

ERNEST BELFORT BAX

Collected Essays



Volume One

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Series Introduction

Ernest Belfort Bax (1854 – 1926) holds a special place in the history of men’s rights advocacy, being the first to mount a sustained public campaign soliciting compassion for men and boys, while denouncing gynocentric chivalry and cultural misandry that was common in his time. As the first major spokesman on these issues Bax is often considered the father of the first wave of the men’s rights movement.

The movement inaugurated by Bax was firstly a literary effort seeking to raise awareness of unreasonable discrimination against men; in divorce settlements, onerous financial responsibilities, military service, domestic violence bias, criminal sentencing disparities, misandric cultural roles and expectations, and so forth. While there were numerous men’s rights advocates appearing from Bax’s time forward, his efforts were published in mainstream publications spanning a period of thirty years, making his voice not only the first, but one of the most enduring.

Bax wrote on a great many topics, including religion, socialism, history and philosophy. This three-part series gathers from his corpus those writings in which he discussed men’s human rights, along with the gynocentric culture he believed responsible for undermining those rights. In these writings Bax asserted that feminism was a central part of “anti-man crusades” appearing in his day, which were in turn responsible for the expansion of anti-male laws during the same period.

Bax wrote many articles in the *New Age* and elsewhere about English laws partial to women and against men, and of women’s privileged position under the law. In this legal environment he believed women’s suffrage would unfairly tip the balance of power to women. In 1896 he co-wrote *The Legal Subjection of Men* as a response to John Stuart Mill’s 1869 essay *The Subjection of Women*. In 1913 he published *The Fraud of Feminism*, detailing feminism’s adverse effects on males and society. The latter two books will form part two and three of the AVfM Press imprint of this series.

The sheer volume of his writings about men’s human rights show that the topic exercised Bax’s mind throughout his life, rivalling his interest in politics and philosophy but surprisingly little mentioned by biographers; perhaps the result of a widespread censorship of non-feminist narratives reported by Bax. With the resurgence of interest in men’s human rights, biographers might now be willing to update this part of Bax’s life knowing they have a receptive audience for whom censorship is less likely to be accepted.

“Perhaps in that day of a future society, my protest may be unearthed by some enterprising archaeological inquirer, and used as evidence that the question was already burning at the end of the nineteenth century.” — E.B. Bax on *Injustice to Men*



Editor's Preface

In this, the first volume of the Bax-Series by AVfM Press, are gathered all of E. B. Bax's independent articles covering the subjects of men's human rights and feminism. Most of the articles were published in periodicals the *Social Democrat*, and *Justice*, and later in the *New Age*. A few of the items are relevant excerpts from longer articles and books that were otherwise unrelated to men's human rights.

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Some Bourgeois Idols (1886)

*The following excerpt from Ernest Belfort Bax's essay was originally published under the 1886 title *Some Bourgeois Idols; Or Ideals, Reals, and Shams*. This is his first extant commentary on the 'woman question.'*

Let us take another idol. This time we tread on sacred ground indeed – equality between the sexes. Well may the iconoclastic hand tremble before levelling a blow at this new Serapis. Nevertheless here also – as the phrase is understood by the ordinary modern woman's right, advocate – we are bound to recognise a vampire. In earlier stages of social development, woman was placed in a condition of undoubted social inferiority to man. Into the grounds of this inferiority it is unnecessary here to enter. Suffice it to say it existed, and that against the state of things the cry of "equality between the sexes" was raised, at first in a veiled, and afterwards in an open manner. For some time it represented a real tendency towards equality by the removal of certain undoubted grievances. But for some time past the tendency of the bourgeois world, as expressed in its legislation and sentiment, has been towards a factitious exaltation of the woman at the expense of the man – in other words, the cry for "equality between the sexes" has in the course of its realisation become a sham, masking a de facto inequality.

The inequality in question presses as usual, heaviest on working-man, whose wife, to all intents and purposes has him completely in her power. If dissolute or drunken, she can sell up his goods or break up his home at pleasure, and still compel him to keep her and live with her to her life's end. There is no law to protect him. On the other hand, let him but raise a finger in a moment of exasperation against this precious representative of the sacred principle of "womanhood," and straightway he is consigned to the treadmill for his six months amid the jubilation of the D.T. and its kindred, who pronounce him a brute and sing paeans over the power of the "law" to protect the innocent and helpless female. Thus does bourgeois society offer sacrifice to the idol "equality between the sexes." For the law jealously guards, the earnings or property of the wife from possible spoliation. She on any colourable pretext can obtain magisterial separation and "protection."

Again, we have the same principle illustrated in the truly bestial outcry raised every now and again by certain persons for the infliction of the punishment of flogging on men, for particular offences, notably "assaults on women and children." As a matter of fact, in the worst cases of cruelty to children, women are the criminals. Some few months back there was a horrible instance in which a little girl was done to death by a stepmother in circumstances of the most loathsome barbarity: yet these horror-stricken advocates of the lash never venture to support flogging as a wholesome corrective to viragos of this description. It would be opposed to middle-class sentiment, which would regard such a proposition as blasphemy against the sacred principle of "femality." No other explanation is possible, since it can hardly be assumed that even the bourgeois mind is incapable of grasping the obvious fact that a man pinioned and in the hands of half a dozen prison-warders, is in precisely as helpless a condition as any woman in a like cage, and that, therefore, the brutality or cowardice of the proceeding is no greater in the one case than in the other. The bourgeois conception of "equality between the sexes" is aptly embodied in that

infamous clause of the “Criminal Law Amendment Act,” which provides that in case of illicit intercourse, between a boy and girl under sixteen years of age, though the girl escapes scot free, the boy is liable, to five years imprisonment in a reformatory.

Even the great Radical nostrum which is supposed to involve the quintessence of political equality, is, when closely viewed, the hollowest of shams. The revolutionary socialist perhaps does not much concern himself about questions of the suffrage, esteeming but lightly the privilege of electing men to help to carry on the present system of society, which he believes destined to perish before long. But looked at from the ordinary point of view, it is quite clear that considering the fact that the female population of England is in excess of the male by about a million, female suffrage, in spite of its apparent embodiment of the principle of equality, really means, if it means anything at all (which may be doubtful) the handing over of the complete control of the state to one sex.

These are only a few of the illustrations which might be multiplied almost indefinitely, of the truth that the tendency of the modern middle-class world, is, while proclaiming the principle of “equality between the sexes” in opposition to the feudal subjection of woman, to erect, the female sex into a quasi-privileged class. The real equality between the sexes aimed at by socialism is as, I take it, much opposed to this Brummagem sentiment and sham equality, as it is to the female slavery of ancient times of which, of course, we do not wish to deny that survivals remain even at the present day. With the economic emancipation of woman and the gradual transformation of the state-system of to-day into an international league of free communes, the feudal subjection of women to man and the middle-class subjection of man to woman will be alike at an end.

Source: Bourgeois Idols, *Commonweal*, April 1886, pp.25 & 26.

Some Heterodox Notes on the Woman Question (1887)

The above is one of those questions on which a particular species of traditional nonsense is expected of one. The “advanced” writer starts from certain dogmas, which the “advanced” reader has had handed down to him in the apostolical succession of “advanced” thought for a century past. These dogmas of “advanced” faith in the Woman Question are (1) that a natural equality of the sexes obtains in all respects save that of physical strength; (2) that women have always formed an oppressed class, but that the advance of civilization may be measured by the lightening of this oppression (here, of course, we get into the tail of the great bourgeois Panegyric of Civilization); (3) the convenient corollary from the first position, namely, that women ought to have all the *rights* of intellectual capacity with all the *privileges* of physical weakness, otherwise expressed, all the rights of men, and none of the duties or hardships of men. For it is a significant and amusing fact that no mention is ever made by the advocate of women’s claims of the *privileges* which have always been accorded the “weaker sex.” These privileges are quietly pocketed as a matter of course, without any sort of acknowledgment, much less any suggestion of surrender. I may add yet another thesis to the dogmas of “advanced” bourgeois thought on the Woman Question. This is what I may term the theory of “womanhood.” It is to be found in its most formulated and definite guise in the Comtian worship of woman with its virgin mother and other accessories; But in a general loose way it pervades a large section of modern Radicalism, and consists in the notion of the sacredness of the female sex as such.

The sentiment, when analysed, may, I think, be traced to two sources. One is the sentiment of consideration for weakness, laudable in itself, but which has got transformed into that of the right of weakness to privilege or domination over strength which is, of course, a very different thing. But the other and most potent factor is, I fancy, a survival of the ancient worship of the principle of generation. The exponents of Cuniform tell us that a well known symbol of the alone, corresponding to the Greek Θ , is to be taken to signify the word “woman.” Now, I think there is a certain moral attached to this piece of Cuniform lore. Woman is, and has been emphatically *the* sex. The veneration of the generative principles in their grosser form is of course impossible to civilised man. And while male man has ceased to represent a sex, in developing into the human personality complete up to date; woman still represents a sexual principle; her personality centres in sex, in fact she still remains for the most part, an amplified, beautified, embellished sexual organ. Otherwise expressed, sex enters into the substance of woman, while in man it is only an accident.¹ Man has a sexual side which he recognises as something more or less distinct from *himself*—“He” is not the male principle of humanity in the same way that “she” is the female principle. With man sex enters into and affects the personality it is true, but is clearly distinguished from the personality as such; with woman, sex is identified with, and indistinguishable from the personality as a whole. This is easily seen in the incapacity of the average woman to abandon herself to interest in any impersonal question. Discourse in any drawing room with the “ladies” there assembled and you have an irresistible but uneasy sense that, however well-feigned may be the interest in the subject of conversation, the real interest of the woman centres round the fact that she is female and you are male, and in the various

conventional barriers with which this fact is surrounded. The way otherwise shrewd men let themselves be deceived by the very thinnest assumption of interest in their pursuits on the part of their wives is to the last degree amusing. A friend seriously speaks of his wife's opinion, say on some literary point; on being introduced to the wife she tells you she thinks Shakespeare must have been a very clever man! The real interest of the good woman is, of course, entirely absorbed in the personal matters springing directly from the sexual relation of married life. In modern gyneolotry I think then we may see the survival of the *cultes genatrices* of antiquity exhibiting itself, not in the coarse form of the worship of the actual organ, but in the refined one of deference for the representatives of the principle of sex² *par excellence*.

In the course of this digression I have forestalled one or two points in the subsequent argument. However, I will now jot down in succinct manner a few criticisms of the cardinal dogmas of modern gyneolotry. Like the dogmas of the Christian theology, and of the Bourgeois economy, these dogmas are supported by one or two stock pseudo-arguments of a conventional nature, the rottenness of which is manifest at a glance. For instance, in support of the potential intellectual equality of women with men, in face of the obvious actual inequality, the fiction is promulgated that women have been cut off from the possibilities of culture which men have had. Now this, I submit, is very much on a level with the Bourgeois argument in support of a class-society, which consists in trotting out the virtuous man of industry and frugality, and the vicious man of indolence and extravagance. There is a grain of truth, of course, in both arguments, but it is imbedded in a mountain of error. It may be true in isolated cases, and under special circumstances, that women have suffered from the lack of training in special departments which men have enjoyed, just as it may have been true in some few cases that wealth has been the result of industry in a sense, and poverty of laziness. The objection of course is, that as arguments they are inept, if for no other reason than that they fail to account for ninety-nine per cent of the facts. The curriculum of higher education has until recently, by general consent, been adverse rather than propitious to the development of intelligence in those subject to it. Years devoted to Latin verse-making can hardly be deemed stimulating to general mental development. This, at all events, women have been spared. Secondly, it has only been in a few departments of learning that at the best, men have had any considerable advantage over women. From the days of Sappho, there has never been any obstacle, real or conventional, in the way of women "taking to" literature or the fine arts in any of their forms. Yet what (in comparison to men) have they ever achieved in any of these departments? It is said that women have always been taught to limit their interests to home, & c. This may be true, of the Englishwoman of a generation ago and to a less extent even of to-day.

But it was not true of the cultivated Greek *hetaira*, or of the Roman lady of the Augustan age. It has never in modern times been true of a large section of women in France, or in numberless other instances that might be mentioned. Besides, we find that with men individual *character* and genius has always shown itself precisely in the *overcoming* of such obstacles of environment. This is also true of women who have attained distinction. There was nothing, for instance, in the training of George Eliot different from that of the ordinary Englishwoman. The argument from social and educational disadvantage therefore plainly breaks down. It is not this which has prevented the average woman intellectually equalling the average man, or the exceptional woman the exceptional man.

The argument for equality, drawn from examination statistics, is hardly worth mentioning. That by great efforts some women can equal men in capacity for “cramming” proves nothing. The “examination” intellect means little more, in plain English, than a good memory and an acquired facility in using it. It is, in fact, an improved calculating machine, which is comparatively rarely accompanied by general or special ability otherwise. What senior wrangler or tripos man has ever been heard of by the world after his examinations are passed and forgotten?

Let us now consider the question of the physical strength of women. The inferiority of bodily or muscular strength is supposed to entitle woman to special privileges. That all weakness is entitled to consideration (though not to domination) goes without saying. But I submit that in the ordinary life of the modern world the question of muscular strength or weakness has very little significance. Even on those rare occasions when it becomes pressing, the invention of firearms has reduced its importance very considerably. A woman flourishing a loaded revolver could hold a room-full of able-bodied men in check. Again, on this argument the consideration shown to weakness ought to be shown *quâ* weakness and not *quâ* sex, as it is at present.

But the chief form of female privilege is the assumed *constitutional* “frailty” of the sex. We come now to an important point. Muscular weakness is commonly confounded with constitutional; strength of body with strength of health and vital power. Woman, because she is muscularly “frail” has obtained the credit of being constitutionally “frail.” But is this belief in accord with facts? Does muscular frailty involve constitutional frailty? If it does of course there remains a certain basis of reason in some, though not all, of the exemptions and privileges of women. But I contend it is contrary to facts open to everyone. It is a universally admitted fact that the female infant is much stronger and more easily reared than the male infant. The registrar-general’s statistics alone illustrate this, as broadly as could be desired. The number of male births is enormously in excess of female.

The numerical proportions of adult men and women is, as is well-known, just the reverse. This superior vigour of the female infant would of itself lend probability, in the absence of strong evidence to the contrary, for assuming certainly not less vital power in the female than in the male adult. And what evidence is there to the contrary? A widespread assumption and nothing more. In observations (relating to this matter) extending over some years of accidents, severe illnesses, injuries, & c., I have noted the excess of women over men who “pull through,” as the expression is, to be enormous.

While inviting the reader to take careful note of his personal observations and his newspaper in this respect for the next six or twelve months I may recall haphazard one or two instances of female toughness of constitution, probably exceeding that of any man on record. It is well known that to be sentenced to the knout in Russia was only deemed a euphemism for a sentence of death. The only recorded instance of anyone passing through the ordeal unscathed is that of Mme. Lapuchin, who was knouted by order of Elizabeth of Russia, survived without serious impairment of health, was deported to the mines of Siberia, survived that also, and returning to St. Petersburg; died at a green old age. Most of us recollect the instance of the old Scotchwoman, the winter before last, who being in ill-health, was on her voyage from the Shetlands to the Mainland in quest of medical advice, was wrecked, drifted about on a raft in intensely cold weather, without food of any kind, for nearly a week, when she was picked up by a passing

vessel, was taken ashore, and tended, and in a few days completely recovered. Not so very long ago, a woman experienced but slight constitutional disturbance after jumping from the Clifton Suspension Bridge, a height of some 800 feet. A case came within my personal knowledge recently of a young woman having to undergo an exceptionally severe surgical operation for internal tumour, involving removal and replacement of a portion of the intestines. "She'll never get over it" was remarked to me. "It may seem incredible," I replied, "still strong is the female constitution and will probably prevail." The truth of my observation was attested when in a few weeks after her two or three hours surgical vivisection she was better than she had ever been before. Now these instances, which are taken merely at random, as they occur to me while writing, and which might be indefinitely multiplied, may be termed exceptional, if you like, but allowing the utmost latitude to their exceptional character, I contend they altogether upset the traditional assumption of the "frailty" of women as regards constitutional vigour and the capacity for endurance. The fact is the "lady" of civilisation is brought up to regard herself as a "frail" creature, is always being told "my dear, this is too much for you," that it is fatal for her to stand on her feet for a few minutes together and so on, till at last she persuades herself it is true, or at least proper and womanly for her to pretend it is.

Among the proletariat where these fancies are an unattainable luxury the equality of health and staying-power between men and women is much more obvious; so, also, to a somewhat lesser extent with those women among the educated classes who have to earn their own livelihood by teaching or literary work. The injustice to men which the conventional superstition of the "frailty" of woman, with its customary rites entails is seen on various occasions. In an omnibus on a wet morning how often does it happen that one of that unhappy class of exploited employees, the city warehouse clerk, with health undermined by long hours in a vitiated atmosphere is driven to dangerous exposure to make room for some fat, hulking matron, out to do her "shopping," who has probably ten times his physical stamina.

I think we may fairly conclude then (1) that no case has, as yet, been made out for reconsidering the opinion dictated by the obvious facts of the problem as it stands, viz. that women are *radically* inferior in mental power to men;³ on the other hand, (2) that there is a very good case, supported by a large mass of evidence, for reconsidering the received opinion of the inferiority in constitutional strength or vital power, of women as compared with men, an opinion which is accepted like most traditional beliefs, in the absence of evidence, and without examination.

The second main position of orthodox Radicalism, that women are, and have been in the past, grievously oppressed by men, is, on one side of it wholly false, and on the other true only to a very limited extent. It is a common fallacy in this connection to represent women as an oppressed class. Now, as a matter of fact, at no period of the world's history has the female sex constituted a disinherited or oppressed class. Women may have been liable to certain disabilities. But these have been always compensated and often more than compensated by exemptions and special privileges. Economically, although dependent on men, women have for the most part had the "lion's share at the banquet of life." The real state of the case is that the condition of women has been determined by that of the men of the class to which they belonged. Women of the privileged class have always been privileged, *women* of an oppressed *class* have been oppressed, not as women, but as belonging to an economically inferior section of the population. We repeat that women as a sex have never been at any time treated as an inferior class to be exploited, in

the same way that the slave class of ancient times, the villain class of mediaeval times, or the Proletarian class of modern times, has. The analogy sometimes attempted to be drawn between the female sex and an oppressed class is therefore altogether inept.

Coming to the present day, the talk of male oppression, in any form or degree is simply the grossest and most impudent piece of cant. Law, custom, and opinion, in this and in most other western countries are wholly and absolutely on the side at women as against men. It is hopeless for a man to attempt to get justice where his adversary is a woman. This has reached a condition of scandal in this country that every assizes shows a crop of spurious charges of indecent assault brought by women against men, without a single instance of one of these women being prosecuted for perjury. There was an atrocious case, recently, of a woman who, charged an unfortunate workman in the same factory with her, because he refused to give her money. Baron Huddleston who tried the case remarked that the woman ought to be prosecuted. Was she? Not a bit. Now suppose these cases were reversed. Suppose men of the baser sort to have discovered a way of blackmailing "ladies." Conceive the yell of indignation that would well up from press and platform; conceive the proposals to apply the "cat" to the dastardly ruffians; conceive the sentences of penal servitude for life which would re-echo from the walls of every tribunal! Imagination pales before the terrific ebullition of Bourgeois fury that would ensue. But, of course, when it is men who are the sufferers, and women who are the assailants it is only a matter on which Mr. Stead may exercise his small wit.

Again, it is a fact, the explanation of which for obvious reasons, cannot be given here, that severe corporal punishment is more likely to injure young boys than girls. Yet if there is a case of a female child receiving a very mild castigation it is invariably magnified into a violent assault and emotionally commented on from the bench, and this in face of the brutal flogging systematically inflicted on the unfortunate lads on board government training ships, and in industrial schools. Yet again, take the case of the law of husband and wife. The husband is compelled to maintain his wife, under all circumstances, while the wife, who has her earnings protected, can sell him up for drink or to keep a paramour at her sweet will and pleasure. If he remonstrates she may proceed to rejoin with a chair, or a flat-iron, or a poker; and should he then be rash enough to stay the uplifted arm, he has committed an assault, she proceeds with wailing to the nearest police-court; commiseration from magistrates for her and six months "hard" for him – *la voila* – she is but an ill-used matron, and a convict-felon he. And this is what you call advancing toward equality between the sexes. The success of Barnum journalism and its maiden tribute agitations, Langworthy marriages, & c., shows the ease with which a cheap conventional indignation can be trumped up on any question supposed to point the moral and adorn the tale of the fiendish malignity of man and the angelic innocence of woman.

How different is it with any infamy perpetrated not for the immediate satisfaction of an imperious passion (however unnatural or perverted) but in the cold-blooded pursuit of gain. A few months ago a fishmonger at Hammersmith, was sentenced by the stipendiary to a month's imprisonment for one of the most revolting crimes a man can commit—he had tried to sell to the poor of the neighbourhood a portion of a putrid cod, which, had it been eaten, must, the medical officer stated, inevitably have produced inflammation of the intestines, probably resulting in a horrible death. This fishmonger appealed, the already ridiculous sentence was quashed, on account of "previous good character," and a fine of ten pounds substituted. Did the humane

philanthropic Bourgeois make the welkin ring with his protestations? Oh dear no. This was done in pursuance of a legitimate branch of trade. (It cannot be said in excuse that such offences are not common for it is admitted that only in the most extreme instances, and not always then, are they brought to justice, and notwithstanding, scarcely a week passes without one appearing at one or other of the London police courts.) This same Bourgeois philanthropist can foam at the mouth, gnash his teeth and vomit an ocean of gushing indignation over the chance seduction of a girl under eighteen! The latter has nothing to do with trade, and is connected with the wellspring of traditional emotion, so you have only to turn the tap on, and out spouts the sentiment ready brewed.

Notwithstanding the state of law, public opinion, and custom, the “shrieking sisterhood,” and their male lackeys continue to invoke male “chivalry” in defence of every usurpation or act of injustice perpetrated in the interest of female domination. This invocation of chivalry now is about on a level with the capitalist’s invocation of “freedom of contract.” With both ideas, while their form remains intact the content has entirely changed. Under an Individualist system of production, “freedom of contract” between employer and employed had a meaning; under the great industry it has none – it is merely an excuse for exploitation by the Capitalist class. In the early middle ages, when strength of arm was commonly called into requisition for defence, “chivalry” had a meaning; in the nineteenth century it has none, and is merely an excuse for the privileges and domination of the female sex.

In fact, if “chivalry” means taking the side of the weaker, it would be shown more often to-day, in championing the cause of the man against the woman, than that of the woman against the man. Hegel said that every typical character appeared twice in history – once as tragedy and once as farce. If we apply this to the chivalric type, and take King Arthur or Sir Lancelot (regarded for the nonce as historical personages) as the embodiment of the former we may certainly find the latter in the person of the great cheap-jack of London journalism, and exponent of the sorrows of husband-hunting wenches. The drop is certainly great from the hero of the “City of Legions” to the “Northumbrian boy.”

It might be thought from the general tenor of these remarks that they were intended as an attack on all idea of equality between the sexes. Such, however, is not the case. All I have meant to do is to attack the spurious social and political equality advocated by the bourgeois “woman’s rights” faction, male and female, an “equality” which, to employ the celebrated bull, is “all on one side.” This to my thinking is to be fought at all costs. As a friend intimately acquainted with current political life recently observed to me, what these people want to get the suffrage for is not to further any broad social views whatever, but simply to get infamous laws passed against men as men. This I believe to be true. What they really want is the erection of a sex domination.

I have also endeavoured in the foregoing to show the baselessness of the arguments supposed to tell in favour of the intellectual equality of men and women. Two things seem to me clear. (1) There is and has been a palpable inequality. (2) The arguments hitherto put forward to explain away that inequality won’t hold water. It will be observed that this is a very different thing from dogmatically asserting the inequality to be necessarily permanent. I believe it to be much more radical than many people would wish to imagine, but we can none of us foresee the results which such a revolution as that toward which modern socialists look forward will effect in modifying

human life generally and with it calling into play latent and as yet unproven capacities in the female mind. With regard to the practical point of equality of social status between men and women the question entirely rests on an economic basis. As has been often said, so long as a man “keeps” a woman, whether as wife or mistress, as things go, it is perfectly natural he should expect to control that woman. It is a part of the system. Abolish the economic independence, place woman on an equal economic footing, and you have cut the ground from under any other possible dependence.

In this great socialistic step toward *real* as opposed to *sham* equality between the sexes, two other points are I think involved. One is the definitive overthrow of our sham monogamous marriage and the formal recognition by society collectively of free relations between the sexes; and the other is the repudiation by women themselves of the anachronistic notion of “Chivalry,” as being due to them from men. (This reconstruction aspect of the question would require a special article). If we are to have equality and fellowship, let it be equality and fellowship, and not a hollow fraud masquerading under the name.

Notes:

1. This does not, of course, touch the question as to the relative strength of the actual sexual appetite in the two sexes. The latter may quite consonantly with the argument be, as some physiologists allege, greater in man than in woman. The statement in the text is best illustrated by the two aims of the “respectable” woman, which are (1), to maintain her virginity, or (2) to make a good marriage.
2. Christianity, in accentuating as the first of virtues, the essentially female morality of sex, really, tended to drag men down to the level of mere males. When “sex” interpenetrates the whole personality a sexual ethic is obviously the dominant one. Chastity – as in the case of women – becomes the first of virtues. Where sex is merely one side of the personality, the sex-morality necessarily loses its importance, even if it is not formally abrogated.
3. I have refrained from entering into the strictly scientific questions of embryology and craniology which nevertheless make entirely in favour of the above thesis, partly from incompetence to deal with them adequately, partly because they would extend this paper too much.

Source: ‘Some Heterodox Notes on the Women Question’ in *To-Day*, July 1887, pp. 24-32

No Misogyny But True Equality (1887)

No Misogyny But True Equality

And now let us come to the main point in dispute [about female privilege]. I have made no “impeachment of women in general.” What I have impeached is the ascendancy of women as a privileged caste or class. What I maintained is that whatever may have been the disabilities of women in earlier stages of society, in our modern bourgeois society (Western Europe and its colonies), there is an increasing tendency to erect women into a “sacra-sacred” class, the members of which are to be exempted from all the disagreeable consequences of their own actions, to have the criminal law suspended in their favour, to win in every civil suit, to be treated as martyrs and heroines every time a slight inconvenience befalls them. This is what I term the modern 19th century form of the [Yonic cultus](#).

Mrs. Besant will not take me seriously when I state that men have been given six months for protecting themselves against their wives’ violence. Yet this is literally true. The case I had in my mind occurred, if I remember rightly, about March last. The exact date I forget, but I noticed it in the *Commonweal* at the time. About a year-and-a-half ago there was a case at Highgate (as far as I recollect), in which a woman actually attacked her husband, who was an invalid and I think a cripple, with a knife, inflicting serious injury, and was let off scot free. If in the higher administration of the law there is gross and egregious favouritism shown to women as women, this is none the less so in the mere setting of the law in motion. A little more than a year ago a boy was sentenced, by Mr. Justice Day, to penal servitude for life, for attempting to extort money by threats of an indecent charge. Now women are allowed (vide Mr. Howard Vincent, *Pall Mall Gazette*, July 13th last) under the very eyes of the police to exercise as a regular trade, a practice which in the male, on a single offence, is deemed worthy of the penultimate penalty of the law.¹

Now I ask has ever greater privilege accrued to any class than this. The mediaeval “benefit of clergy,” pales down before the modern bourgeois “benefit of Sex.” Again, an alderman ventures upon a little feeble civic banter with some flower-girls who are brought up before him for obstructing the pathway. The Yonicists are up in arms. These “poor girls,” are insulted. The newspapers gush with indignation. M^{de}me. Dronin is arrested on false information; by virtue of her sex the whole delinquent officialdom bows before her, from Home Secretary downward, with apologies and costly gifts. A scream goes forth that women are bullied by the police in the streets. Parliament adjourns. The welkin rings with wrath against police tyranny. Over mere male Socialists, that does’nt matter – but over prostitutes – Oh! The *Pall Mall Gazette* rubs its eyes and snivels “Brethren shall we harry our sisters”? The same *Pall Mall Gazette*, *bien entendu* is very anxious to have its brothers “harried” for so much as looking at a woman in the streets; for the crime of accosting two years hard labour would, we suppose, be “grossly inadequate.”

Talking about the *Pall Mall Gazette*, by the way, it is difficult to believe its editor was not intentionally “lying” at home “for the benefit of his country” – women, as he conceived, when he declared the other night that only a woman could be arrested on unsupported testimony. A man

deserves to be condemned to travel every day for a twelvemonth with single women on the Metropolitan Railway that can make such an impudently false statement. As regards this matter, however, I, for one, am quite willing that no charge should be taken against a woman for annoyance in the street on the unsupported testimony of a man, provided no charge is taken against a man for indecent assault on the unsupported testimony of a woman. How now, what do you say to this, Mr. Stead? Completely destroy the blackmail industry – wouldn't it? Now take this case – Barbarous cruelty to a young child, through whipping, is charged against the police – the child is a boy, a question is asked in Parliament, an investigation promised, and the matter shelved. Compare this with the case of a female arrested on an unproved charge by a policeman, and locked up for a couple of hours. She whimpers, and the respectable classes are set in a blaze.

Yonic Superstition



I think that the Yonic superstition is in nothing more clearly evinced than in recent criminal legislation. The tender body of a young child may be flayed by a brutal policeman, just because it happens to be of the male sex; if it be of the female, to lay a finger on it is sacrilege, and for precisely the same offence it practically receives no punishment. The British Bourgeois affects horror at Count Schouvaloff's birching of the court maids of honour at St. Petersburg, whose bodies were presumably better able to bear a castigation than the babes he complacently reads of in his paper as being sentenced to ten strokes of the birch by a police magistrate. Then take the clause in the recent Criminal Law Amendment Act, which provides that in the case of illicit intercourse between a boy and a girl, while the boy may be sent to the penal servitude of a reformatory for five years the girl remains absolutely untouched. Now it is universally admitted that girls develop earlier than boys, so that this is a simple premium for girls with

precocious criminal tendencies to entrap youths. If it is prejudicial to the interests of society that intercourse should under any circumstances take place in the case of girls under sixteen, what conceivable rational ground can there be for limiting the penal consequences to one side of the equation. A more abominable infamy it would probably be difficult to find in the whole course of modern legislation.

Such are the outward and visible signs of the worship of the female principle in the modern world. Newspaper gush, one-sided legislation, "purity" meetings.

As it is holiday season, perhaps the editor of To-Day will allow me to be frivolous, and narrate a dream I had the other night:

I had been reading the Pall Mall Gazette, and Mrs. Besant's article after supper – and on going to sleep I thought I was in an ancient city. Temples, with griffins and other queer stone creatures abounded on all sides. Groups of quaintly robed idlers were standing about an open square (in which I suddenly found myself) talking eagerly together. Presently there issued from one side of

the square a procession of white-robed figures that looked ghostly in the twilight as they advanced with measured step to the sound of the lyre and the lute. I asked of one who stood near what it was that I saw. "Knowest thou not, O son of the stranger," replied he, "that the great goddess (the name I couldn't quite catch) has vouchsafed to appear to men in mortal form, that she commands new rites, and will unfold to her worshippers the holy mysteries of the militant virgin."

This was interesting, and I eagerly watched the approaching votaries. While I had been waiting it had been growing rapidly dusk. But now the moon shone forth. By its light, I thought I detected, in spite of their strange garb, foremost among the advancing throng, not as I expected, Orientals of the third century B.C., but the homely figures of Mr. Stead and Mrs. Ormiston Chant, hand in hand, singing as they danced, and dancing as they sang, a joyous hymn of ecstasy. I looked again, and behind them detected, as I fancied, the features of Mrs. Josephine Butler and Mr Waugh, in similar raptures. My historical sense suffered a shock and I essayed to withdraw a little, but ere I had done so my neighbour laid his hand on me, "See," said he, "the goddess herself approaches." As I turned, the sharp cut features of a man, evidently a priest, caught my eye. He was clad like the rest in a plain white robe, but on his breast a large triangular silver breastplate glistened in the moonlight, and on his head was a conical crown. Could it be, but no – yet it was very like – the good Mr. Marson! In his hand he bore a standard whence gleamed in massy silver the model of a fish.

Behind the high-priest followed a car drawn by eight milk white mares, and in a kind of palanquin a veiled figure I knew to be the goddess. "Bow, vile stranger," said my neighbour, "adore that virginity which was, and is, and is to come, before which even the legislators veil their faces." But I kneeled not, neither adored, but standing looked on. The procession halted before a temple, four priests came out and raised the palanquin. A thrill ran through the assembled multitude as the time arrived, when just for one moment the sacred veil should be raised. At the further end of the square a body of richly-attired old men emerged, with bowed heads, from a massive and imposing building. These, I understood, were the legislators, the fathers of the city.

Now, thought I, for a chance to see one of the great types of ancient female beauty, if not the Trojan Helen, at least a Semiramid, a "Mrs." Caudaules, or a Cleopatra! The veil was raised, there stood forward in the pale moonshine – "Miss" Cass ! I turned and felt a little sick. I suppose I must have swooned at the sight of the shopocratic vestal, for the next thing I recollect is being aroused by a crowd rushing forth from the temple, headed by him and her, whom I had taken for Mr. Stead and Mrs. Ormiston Chant, shrieking death and destruction to the male principle. "Hail to the eternal virgin-militant womanhood!" They all raised diamond-shaped daggers on high and conjured the moon-goddess that ere her virgin rays paled that night the city should be purged for ever of maleness, and dedicated a holy priestess to her service.

I didn't know exactly what it all meant, but thought I might as well go and look at something else, and so moved away, clutching a steel J pen and a fragment of the Pall Mall Gazette, which, in the event of the hero of Northumberland street beginning to show "venom," I intended to use as a charm, crying *In hoc signa vinces*, (The allusion to the power of the new journalism; I thought would be sure to "fetch" him and make him forget his dreadful vows). However, at that

instant I awoke – to reflections on the mutability of human affairs and the difference between the militant Yonicism of two thousand years ago – the group of smooth-faced white-robed fanatics, fish-sign on forehead, triangle on breast and diamond-shaped dagger in hand – and the militant Yonicism of to-day with its black frock coats, Exeter Halls, newspaper articles, London police-courts, lobby wire pulling, and vigilance societies, and I thought that on the whole in spite of certain elements of unpleasantness I preferred the former.

Let me assure Mrs. Besant I am no hater of “women in general.” What I hate is – women in the “particular” position of a privileged class as they are at present. I decline to bow down before a sexual principle, or to admit the justice of granting privileges on the basis of a sex-sentiment. What I contended and still contend is that the bulk of the advocates of woman’s rights are simply working, not for equality, but for female ascendancy. It is all very well to say they repudiate chivalry. They are ready enough to invoke it politically when they want to get a law passed in their favour – while socially, to my certain knowledge, many of them claim it as a right every whit as much as ordinary women. Says Mrs. Besant, “Why use the existence of bad women as an impeachment of women in general?” Now I want to know who has done so. I certainly have not. All I say is, don’t allow the worst characteristics of bad women to come into play by giving them free leave to use the tribunals for purposes of spite, revenge or blackmail! Don’t pull out your biggest pocket handkerchief at every tale of wife-beating, before you have heard the other side! Don’t allow women to ruin men by legal process, as a punishment for not marrying them when they want them to! Don’t allow wives to “sell up” their husbands, or to compel their husbands to maintain them in idleness, while they are allowed to keep all their own property or earnings singly to themselves.

In stating this view of the question plainly, I may say I am only giving articulation to opinions constantly expressed in private by men amongst themselves. A noisy band fills the papers with lying rhodomontades, & c., & c., on the “downtrodden woman,” and their representations are allowed to pass by default. I am styled a misogynist forsooth, because I detest the sex-class ascendancy, striven for by a considerable section at least of the bourgeois Women’s Rights advocates, and desire instead a true and human equality between the sexes.

Notes:

1. This is not all. It is now proposed by the Saturday Review and Pall Mall Gazette that this promising branch of female industry should be “protected” by the curtailment of cross-examination. A Mrs. Brereton, the other day, brought what the jury by their verdict pronounced a false, or to put it mildly, “doubtful” charge against a man. It is now actually complained by the journals in question that this verdict was obtained or furthered by the too severe cross-examination of the prosecutrix. Hence it is argued that cross-examination must be in future limited to questions not embarrassing to the prosecution. Could sex privilege go much further!

Source: ‘No Misogyny But True Equality’ in *To-day* October 1887, pp.115-121;

The Woman Question (1895)

Taking a hint from the suggestion of "TATTLER" a few weeks ago in *Justice* that it is time above question was fairly thrashed out among Socialists the editor of *Justice* has invited me to briefly state my views.

Up till quite recently Socialists like Radicals other advanced persons, were supposed, as a matter of course, to swallow that conventional lie of modern civilisation – the theory of "woman the victim of man's oppression." This dogma, which, like the doctrine of Manchester school, that the ideal of human liberty is attained under the capitalistic regime of free industrial and commercial competition, has dominated the thought of the Anglo-Saxon race for two generations and has been the chief instrument in effecting a revolution which has placed the whole judicial and administrative machinery of the country at the disposal of one sex oppress the other (in all causes, i.e. into which the sex question prominently enters.) Let us look at the present condition of this so-called "victim."

While under our present marriage laws the wife is under no obligation to maintain the husband, not even though she have money and he be destitute (saving the ratepayer's right to be recouped for his maintenance in the workhouse) the husband is bound at criminal law to maintain his wife *in comfort under all circumstances*. Hitherto exception has been made in the case of adultery on the part of wife. Now, in a Bill before Parliament this last reservation is proposed to be virtually abrogated by a "caoutchouc" paragraph which enforces "alimony" where the husband can be shown by his defect or "misconduct to have contributed to the adultery. "

Thus, if a man has ever had a dispute with his wife or even come home late, as in a recent case, he will presumably have, "by defect or misconduct, contributed to the adultery;" just as now if a man ever had words with his wife and raised his voice above its normal pitch or come home late he may be deemed to have committed technical cruelty entitling the said wife to separation or divorce with "alimony."

2. A wife is perfectly free to leave her husband at will, and he has no remedy (Jackson case). If a husband leaves his wife she can compel him to surrender to her a third of his income or earnings, and for desertion, i.e., for leaving her without money, he can be punished with hard labour.

3. A husband is further liable for her debts and her civil delinquencies (torts).

4. A husband cannot obtain relief against a wife for any act, negligence, or language of hers, *while for any one of these considerations* she can get judicial separation, exclusive rights over the children, if any, and a third of his income or earnings for herself, with so much per head in addition for each child. Thus if a man gives his wife an unfriendly pat on the cheek with his open hand she can get established comfortably for life on the fruits of his labour; if, on the contrary, she smashes his head in with a poker she may be fined five shillings which the injured husband has to pay; and should he succeed in obtaining a separation it is only on condition of his keeping the virago in comfortable idleness.

A little illustration will bring home to the reader this complete serfdom of the husband to the wife under our marriage laws. A man, not long ago, obtained the offer of employment in America. His wife did wish him to go. Not having any money or work home he insisted. The wife who had money of own, and to whom he moreover gave £25 with promise of more on his arrival at his destination, went straight to the Guardians, had him arrested on board ship at Southampton, dragged before the magistrate, and sentenced to three months hard labour. The sentence was subsequently quashed after the man had been in gaol and was ruined. Most feudal barons would surely have been satisfied with such powers as this over their "villeins."

At criminal law it is a well-known fact which anyone may verify by the records of the courts that women enjoy *an almost complete immunity* for all offences committed against men, as such. For assault, perjury, and blackmailing practised on men, women are virtually never even prosecuted, let alone convicted. On the other hand, savage and vindictive laws, savagely and vindictively enforced by judges are dealt out to men for the most trifling assaults or other offences committed against women. In fact it seems that the express aim of the modern political woman and her "Women's" Associations is to deprive men of the last shred of protection against criminal women with a view of giving the latter every facility for exercising their calling.

If one looks at the matter fairly, one surely cannot be surprised at occasional violence committed on women – wife assaults, wife murders, &c. Legalised tyranny and inequality has always throughout history led to sporadic outbursts of brutality on the side of its victims. It is always so, and always will be so.

Such is the present position of advantage enjoyed by women by virtue of their sex. Such are the facts as opposed to the popular "legend" on the subject. Space forbids my further analysing the present subjection at law of men to women in this article, which is the more unnecessary as I have elaborated the subject in further detail elsewhere.

Of course, under Socialism, the side of the question based on property falls away. Our existing infamous marriage laws must disappear when both sexes are alike economically free. When once this is so, a perfectly free marriage, without let or hindrance, would necessarily result. Should, as Herbert Burrows seems to have suggested, a bastard "public opinion" try any games on of attempting by ostracism to supply the place of the defunct coercive legal bond in enforcing any special form of marriage, such as monogamy, we shall have to do our best to strangle that "public opinion" as quickly as possible. If driven to it, even opponents might combine in an association whose members pledged themselves (like the Oneida Creekers), to marital relations strictly limited to a fixed period, say six months. To thus raise anti-monogamy to the level of a principle would surely be a pity as a result of the "cussedness" of trying to compel outward conformity to monogamy among people whose temperaments were unsuited to it. In using the ugly word "lust" for any form of marriage he does not like, Herbert Burrows resembles the respectable bourgeois of my boyhood's days who used to stigmatise every form of liberty he did not like (e.g., the right of workmen to combine) as "licence." No, friend Herbert, I trust a society even half-way into Socialism will be past being caught with that sort of chaff.

At the same time I regard it as highly probable that for a long while to come voluntary monogamy (voluntary, in fact, and not in name merely) will be the dominant form of the sexual relation. The attempt to enforce it, however, whether by law or “public opinion,” will I am equally convinced be contrary to the whole spirit of a reasonable society. To make out that there is an absolute and immutable moral superiority in monogamy irrespective of temperament or circumstances over every other form of sexual relation is surely absurd. Only by society encouraging perfect freedom can the most perfect form of the sexual relation, that best adapted to human needs, be wrought out. Monogamy, like every other institution, will have to make good its case by showing its superiority to other forms, and not by the aid of external tyranny, whether juridical or social.

Before concluding this article I would point out what is liable to be overlooked, viz., that the coercive effect of “public opinion” could only be operative in a Socialist society when the whole community was practically unanimous in condemning a course of conduct and not in defence of any arbitrary dogma, however strongly held by a section of the community. The case is different under capitalist conditions when a man can be forced to wear a “pot” hat against his will, owing to the “public opinion” of the class on whom he is dependent for his livelihood insisting on it.

Source: The Woman Question, *Justice*, 27th July, 1895, p.6.

The Everlasting Female Again! (1895)

DEAR COMRADES, That I have effectually put a spoke in the wheels of an imposture kept alive by “bluff” and the falsification of fact, is evidenced by the letters you have published and received. Like the man who was converted to freethought by hearing the parson discourse on the Evidences of Christianity, I have good reason to believe that many readers of Justice who were waverers on the question have had their views decided as much by the replies to me as by anything I have myself written. The partisans of the (so-called) woman’s movement have hitherto successfully adopted the motto, “*Il faut de ‘bluff’, encore de ‘bluff’ et toujours de ‘bluff’*” Now it is just the “*toujours de ‘bluff’*” which has been threatened (at least so far as English Socialists are concerned) by my very simple statement of facts. Hence these tears, hysterical shrieks, and inconsequent ravings! Polite aspersions on sanity by ex-lights of the Theosophical Society and accusations of “monomania” on the part of atrabilious females, for daring to criticise their conventional shibboleth are very amusing and recall the tone of certain parsons of my youth and other gentlemen of that ilk when disputing over the body of Moses With Biblical scholars and geologists; or more recently of the hidebound “Manchester” economists when discussing socialism.

Seven or eight years ago on the occasion of a criticism of Die Frau by me in the Social Democrat, August Bebel, who similarly found himself unable to answer my arguments, sought a way out of the difficulty by loftily waving them off and expressing pain for the welfare of my Social-Democratic soul. This, if more dignified, was not more effective than poor comrade Burrows’ scurrility. Needless to say, my arguments have remained unanswered by Bebel to this day. My only object in drawing attention to this matter has been to enter a protest against the Socialist movement being “bluffed” by a noisy, band of shriekers into allowing itself to be dragged at the heels of a bogus agitation. A species of terrorism has been established amongst “advanced” persons generally to ostracise a serious discussion of the “Woman Question” in a sense adverse to the platform claptrap of the (so-called) “Woman’s Rights” movement.

Among Socialists this has been aided by a false analogy (that fruitful source of fallacy) consisting in setting up of a parallel derived apparently, from Auguste Comte, between the position of women as a sex, and that of the proletariat as a class. That there is no such parallel at all I have pointed out again and again. In the one case you have to deal with an organic difference – one of bodily structure – irrespective of class, while in the latter we are concerned with a social and economic difference, irrespective of organic differences, sexual or other. There are exploiting women and exploited women, just as there are men. Socialism, proclaims that accident of birth so far as economic condition is concerned is responsible for the main differences which exist among the population of a class society. It postulates a condition of things as its aim in which the “accident of birth”, in an economic sense, shall no longer tell. But to insist that the “accident of birth” should be quite inoperative even where it involves not social or economic, but radical structural or constitutional differences, is a preposterous absurdity. If you only carry this principle far enough, you arrive at the position of the emperor Caligula when he raised his favourite horse to the consular dignity, being doubtless under the belief that it was hard “the accident of birth” should be a disqualification for his four-footed friend and favourite

attaining the higher honours of the state. The “accident of birth” in so far as it involves points not reducible to social and economic cause, points belonging to the “nature of the animal itself” – no society can afford to ignore in the apportionment of its functions. The difference of sex most authorities believe to involve such points. A *prima facie* case is at all events made out for the affirmative and has never been successfully refuted as yet. If this be so, all I say is that our conception of equality as regards sex requires revision. Our notion of equality in the matter of class is based on a conviction of the ultimate abolition of classes as our goal. Is our notion of equality in the matter of sex to be based on the belief in the ultimate extinction of sex as our goal? If so there is a certain parallel, “If not, not.”

One young lady waxes pathetic over the iniquity of punishing people for what they can't help. Now here is a point in which I certainly agree with her. And if she will allow me I will suggest one case among many in which this iniquity obtains to-day and against which her tongue or pen might be usefully employed in protesting. In our prisons, as in most of our industrial schools, men and boys are subjected to brutal and degrading punishment from which women and girls, for the same or equally grave offences, are exempt, solely by virtue of their sex. If this is not a case of punishing the male criminal or delinquent for what he can't help, namely, his sex, I don't know what is? On the other hand no one that I am aware of has ever proposed to punish women for their sex.

I come now to Mendelson. “Bax has had to choose between equality and protection, and he refuses them both.” Just exactly what he does not. He points out, on the contrary, that in the mouths of “Woman's Righters,” Socialist, no less than bourgeois (for in this respect the former are much the same as the latter), “equality” means sex domination, and “protection” means tyranny and injustice exercised on behalf of a sex. It is these things I reject. You can always put a glow upon tyranny so as to plausibly explain it away as “protection.” The trick of the tyrant, whether man or class, has always been throughout history to start by whining for “protection.” Alessandro de Medici wanted protection, and collected a body of retainers for that ostensible purpose, with which he subsequently seized the Florentine state.

The white planters of the slave states explained away “chattel slavery” as a mere device for protecting the poor weak white against the muscularly and numerically stronger negro. As a matter of fact, the bestial barbarities perpetrated on the black race in the Southern States are even now so excused. The Czar and official bureaucracy of Russia doubtless have always believed that the knout and Siberian mines meant nothing more than “protection” for their precious carcasses. Robespierre's “great terror,” he would have argued, was merely a necessary measure of “protection” for “patriots”, viz., for his Jacobins. There is, in short, no form of despotism and cruelty that cannot be twisted by perverse ingenuity into being a measure of “protection”. “Only this, and nothing more!”

Among the interesting items of information Mendelson affords me as to what views I hold, most of which were quite unknown to me before, is one that nervous citizens should be protected on their way home at night. Now I suppose, owing to not being a Peisistratus, a Medici, a Robespierre, or otherwise a specially nervous citizen in this particular respect, I am bound to give friend Stanislas the entire credit for this brilliant idea. I can certainly lay no sort of claim to it. An escort of police, I should say, would be an uncomfortable sort of arrangement, but in view

of some recent cases an escort of special constables as a protection against the police might be worth considering. Allow me to point out, however, that the moment the “nervous citizen” abused his “protection,” whether of police or anti-police, as a menace to the peace of other citizens it would, even if accorded, in all probability be promptly suppressed. And this is precisely what I urge in relation to the laws now existing for the “protection of women.” As to Proudhon, though I have read some of his economic treatises, I have never read anything touching the woman question from his pen. And to dub me a disciple of Proudhon is, I submit, simply silly.

I think the “impartial reader” of Justice will scarcely be caught by certain demagogic references to “brutal Manchesterism” and sneers anent “neo-Malthusians.” A disapproval of the system of legalised blackmail called “breach of promise” actions by which a certain low type of woman is enabled to prey upon a man who has been foolish enough to get entangled in the harpy’s clutches is styled “brutal Manchesterism.” If so, for the first time in my life, I am proud of the title of “brutal Manchester man.” One would think it decent women had one atom of respect for their sex about them they would themselves horsewhip filthy females out of their society. For the rest I may point out that there is an element of truth in Manchesterism as in every other epoch-making idea. It is its false economic application that Socialists justly protest against. To merely sling out the epithet “Manchester man,” “Neo-Malthusianism” or “Anarchist” as forms of abuse is to fire an unshotted broadside. Where the middle-class Radical has failed to complete his work the Socialist must take it up. Some Radical ideals may partake of the nature of the “cult of abstractions,” but others are an integral part of the growth of society. Neo-Malthusianism is objected to by Socialists in so far as it is put forward as a red-herring in the guise of a social panacea, but not necessarily otherwise. I join issue completely with Mendelson in his statement that because an act (though purely self-regarding in itself) is what he pleases to term “abnormal” – by which I can only understand him to mean contrary to some eighteenth-century, deistic, abstract metaphysical entity he calls “Nature” – that therefore society would have any right to “consider whether it would tolerate it or not.” Eating with a knife and fork or shaving are equally “abnormal” in a sense but I should say it would be bad for any society that took to “considering whether it should tolerate” liberty in such purely private concerns of citizens. But our friend probably advocates sumptuary laws against flannel shirts and red ties. Would Mendelson propose a punishment on men and women living singly, who are also “abnormal” and have no children? Mendelson will perhaps stigmatise my suggestions of a limit to the power of the community over the individual, even in private matters as middle-class-Radical, or Anarchistic. He is welcome to this very stale gibe of the crude State Socialist. I do not propose to discuss the question of “bastardy” raised by Mendelson. Those who have read my letter on *Free Love and Socialism* will see I think that his objections do not touch me.

But now, what does the sum-total of Mendelson’s gynecocratic contentions amount to? Why does he not say what he obviously means? All objections to the most arbitrary despotism exercised on men in the supposed interests of women are ruled out as the “Freedom-ideas of the middle-class Radical”; the control in the interests of public health of women who pursue a certain calling, is, on the contrary, stigmatised as “odious police supervision.” Now why not say straight out men are to be bullied and blackmailed because they are *men*, while women are to enjoy complete immunity from all responsibility and to be aided and abetted by the law in all their attacks on men, *because they are women*. Similarly, when I criticise the pretensions sometimes made on

behalf of the female sex I am sneered at as having a “hobby.” Those who persistently make these pretensions have no “hobby” – oh dear no! Truly a case of “my doxy and thy doxy”! If I have dolt with Mendelson’s letter at some length, since it is the only definite attack on me which has so much as attempted to argue the matter, and in Sahara one is thankful for a drop of water even though its lucidity *may* leave something to be desired.

In conclusion I will give, once for all, in a few words my position on this question, cleared of the prejudice imported into it by railing accusations of woman-hating and other objectionable qualities.

1. I utterly dispute the validity of the attempt analogy between women as a sex and the proletariat as a class, on which analogy the plausibility of the “woman movement” for Socialists so largely rests.
2. While fully recognising the oppression of the capitalist system on women as on men, I deny that, on the whole, it presses more on women than on men, as such.
3. Coming to the question of direct sex-tyranny, if we are to talk of this I am prepared to prove that, at least in all countries where the Anglo-Saxon is dominant, viz., in Britain and its colonies, in the United States, &c., it is invariably men who, both by law and public opinion, are oppressed in the supposed interests of women and not *vice versa*.
4. That the few (mainly formal) disabilities of women in politics or elsewhere which are perpetually being trotted out, are more than compensated for, by special privileges in other directions.
5. That the woman’s rights agitation as hitherto conducted, in which the “brute man” plays the role of villain, was born of hysterics and “sour grapes,” and is kept alive by a bare-faced system of “bluff,” and both the suppression and perversion of fact, intended to work on the sentimental male with a view of placing women in a safe citadel of privilege and sex-domination – the talk of equality being a mere blind. I am prepared to maintain any or all of these proposition in writing with anyone.

Source: The Everlasting Female Again!, *Justice*, 30th November 1895, p.6.

Some Current Fallacies on the Woman Question (1897)

In the following remarks on the above subject, I should premise that my intention is only to appeal to those persons whose minds are warped in favour of Feminism¹ by certain plausible-sounding arguments, which they have been in all sincerity accepting because their fallacy has never been pointed out to them. The rack of hysterical molluscs, who are imposed upon by hollow sentimental whines anent their “mothers and their sisters” (why not their grandmothers, their aunts, their female cousins, or their mothers-in-law?), may be fairly left to stew in their own rather thin juice. As for myself, when I hear of injustice, say, of prison brutalities practised on men (brutalities from which women are exempt), my indignation, I say, is intensified, when I think it is the sex to which my father and my brother belong (or did belong) who are their victims. But I should never think of trotting out this purely personal sentiment as an argument for the special favouring of men in this connection, in any discussion on the relative treatment of men and women. I therefore propose confining myself to certain popular statements which one commonly hears and which are supposed to make for the views promulgated by women’s rights advocates – statements which, if they were true, or if the implication conveyed in them were true, would undoubtedly afford some grounds for a serious consideration of the conventional view of this question put forward by the aforesaid advocates. They are, in fact, the only semblance of argument which the latter seem able to produce.

These argumentative statements consist very largely of variations on two main contentions – both of them, as I maintain, in the nature of false analogies. The first is the assumption that the relative position of the sexes bears some analogy (it is commonly represented as a very close analogy) with the relation between employer and workman – the employer representing the man and the workman the woman. The talk about “the proletarian in the household” is founded on this assumption. Now, as I have often pointed out before, the very basis of an analogy is wanting in this case. The difference between man and woman is not all economical or social one: it is an organic or biological distinction from which, as contended by non-Feminists, is deducible the difference in capacity between men and woman, both as to quantity and quality. The distinction between capitalist and proletarian is, on the other hand, not biological, but purely social, being simply one of class, based on economical circumstance. But what is further amusing is the way in which this preposterous analogy is worked, so that the woman is represented as the oppressed side of the equation in the case. Now, it is quite clear that if we are to fake up an analogy at all between sexes and classes, it is the man whose labour is exploited and not the woman. It is the duty of the husband to *maintain* his wife, not the wife her husband. The husband is compelled, by custom and by law, to do *corvée*, or to yield up such portion of his earnings as may enable his wife to live in comfort – just as the villein was compelled to do *corvée*, or to pay his lord a proportion of the produce of the fields worked by his labour. The lord had the practical monopoly of the villein’s means of existence – the land. Under the most favourable circumstances, he exacted from him a toll, in the shape of rent in kind or money, and other dues, for the privilege of working the land. The woman possesses the monopoly of what is, if not a primary, at least a secondary necessary of life to the great majority of men – the means of sexual

satisfaction, her body; and for allowing him access to which the law entitles her to demand a rent and dues in the shape of food, clothes, shelter – in short, provision in accordance with the station of life occupied by her “villein,” the husband, without any exertion on her part. But, it may be said, she has her duties to perform in the household, which may sometimes involve not inconsiderable labour. But so had the feudal lord *his* duties to perform. He had to go out to battle to protect his tenants against foes from without – an operation which might easily cost him his life – and to see that justice was administered on his estate. It is true there was often no adequate power to prevent the lord from neglecting the welfare of his tenants, but there is no power at all in modern English law to prevent the wife from neglecting her duties to her husband and family. The husband remains even more hopelessly the slave of a worthless wife than the mediaeval serf was of a tyrannical and rapacious baron. I do not press the foregoing parallel myself, as I consider the whole attempt to establish an analogy between class and sex-opposition to be fallacious, *ab initio*. But I think I have sufficiently shown that if we are to have the analogy forced upon us at all, it will work out in quite a different sense to the “proletarian-in-the-home” theory.

Yet it is in the class of argumentation of which this theory is a specimen that it is considered incumbent upon all democrats to champion the pitch-forking of women into every sphere of activity which, from its lucrative or honour-bearing character, happens to excite their envy, quite irrespective of their suitability therefor. As against this, all that is contended by myself, and other democrats and Socialists who think with me, is that the cumulative experience of the human race through at least three thousand years establishes a case for what is termed, in legal phraseology, a “presumption” that the woman is less capable than the man in those spheres of activity in which she has hitherto not shone. It is true that this presumption is rebuttable, and has in individual cases been rebutted. But the onus of rebuttal, it is contended, rests with the individual woman who aspires to the post or occupation in question. If she has given clear and unmistakable proof of her capacity, it would be absurd to exclude her on the ground of her sex alone.

But, on the other hand, one swallow does not make a summer, and the fact that an occasional woman is to be found to which the presumption will not apply is not by any means sufficient to rebut it as a general principle. Therefore, it is insisted, such isolated cases ought not to be regarded as establishing a precedent for reversing a practice resting on such a widely established induction as that of the inferiority of women to men in so many departments of executive and directive activity. The induction referred to is strengthened rather than weakened by the theory, so dear to woman’s rights advocates, that gynocracy (the supremacy of the female) was universal in the earliest stages of human society. There is, of course, another theory, that the so-called gynocracy was peculiar to certain races, and hence cannot be regarded like other institutions belonging to the same period as forming an essential stage in social evolution generally. But, assuming the former theory to be right, it is obvious that women in primitive times enjoyed a governmental and executive authority which they were unable to maintain, presumably owing to inherent incapacity, since the fall of gynocracy wherever it has existed, is too widespread a phenomenon to be accounted for by local or special causes and the hypothesis that the victory of private over tribal or communal property-fielding had anything to do with it is manifestly absurd when we consider that personal property holding and inheritance is just as possible through females as through males, a state of things which actually obtained concurrently with other gynocratic institutions, in some cases long after the ancient primitive communism

had broken down (e.g., in Lykia, as also to a large extent in Egypt), and yet that, in spite of all, either the gyneocratic institutions perished, or the races subjected to them went under before non-gyneocratic civilisations. If the above be in any way admitted, it follows that the appeal to democratic sentiment and democratic analogies in support of the so called "claims" of women is entirely beside the mark. It yet remains to be proved that women have any "claim" at all to the exercise, say, of the suffrage, or of any other responsible function. It may be an open question if you like, but it cannot be decided off hand on the basis of "natural rights," "social equality," or any of those grounds which are urged in the case of classes, or of nations on approximately the same level of development.

Would people but abstain from quite going off their heads, in considering this question, they would be compelled to admit that women have never been oppressed as subject classes have been by dominant classes, or even as subject races have been by dominant races. The superficial disabilities to which women have been subject have always been more than compensated by other privileges. The woman has always been queen in her own sphere. She has always had very substantial rights, and exercised authority in a very substantial manner. The distinction of rights between the sexes has always been more as between spheres of influence rather than as between domination and subjection.

Nevertheless, that an *organically* inferior being should not be in certain matters subject to the relatively superior, is a proposition which I for one am not prepared to endorse off-hand. But the inferiority of women has not been proved, it will be said! True, but as already pointed out, the course of history, from primitive times upward, makes out a strong case of presumption in favour of the inferiority. And that presumption has certainly never been, as such, rebutted. Those who doubt this may be referred to the painfully-laboured special-pleadings of Bebel in a certain chapter of *Die Frau*. The forlorn defence of an able advocate is always the best indictment of all untenable position.

As things are, women, by considering themselves in the light of a class, and agitating, not for equality, but for supremacy (the "equality" is a mere pretence) in class-fashion, are really creating a sex-antagonism which ultimately means the sacrifice of their strongest weapons. They are flinging away that moral power by which they have hitherto, for good or for evil, swayed men, wholly unchallenged, for the sake of a brute force wielded by men in their favour, which they may lose at any time. They are resigning the psychological magic by which they have bent men to their will for the privilege of being allowed to invoke the brute force of the policeman, the prison warder, the judge, and the bailiff. The fact would seem to indicate a female degeneracy, if that were possible, since the exchange, one would think, could only benefit women who united in their persons the attributes of badness, ugliness, and stupidity. The absence of any one of these qualities has generally sufficed, hitherto, to enable them to work the oracle themselves. They have now invoked the phantom of the brute force of the state to settle their quarrels with men, thereby calling into existence a sex-hostility which will one day recoil on them as sure as men are men and women are women.

Meanwhile, middle-class public opinion still continues in favour of the oppression of men, and the immunity of women from all control. It is a "revolting injustice" to subject public women to sanitary measures. It is perfectly in order to mutilate men who have contracted disease from

these unexamined women. It is a monstrous iniquity that a man should exercise any power over his wife's property or earnings. The latest "right" claimed by the "advanced" political women of New Zealand is the confiscation for the wife's exclusive use of half the husband's property on marriage! Sir John Bridge, doubtless, aptly expresses public sentiment when, in discharging a young man against whom a bogus charge had been brought by a prostitute, after she had first of all assaulted him, admonishes the young man – that he give the sweet creature ten shillings compensation! Truly a nice way of fulfilling a police magistrate's duty of protecting harmless citizens on their way home at night! Another police magistrate, Mr. Francis, is severely hauled over the coals by certain hysterical Feminist organs for not passing a vindictive sentence on a husband charged with administering to his wife what, for aught they knew, may have been a thoroughly well-deserved thrashing. As the same magistrate said, when dealing with another similar case, if all husbands were sent to gaol for trivial assaults on their wives, there would not be enough prisons to contain them. Yet this is exactly what our Feminists are aiming at. The chief function of the magistrate, according to them, ought to be to act as assistant-bully to brow-beating wives. We have already got some way in this direction. A friend of mine heard a manifestly bogus charge – of indecently assaulting a daughter – tried (the prisoner apparently being only convicted owing to a misunderstanding of the jury), where the judge put it to the wife whether it would not inconvenience her to be deprived of the labour of her husband-slave, and, on the creature answering in the negative, sentenced him to a month's "hard."

The second main-root of a number of fallacies as to the possible capacities of women, both as regards quantity and quality, in various departments where they have not hitherto distinguished themselves, is expressed in the view that modern woman is the product of "centuries of oppression," and hence cannot be expected, at present, to show forth the latent glories of her intellectual and moral character. Now, for my own part, I should certainly demur to the fact of the centuries of oppression, but the granting of them does not help the Feminist case. In the first false analogy we had the confusion between sex and class; here we have the confusion between sex and race.

For the advocates of the theory forgot that, were it true that women have suffered under a special oppression as women, the effects of such oppression would necessarily, on the average, be divided equally between both sexes of their descendants, and could not possibly be inherited after the manner of what someone has called a "hent-ail," in the female line only, and hence could not affect women more than men. Women no more constitute a race or species by themselves than they do a class by themselves. Nevertheless, this preposterous argument has been repeated over and over again, until to many people it is an unassailable truth upon which it is perfectly safe to base speculation as to an infinite vista of untold feminine achievements. Really Feminists would do well to drop argument, and confine themselves to blithering about "mothers and sisters"! It is so touching!

In addition to the foregoing sources of fallacy, there is a fooling among Socialists, in itself perfectly natural and legitimate, to the effect that the change from Capitalism to Socialism must involve considerable alteration in the condition of women. So it certainly will, but it by no means follows that the changes involved will be along the lines of the modern Feminist movement, as so many take for granted. That the position of women must change is obvious; but to assume that it must take the form of the female prerogative prevailing in the more advanced capitalist states

of to dry, or even of a mechanical equality which takes no account of organic differences, is a mere assumption which the wave of Feminist sentiment has hitherto allowed to pass unchallenged within the ranks of our party on the Continent as well as here. It is this assumption which will have, in the future, to be subjected to a rigorous criticism, a criticism very different from the one-sided *plaidoyer* for the Feminist position contained in the, in other respects, excellent book of August Bebel, *Die Frau und der Sozialismus*. Men will perhaps learn in time to approach this woman question with an open mind, unbiassed by that blind hatred of their own, and blind worship of the other sex, which at present characterises Rebel as well as so many other writers on the subject.

Note:

1. It seems to be decided now by the usage of the majority that the above, and not “Feminism,” is the correct form of this word.

Source: ‘Some Current Fallacies on the Woman Question,’ *Social Democrat*, July 1897, pp.201-205.

Outraged Feminism (1901)

In an article in the January issue of the *Social-Democrat* I pointed out what I deemed a fallacious argument commonly employed by woman suffrage advocates. No attack was made on the principle of woman suffrage as such, which so far as concerned my contention, might, in itself, have been absolutely unimpeachable. I merely criticised a particular demagogic form of appeal sometimes used by its supporters. Nevertheless, the mere fact of having laid a critical hand on any argument that had ever been employed in the sacred cause of Feminism, seems to have been enough to raise a hornet's nest about my ears.

What I stigmatised as a fallacy, and that it is a fallacy I am still prepared to maintain, was the assertion of a necessary logical connection between woman suffrage and "democracy," either political or Socialistic. "Democracy" has always meant the abolition of class-distinctions – political or economic or both – but until within the last few years has never been twisted into meaning the confusion of the social spheres of the sexes or the admission of the female sex to political functions. Modern democracy, which took its rise as one of the phases of the bourgeois revolt against feudalism and the absolutist bureaucracy that followed on feudalism, which again was one of the conditions of the rise of modern nationalities, was naturally at first patriotic and national. During the French Revolution the instinct of Internationalism sporadically asserted itself in democracy, and grew in the subsequent decades till Marx demonstrated the bankruptcy of nationalism and the essentiality, logically, economically, and ethically, of Internationalism as a basis for the realisation of modern Social-Democracy, which he expressed in the well-known formula. Thenceforward *Social-Democracy*, at least, became definitely internationalist, since the fall of class-barriers was seen to be inextricably bound up with the fall of race-barriers equally – at least so far as the progressive races are concerned. One can easily show that Social-Democracy involves many other points of belief and political practice, but the logical necessity for democracy of the general admission of women, as such, to political power has never been attempted to be shown.

Destruction of class and of race-barriers does not necessarily carry with it the destruction of sex-distinctions as such, since, as I have pointed out, in sex you have to do with an organic difference, not with an economic difference, as with classes, or with a mere difference of political, linguistic, and other tradition, as with more or less allied races. This organic difference goes to the root of the physiological structure of each. Such a physiological difference takes the question out of the sphere of class and race, and places it in quite a different category, requiring to be dealt with by different arguments. Up till recently the presumption of the general unsuitability of women for the exercise of political power has been tacitly or avowedly admitted.¹

Now, it is clearly admissible to attempt to rebut this presumption, to show it to be unfounded and to prove the complete capacity of "Woman" (blessed be her name!) to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm of human affairs, and the advantage to progress of her doing so; in other words, to show that woman's suffrage and democracy are inextricably bound up together. But as yet I have seen no serious attempt to do this, although I have known of many endeavours to "rush" the

position by sentimental appeals, fallacious statements, flimsy rhetorical apologies for argument, followed by sorry struggles to retreat from objectors under cover of feeble jokes. The fact is the majority of democrats and Socialists are consciously or unconsciously not quite sincere on this question. They do not take it altogether seriously. Indeed, I sometimes wonder whether, when two male woman's suffrage democrats meet each other in private they keep their countenances, or whether their interview doesn't resemble that of Cicero's two augurs. I am persuaded there are a vast number of male Socialists who, like our friend in Paris whose remark to Vandervelde is quoted by Mrs. Montefiore, simply do lip-homage to the feminist movement, and who regard anyone who takes them seriously as an amusingly naive fool. I know this to be the ease with some. However, for my part, I cannot help regarding their playing with fire to be as dangerous politically as it is unworthy otherwise. The man who regards feminism as wholly or in part injurious to progress ought, in my opinion, not only in common honesty, but as a duty to his party, to say so undeterred by the abuse or sneers of the shrieking brotherhood and sisterhood.

Be it remembered in the case of the suffrage the question is not of social or economical justice, but of the effect of the exercise of political power by a biologically new element. This may be all right; it may be, as I heard a very superior idolatress of her sex say some years ago, that the mere political enfranchisement of women will solve the whole social problem. I am unable to believe so myself, but still "one never can tell." All I say is, no serious attempt as yet has been made to rebut the presumption against the desirability of women being indiscriminately endowed with political power as things stand at present. Let us take Mrs. Montefiore's article in the February *Social-Democrat*. Instead of setting herself to the task of pointing out the fallacy of the assumption by which women are regarded as (in the bulk) unfitted to exercise political power, she thinks it necessary to quibble about a phrase of mine in which I alluded to the fact that the difference between two men, one in the position of employer and the other of workman, was of a totally distinct nature to that between the workman and his wife, and hence the demand for political equality in the latter case could not be placed on the same footing as in the former.

Were not a lady in question, I should be inclined to quote in full Hamlet's observation anent the grave-diggers. However, in dealing with this question, I promise Mrs. Montefiore "to speak by the card" in future, even at the risk of making my article resemble in prolix pedantry an auctioneer's catalogue or a house-lease of a generation ago. Mrs. Montefiore thinks sex has nothing to do with the exercise of the suffrage. She may be right, but as it stands her assertion is a mere begging of the question. The suffrage means the exercise of political power, and there are a good many benighted individuals, some of them not quite so incapable of studying questions historically, either, who think otherwise. I am accused of "sapiently" remarking that the question of "sex-equality differs *in mind* from that of class-equality." (What I wrote was, of course, *in kind*, but I assume "mind" to be a misprint). Thereupon Mrs. Montefiore thinks "it might be useful" if I would "explain" how I propose "giving class-equality to the male sex without extending it to the female sex," and waxes funny over "duchesses and countesses flourishing in the land." Now, I submit that it would not be at all useful for me to waste words over a piece of nonsense, the product of Mr Montefiore's imagination, which she foists upon me but which I venture to assert no possible twisting of my words could have suggested to an unbiassed reader. Perhaps Mrs. Montefiore will not take it amiss if I suggest that such controversial tricks, such cheap pieces of *Effect-hascherei*, as that of the paragraph in question are unworthy of a woman capable of writing some of the articles I have seen over her name.

The whole of the genuine *argument* (as opposed to jokes and quibbles) to be found in the article under discussion is contained in the two last paragraphs. Mrs. Montefiore finds that the suffrage ought to be given irrespective of sex just as “education is given irrespective of sex, as taxation is applied irrespective of sex, and as the civil and criminal law is enforced irrespective of sex.” As regards this I would point out that, *as a rule*, the question of sex enters very largely into education. I am not discussing whether it ought to or not, but as a matter of fact it does. The number of girls or women who follow the same course of education (other than elementary) as men is a mere handful. That taxation is applied irrespective of sex is nothing to the point, since taxation is based on property rather than on the person. This argument, therefore, is only good for those who would base the franchise on a *property* rather than a *personal* qualification, which I presume not to be the case with Mrs. Montefiore. The civil and criminal law is enforced irrespective of sex! Is it? If my fair disputant will procure the pamphlet, *The Legal Subjection of Men*, published some five years ago by the Twentieth Century Press, the statements of law as well as the facts contained in which have never been refuted, or even if she will endeavour to put away prejudice and study impartially for herself any considerable file of “cases” in which women are concerned, she will hardly venture to repeat such a statement.

Women, thinks Mrs. Montefiore, with Vandervelde, “must awake to political life” through Socialism. With all my heart! But I would point out that there are many indirect means by which women who have the grit in them, can even now influence political life, without the concession of the franchise to women in general. As to its having been “abundantly proved” that every extension of the franchise has been followed by “a sense of responsibility” in those to whom it has been extended, that is only true if Mrs. Montefiore takes the bourgeois view that “a sense of responsibility” is shown by the reactionary character of the vote given. If so, she might certainly cite the British workman-elect as a convincing instance in point. I am aware that this has been triumphantly put forward by the Liberal-capitalist press, but to hear a Socialist quote it with admiration is new.

Mrs. Montefiore thinks Vandervelde “pertinently” asks “How it comes to pass that all reactionaries combat woman suffrage?” Now, I should have said the question had precisely the “pertinency” of the celebrated query addressed by Charles II, to the Royal Society, “Why a dead fish weighed more than a living one?” the fact being, of course, that if there is one question on which reactionaries are not unanimous it is just this one. Again, you find such revolutionary persons as Mr. Balfour, Mr. Haldane, Lord Grey, and Mr. Woodall on the suffrage side, and such hard-baked reactionaries as Mr. Labouchere in the opposition. That all Socialists agree, even in principle, in demanding the suffrage for women is not even now true, although many have allowed themselves to be “rushed” by sentiment and clamour into nominally giving in their adhesion to the proposal. There are, of course, *some* stupid reactionaries who will oppose any change merely because it is a change; but there are plenty of shrewder and cleverer men in the reactionary camp who are quite alive to the fact that reaction has, in all probability, a good deal more to gain than to lose by this particular change. In fact, as I have elsewhere pointed out, the peculiarity of the whole feminist movement which shows its absolutely unique character is that it entirely crosses all the lines which otherwise mark party divisions, and which are all based directly or indirectly on economical or class distinctions. You will find the most brutal advocate of strike-breaking and coercive legislation oftentimes weep tears of blood over the cruel

oppression his imagination sees women groaning under at the hand of the wicked ogre – man. Lastly, if it be true, as Bebel has it, that no great movement, has ever been accomplished without women playing a part in it, it must be remembered that women have hitherto not had the political franchise, as a rule. What more conclusive argument, therefore, can you wish for in proof of the fact already referred to, that the franchise is not necessary to enable really capable and devoted women to exercise an influence on the course of public life? Q.E.D.

I have dealt at length with Mrs. Montefiore's article because it is a good specimen (i.e., a favourable specimen) – since it contains at least two paragraphs of something like argument – of feminist if not of feminine logic. The contention in my article on “fallacies” remains unshaken by anything she has said. The advocacy of woman suffrage, as of feminism generally, is not logically involved in the democratic or Socialist position – at least, that it is so is, up to date, a mere assumption unsupported by any argument that will hold water for a single instant. The burden of proof, at least, lies with those who make the affirmative proposition. Up to the present time the whole feminist position has been smuggled through democracy and Socialism by dint of shrieky assumptions and fatuous jokes. That woman suffrage may be an admirable thing I have not denied. All I have contended and do contend is, that it has never yet been shown that it is necessarily involved in political democracy or Social-Democracy at the present time.

P.S. – A reference has been made by our comrade Askew in Justice to myself, or others who may disapprove of woman suffrage, in connection with his specially retained brief (as it seems) to whitewash the German Party for its cowardly conduct in not expelling Bernstein. This is surely very weak. Every member of a party must logically be bound by the *fundamental principles* on which the party is based, but every member is not bound personally to accept every “plank” in the party programme for the year, which has been passed probably by a majority vote, and hence which he and others of the minority may be expected only to acquiesce in as a matter of form and “under protest.”

Footnote:

1. If we assume a period in early society, of female domination, of the *Mutterrecht*, as having been general, my contention is only strengthened, since the presumption is obvious that female dominance fell and was superseded by male through the inability of the former to adequately fulfil its functions – by the survival of the fittest in social evolution, in short. This, however, is too big a subject to enter upon in detail here and now, and hence I only allude to it in passing.

Source: Outraged Feminism, *Social Democrat*, April 1901, pp.100-104.

Feminism in Extremis (1902)

It is an undeniable fact that many Socialists hold their social creed to involve the doctrine of what is called sex-equality, by which is commonly meant, not merely the freeing of the female sex from certain arbitrary, economic and social disabilities, equal reward for equal work, the right to follow, in general, any pursuit for which qualification can be shown, & c., but the same rights as man in all things, political, economic, domestic or what-not, supplemented by certain sex privileges and immunities, airily defended on the vague ground of physical weakness. Now in order to maintain this position it is necessary to assume the complete intellectual and moral equality of women with men, while judiciously conceding their physical inferiority. A desire, conscious or unconscious, on the part of these Socialists, as of other advocates of Feminism, is to make out a claim for women to all that is honourable and agreeable in the functions of human life, while safeguarding them from any obligation to accept rough or dangerous duties.

Thus Bebel, in his “Frau und der Sozialismus,” while maintaining that no social function filled by men ought to be inaccessible to women, since any seeming unfitness in the latter is only the result of certain cruel oppression at the hands of vile man, yet is careful to guard his fair clients from the danger of being called upon for military purposes, even of defence. Now if we are to assume the physiological possibility of the results of oppression being inherited through one sex only, it would seem somewhat singular that only the physical inferiority should be inherited, and not the mental, since there is no obvious reason for assuming that while one is the result of oppression, the other is of original constitution. The consequence, however, shows itself in that while it is deemed only reasonable to regard women as unfitted for soldiering, it is in the eyes of the Feminists crass and blind male prejudice to deem them unfitted for responsible political office.

The best-known Socialistic exponent of Feminism is, of course, August Bebel, but in his book, i.e., in those portions of it treating of the woman question, the violent prejudice is so obvious and the apparatus of argument so plainly coloured by *parti pris* that some Feminists are prepared partially to surrender Bebel in conceding his argumentation to be “doubtless open to criticism.” In the present article, therefore, I prefer to take as an exponent of the Feminist position an undoubtedly able and eminently sober-minded English publicist, and to constitute as my text an article of Mr. J.M. Robertson in No. 362 of the *Reformer*, consisting of a criticism of Enrico Ferri’s position on the subject of the equality of woman and man, a position shared by the present writer.

As already said, this question of moral and intellectual equality between the sexes is the key of the situation as regards Feminism, and hence it is to this point I shall address myself chiefly in the following paragraphs.

Mr. Robinson accuses Enrico Ferri of being “unscientific.” This means, as we shall see, merely that Mr. Robertson disagrees with Enrico Ferri. In a long footnote (pp.20-22 of the English translation of “Socialismo e scienza positiva”) Ferri points out that the tendency of some Socialists to make the equality of man and woman an article of faith is due to a mental habit surviving from utopian Socialism. He might have said that it is also, and perhaps chiefly, due, as

I have repeatedly pointed out, to the confusion between sex and class – i.e., a primarily biological category with a social and economic category. However, Enrico Ferri goes on to show how recent investigations have tended to confirm the fact of the physiological and psychological inferiority of woman to man. Now Mr. Robertson falls foul of Ferri on the ground of his using the general terms “woman” and “man,” his plea being that these terms are abstract, and, therefore, “medieval” (as he calls it) since no two concrete men and no two concrete women are exactly alike. I confess, on reading this, I fairly gasped at the straits to which Feminist advocates can be reduced for an argument, and the recklessness with which a usually telling and logical thinker will throw his reputation into the breach on behalf of the cause he has espoused – when it is that of the fair sex. To read Mr. Robertson one would think he were in a state resembling Mr. Jourdain’s, before he had discovered that he had been talking prose all his life without knowing it. For Mr. Robertson writes as if he were altogether unaware that the form of the *Concept*, at the basis of what is known in Logic as the “class-name,” is not only the primary essential of all human thought and language, but is a crucial factor even in our perceptive consciousness.

In all his walk and conversation, Mr. Robertson, like the rest of us, has been employing this “abstraction,” the logical class-name, ever since he arrived at self-consciousness at all, and has, accordingly, to adopt his own phrase, been “medievalising” all his life. Our critic now suddenly makes the astonishing discovery (which, by the way, every mediaeval schoolboy could have revealed to him) that the class-name is an abstraction in that it never covers the entirety of the qualities of the particulars or individuals falling under it, which hence may differ *inter se*. But the still more astounding deduction he draws from his discovery would seem to be that we should abandon the use of the “general term” or “class-name altogether, and so we suppose become Jogis, doing our level best to divest ourselves of all logical thought and human language. Yet no! This would be a too hasty view of Mr. Robertson’s position. He knows mercy and will still allow us to talk, even in scientific conversation, of dogs and horses, Hottentots and Russians and the like, and to predicate things concerning them, without branding us with the terrible stigma of being unscientific mediaeval survivals – and this, notwithstanding that no two dogs (not even of the same breed) are exactly alike any more than any two horses, or two Russians, or even two Hottentots. No, where he draws the line is at human sex. if you speak of “man” or “woman” in general terms, if you employ the class-name in this case, then his anathema descends on you; then you are, indeed, a mediaeval survival discussing an abstract “man” and “woman” having no counterpart in “reality,” but being merely the coinage of a medieval brain. Mind you, I repeat, if you are a zoologist or a veterinary surgeon, you are not unscientific in differentiating between a greyhound and a spaniel, notwithstanding that no two greyhounds or spaniels are “concretely” alike. Similarly, if you are an ethnologist, you may talk of the race-characteristics of Hottentots and Slavs without even a stain on your scientific character! In this case the abstraction is all right; but, if you are a sociologist, and venture to distinguish sex, i.e., human sex, or to discuss the general characteristics of “woman” as distinguished from “man,” then woe betide you! Is the suspicion unnatural, that the sudden desire to confound the harmless and necessary class-name or logical “universal” is due to the fear lest its normal use should in this case lead to conclusions derogatory to the claims of emancipated womanhood.

When Mr. Robertson talks about his million female college graduates (he would have a difficulty in getting a million together, I fancy) as against a million grooms or sailors, with a view of upsetting comrade Ferri, he is simply trying on the old dodge of placing exceptions against

exceptions to subvert a rule. The female graduate is an exceptionally gifted woman, the groom in most cases an exceptionally non-intellectual man. Granted that a clever and well-trained dog might show more intelligence than a neglected human idiot, it would not bring us any nearer to a proof of the intellectual equality of man and dog. Place the groom from childhood under the same educational circumstances as the Girton girl, or *vice versa*, and you might have the basis for a comparison, but as the argument is stated by Mr. Robertson it is, I submit, simply an evasion of the issue. Brought up under special conditions, I believe, cats have been trained to eat grass, and sheep mutton chops, but this fact is not usually regarded as rendering the man unscientific or medieval who describes the former as carnivorous and the latter as herbivorous animals, and who proceeds to argue on this basis. In violation alike of physiology and ordinary observation, Mr. Robertson, in order to save the situation for feminism, would apparently maintain the thesis that the sexual system plays as important a part in the general intellectual and emotional life of the average man as it does in that of the average woman.

Says Ferri, "all the physiological characteristics of woman are the consequences of her great physiological function, maternity." "This is as good as saying," observes our critic, that "man's characteristics are not thus consequent on sex," to which I reply, certainly they are not, at least to anything approaching the same extent. The whole mental life of the average woman is completely dominated by her sexual organisation. It determines her attitude in every question and in every department of life. Her sexual relation to man is the fulcrum moving her whole life until she becomes a mother, when this is, of course, modified by the maternal relation. With man, on the contrary, sex is only an element, generally even, by no means the strongest, in determining his *general* mental life. It exists more as something *per se*; it may be strong or it may be weak, but in only exceptional pathological cases does it infiltrate that mental life in the same way that it normally does in woman.

As I have elsewhere put it, we are justified in referring to normal woman as being a sex (in common language, woman is spoken of as "the sex"), and to normal man as having a sex. The actual sexual instinct or passion may (if you will) be stronger in man than in woman, but, even if so, it does not in the same way interpenetrate his entire life. It is not the fulcrum on which his whole mental constitution turns. To deny, as is apparently done by Mr. Robertson, that a woman's mental processes are consequent on her sex-function to an extent and in a sense in which men's most assuredly are not is, I repeat, a procedure so flagrantly in contradiction with physiology and ordinary observation that Mr. Robertson can hardly expect us to accept it without more ado, even on his authority.

Mr. Robertson, like other Feminist advocates, would, as we have seen, deny that there are causal elements in the female constitution, physical and psychical, that are *sui generis*. To do so, he says, is "reducing psychology to chaos." What he means by this I do not profess to know. All I can say is, if the recognition of a self-evident fact is to reduce psychology to chaos, the sooner this happens the better, since so much the sooner will poor psychology have a chance of being reconstructed on a more reasonable basis – a basis which will include all facts, however distasteful they may be to the individual psychologist.

Pursuing his extraordinary line of argument, the first condition of which, like that of most Feminists, seems to be the denial or ignoring of patent truths, Mr. Robertson goes on to

emphasise his point, alleging that Ferri's contention as to the influence of the sexual system on women could not be true except on the hypothesis that every woman were in a continual state "of pregnancy, parturition or lactation"! And this is a critic who veritably runs amuck with the word "unscientific" among all whose science leads them to results uncongenial to the Feminist mind. We note by the way that Mr. Robertson writes as though he had never heard of menses as the most constant and hence in the long run most severe manifestation of the female sex-organism. Mr. Robertson actually goes so far as to allege that the sex-function apart from maternity is more of a drain on men's than on women's strength! To what length of absurdity will *parti pris* not carry us!

But the really startling fallacy of our author lies in the assumption that the peculiar sexual-organisation of women can only affect their general bodily and mental structure and functions during the period of its special activity. That the mere fact of this sexual organisation being present, the whole system otherwise having to contribute to its maintenance, he apparently regards as quite immaterial. Yet it is precisely on the existence of this sexual system as such and on the demands it makes that Ferri's argument is primarily based, and not merely, or even chiefly, on its special periods of activity.

Ferri's critic is fond of using the expression "bluff" respecting controversial statements he does not like. But if there ever was an instance of "bluff" in argument, I submit the article under discussion about "takes the cake." Mr. Robertson, as we have seen, begins with a piece of logical "bluff," endeavouring to bamboozle those unversed in the "Tree of Porphyry" anent the proper use of the "class-name" or logical "universal." He next tries on a physiological piece of bluff – the assumption that the action of the sexual system in man and woman respectively on the general life is comparable in kind and amount. He emphasises this by a further piece of bluff – viz., the assumption that Ferri's argument, as based on the peculiar characteristics of the female sex-system, could only be applicable during the periods of the latter's special activity. He goes on making the astoundingly "bluffing" assertion, unbacked by any proof, an assertion refuted by common experience, that the sexual function, apart from maternity, is more of a drain on men's than on women's strength – and so on.

Mr. Robertson is naturally prepared to grant the inherent muscular weakness of women as compared with men. But he is careful to point out that physical or muscular strength and intellectual capacity are seldom united in the same individual. This is very true, only, unfortunately, it does not help the Feminist position. The problem for Feminism is to maintain the *mental* equality of woman with man, while speciously conceding the *physical* inferiority. Hence this observation as to the respective proportion of physical and mental capacity present between *individuals* of the *same* sex is made to do duty as an argument when the question is of *one sex with another*. The (logical) class or category called man contains a general potential capacity that may actualise itself either in physical or mental capacity. But this is, says Mr. Robertson, often distributed in inverse proportions between individual men, the mentally strong man being often the physically weak, and *vice versa*. Hence, he argues that the physical inferiority of women does not presumptively imply their intellectual inferiority.

The fallacy here is obvious. A fact which applies between the individuals of one category he would make apply as between two distinct categories. The sex-category man, say for the sake of

argument, possesses a certain general potential energy, capacity or power. This may actualise itself in any given individual man as mental power (at the expense of physical) or as physical (at the expense of mental). But over the whole range of men both are present. If, however, you admit in the case of woman that there is a persistent inferiority *throughout* the whole sex, of one form of actualised capacity, the physical, the presumption is surely strong that the total capacity, mental as well as physical, in the sex-category woman is less than that in man, and it is, I submit, a presumption which will require a good deal of rebutting. No mere reference to the distribution between individual men, as regards the physical and psychical sides of the total potential capacity of man as a whole (i.e., as a sex), will suffice to effect this since the basis of an analogy is wanting. For a gentleman, however, who has such a sovereign contempt for logical forms as Mr. Robertson we suppose it would be too much to expect that he should recognise this.

But, says the Feminist, the intelligence of woman may be different from that of man but not necessarily inferior. The whole of the evidence available, I answer, points to woman's inferiority as an organism. In addition to the facts brought forward by Ferri we have a mass of cumulative proof which is overwhelming. Let us enumerate some of the main points in connection with this.

1. The smaller average size of the organism, otherwise, in the main, the same in essentials as that of man.
2. The proportionately inferior mass and quality of the brain matter (as shown by anatomists).
3. The special character of the female sexual-system and its functions, especially menstruation, which necessarily tends to draw off strength from the brain, the nervous and muscular systems.
4. The earlier ripeness of the female organism as compared to that of the man (it is well known that, other things equal, an organism inferior in the order of evolution reaches perfection sooner than a superior organism).
5. The lesser susceptibility to pain proved of women by the experiments of Lombroso and others, and the greater constitutional toughness of vitality in women than in men, characteristics at least strongly suggesting a lower form of evolutionary type.
6. The liability of women to hysteria in one or other of its forms, one woman in four or five, or according to some estimates even a higher percentage, being affected by it to a greater or less extent, varying as it does from slight and unimportant nervous symptoms to positive insanity (a remarkable illustration of how this tendency handicaps women in all occupations demanding close attention is afforded by the recent report concerning the employment of women in Post Offices and other Government departments in Germany.)
7. The fact that, even in those directions (e.g., art and literature) where no special prejudice or barrier has stood in the way, women have, with one, or two exceptions, never achieved anything noteworthy.
8. The fact admitted by every observant person who has not taken a brief in the Feminist cause, of the usual comparative absence in women of the foundation of all morality, the sense for

abstract justice, of a regard for truth, and of the capacity for forming an objective and disinterested judgment.

In conclusion, I would once more call attention to the singular circumstance that, whether really so or not, while, *on the face of things*, women are inferior to men mentally as well as physically, yet the Feminist, while readily accepting the second kind of inferiority as essential to women, storms and raves at the bare suggestion that the first kind of inferiority may also be necessarily part of the equipment of the female sex. To deny essentiality for either would be at least consistent, but then what would become of woman's privileges based on her supposed weakness? Mr. Robertson's desperate attempt to confound the distinction between Men as such, and Women as such, in endeavouring to maintain that the difference between the average man and the average woman is no more than that between one man and another, or one woman and another, is too thin to pass muster outside the brotherhood and sisterhood of sworn Feminists.

I think I have shown that Mr. Robertson's science, whatever it may be at other times, when infected with Feminist *parti pris*, does not amount to much. On the other hand, what has Mr. Robertson done to show anything unscientific in Enrico Ferri's "note" in *Socialismo e scienza positiva*? He sets up sundry assertions contrary to received physiology and certainly contrary to the results of ordinary observation, in opposition to certain of Ferri's statements. The only score he makes is over a slip or misprint of the word *no* where the word *few* was quite obviously intended. In Sahara one is thankful for anything in the shape of moisture, and, considering the hopelessness of our critic's case otherwise, I do not grudge him the capital he seeks to make out of a typographical error. This error is, in the opinion of Mr. Robertson, sufficient to entitle the "Feminist" to deny him (Ferri) any further hearing! When we have to deal with woman's rights champions, it is clear we must look sharp after our proof-sheets after this.

For the rest, I venture to say that to any impartial person the "note" criticised will be found to be as rigorously scientific as the nature of a brief statement admits. The characterisation, moreover, of women "as ranking between the child and the adult male" seems as happily to hit off the case as presented to common observation as it is possible to do in a short sentence. And now our last word on the relation of Feminism to Social-Democracy. As Dr. Möbius, in his remarkable pamphlet, truly says, "If Social-Democrats allow themselves to be caught by the Feminist fallacy, they are only injuring their own cause." The same author also justly points out that the proletarian woman-movement has no necessary connection with the so-called "woman's rights" or Feminist movement, which is rather individualist or anarchist. The aim of the latter is, in a word, to obtain for the female sex men's rights combined with women's privileges, and this goal, I am afraid, also seems at the back of certain Socialist pronouncements on the woman question.

Source: 'Feminism in Extremis,' *Social Democrat*, Vol. 6. No. 12, December 1902, pp. 361-367

Female Suffrage and Its Implications (1904)

It is impossible to separate the question of the suffrage from the woman question in general, which is as much as to say, the suffrage opens up the whole question as to whether women as a whole are to perform the same functions in society as men and hence to have the same rights. The question, it may be observed, mainly concerns political rights (in the widest sense), i.e., rights of sharing in the direction and administration of society – equal economical rights are, of course, conceded in general, equal advantages from equal labour in some form or other being a fundamental demand of Socialism. While as regards social and legal rights, as we shall point out presently, women are already in a position of privilege as regards men. It is, then, with legal and administrative rights that we are primarily concerned.

Now, it seems to me, that the question we are dealing with resolves itself into three: (1) Are we justified in barring any section of human beings as a whole, which, through general intellectual inferiority or otherwise, is recognised as relatively incompetent to fulfil certain functions, from those functions? (2) Have we the right to conclude that women are, in general, intellectually inferior to men, or otherwise incompetent to have a voice in legislation and administration? (3) Admitting them to be sufficiently competent, are there other grounds, justifying their exclusion at present from public life in this sense? As regards the first point, first let us examine what the conception “justice” means.

It may be quite true that concrete justice always implies a definite content, but nevertheless, all concrete and particular justice presupposes an abstract and general justice by which the former can be measured. Now, the abstract principle of justice is covered, I take it, by the notion of *equality*, as Aristotle found out long ago. But when closer viewed this “equality,” it is seen, must be a relative equality. It must be an equality determined by the total circumstances of a particular case and not merely by one or two of its most obvious and superficial aspects. It is this last consideration which decides its character or determines its content in any particular instance.

Judged by this standard, then, I take it there exists a right to debar in general the unfit from the exercise of certain functions within a given society – provided that the unfitness results from organic causes and is not merely the temporary and direct outcome of defective economic and social conditions within the society itself. This is generally recognised even as regards the franchise. For example, children, i.e., young persons up to a certain age, are by common consent excluded from the right to exercise the suffrage as being unfit by reason of immaturity. Even the most suffrage-thirsting democrat limits his demands to adult suffrage. Then, again, where you have within a society an alien population of an intrinsically lower race the right to exclude such a population from interfering in the regulation and administration of such a society by its votes or otherwise, would be admitted at least by many thoroughgoing democrats. And the more so now that the experience of this particular application of the man-and-the-brother doctrine in the United States has proved its unworkability. The reason is obvious – lower races stand in the same relation to higher races that children do to adults.

Their minds are so far different from the former, that there is no basis of organic equality between the two. In this case, of course, of lower and higher races, while the attempt to amalgamate them in one commonwealth can only be productive of mischief, the true solution is that the organically lower race should be left to itself to work out its own social destiny. For instance, my solution of the negro question in America would be, while excluding the negro from the franchise in the white States, in those of the Southern States where he was in an overwhelming majority to hand over the government of the State entirely to the negro, to the exclusion, for that matter, of such white population as there might happen to be. The white American might not like this, but it would be the only just way out of the difficulty which his ancestor has created by forcibly importing the negro out of Africa. This, however, by the way. I have only wanted to show that the exclusion from political influence in the society, whether by vote or otherwise, of elements organically inferior, or, if you will, organically different, from that which has hitherto constituted the society, is not necessarily inconsistent with a democratic attitude which would level, in politics, all distinctions [apart] from economic differences; in other words, on class in the ordinary sense of the word.

Between fundamentally disparate things there can be at least no *direct* relation of equality. Now Socialism is a doctrine proclaiming the fundamental identity for a common socio-political life of the men of the progressive races, the apparent diversities being non-fundamental to such a common life. These diversities it traces mainly to economic and political causes – in the case of classes to economical causes solely; in the case of races within the circle of modern civilisation (with which, as above said, Socialism is alone directly concerned), largely to political causes, as well as to economical causes, the organic differences between these races, if we assume such to exist, being so slight as to be non-fundamental from the point of view concerned. But Socialism does not affirm that the negroid branch of the human family (say) is in the same case. For here we clearly have to do with an organic difference of a deep-lying, if not fundamental, character. The mind of the savage, of the Bushman, or even of the Kaffir, is to that of the progressive races as the mind of a civilised child to that of a civilised adult. There is plainly, therefore, here not even the basis of a common politico-social life. This fact alone (we observe, by the way) ought to bring home to us the cruelty and criminality of the imperialistic enslaving of such races, thereby destroying their own social forms-forms which are alone suited to them. It is, I say, a false conception of justice which demands for such races the franchise in an alien social organisation. True justice insists upon the duty of “hands off,” i.e., of freedom and development for them from within, along their own lines. For where deep-seated organic disjunction obtains, justice must have a different content to where no such distinction obtains.

Again, as already said, within every community you have an order of human beings who by common consent are unfitted for the functions of regulating and administering the community, viz., children or young persons under age. Here also there is no basis of direct equality, the immaturity constitutes an organic distinction which in this case also gives justice with regard to them a different content to what it would have if this distinction were not present. There is a justice, of course, in their case, because there is a form of equality to be arrived at, but it is an indirect justice because the equality is indirect. There is justice, for that matter, for all living beings, for animals as well as human beings, but it does not consist in giving them all the franchise.

I think it is clear, therefore, that we are justified in debarring any order of persons from the franchise if they, as a class, indicate an inferiority based on an organic difference which is likely to render their co-operation in political or administrative life a danger or disadvantage to the community as a whole. For let us make no mistake, the active franchise (so-called) means the first step towards the passive; and this again is the step to all other political functions; just as the Bar is the first step towards the Bench, and this again towards the highest administrative functions in the existing State. You cannot practically limit any order of persons to the first step alone, with a "thus far shalt thou go and no farther." from the right of election to a legislative body, to the right of membership of that body, for instance, there is no logical halting-place.

Now the question arises, are we to regard women as possessing a deep-lying organic difference, involving inferiority, to men? If so, we shall be *eo ipso* justified in opposing woman-suffrage on the ground that the well-being of the community as a whole would be endangered thereby. "Equality in a reasonable sense," as Möbius says, "can only mean that injustice is done to no one, that there is equal reward for equal achievements." It does not mean necessarily, as above pointed out, that every one, irrespective of vital differences, should have the *same* rights. Have we, then, the indications of mental inferiority in woman? I must here enter a protest against the trick of certain Feminists in attempting to belittle the difference between men as a sex-class and women as a sex-class. The immense *difference* (I do not say, mind, inferiority) between the mind of woman and the mind of man is patent and obvious to all who have no interest in denying it. An attempt to ignore this self-evident fact – a fact open to the observation of everyone – seems to me waste of time to discuss. Deny the *inferiority* if you will, but do not deny the *difference*. Talk about there being no greater difference between the sexes than between one man and another and one woman and another, we can hardly regard as seriously meant.

References to the comparatively slight distinction between the sexes in animals does not affect the question. It would seem that the sex-distinction in man approaches the relative magnitude of the specific or variational distinction in the lower animals. Möbius explains this greater differentiation of the sexes in the human species than in animals by the long period of helplessness in the human offspring. Whether this is so or not I am not prepared to say. The point really at issue is, I take it: Does this distinction involve either general inferiority or inferiority in certain directions? Both those points I think must be answered in the affirmative. Of course, I cannot here argue the case in detail. The main line of proof for the general inferiority of women is given at length in the introduction to the well known work of Lombroso and Ferrero on the Female Criminal. To take the physical indications of inferiority first. I will not dwell upon the inferiority as regards size and development of physique generally, though this might also have its significance, but would point out that according to the researches of Bischoff and Rüdinger not merely is the female brain absolutely smaller than that of the man, but relatively smaller allowing for the difference of size in the organism. Rüdinger has dealt with the matter, and gives a series of plates and tables showing from a large number of instances that the important parts of the brain are themselves relatively smaller; and not only so, but what perhaps is more important, that the convolutions even in the new-born child are much simpler and cruder in the female than in the male.

The differences are vastly accentuated in the adult, the formation of important parts of the brain presenting quite a different appearance in this respect between the sexes, approaching, as regards

proportions, in the female to the pre-human type. The inferior sensibility to pain discovered by Lombroso in women is a well-known fact. The special character of the female sexual system and its functions by the amount of vital energy they absorb would, apart from anything else, naturally lead us to expect an inferior development. The same conclusion is pointed to by the earlier ripeness of the human female organism.

Now, let us look at another group of facts not referring directly to the structure of the female sex, but to its intellectual functioning. Where and when throughout history can we discern in any branch of original thought or imagination or emotional activity, women that have achieved anything noteworthy – in science, in philosophy, in political practice, in invention, in the fine arts (painting, poetry, music)? The few exceptions in one or two of these departments in which women have approached the achievements of third-rate men, only suffice to prove the rule. Now, how do you explain this? Oh, it is said, women have been repressed, and have had no opportunity of showing their latent capacities! But it is forgotten that they have by no means been discouraged in all departments; on the contrary, rather the reverse in the fine arts and certain lines of literature. Furthermore, male genius has shown itself, where it existed, in the teeth of the most adverse circumstances. “Ah, but,” it will be replied, “how many among men are not geniuses, and yet you don’t deny them the franchise on the ground of inferiority on that account!”

This is to mistake the argument, which is only designed as a test. From the heights of the summits one may gauge that of the table-land beneath them. If one order of human beings produces a continuous crop of geniuses in every – the most divergent – departments, and another order does not, we may fairly conclude that the average of the order that produces few or no geniuses is also, as an average, inferior to the order that produces many. Again, as regards the undoubtedly considerable memory capacity of women when specially cultivated, a capacity which enables them to compete with men in cram-examinations, Möbius (*Die Physiologische Schwachsinn des Weibes*) points out that even this form of intellectual power is rapidly lost in women, especially after a few years of married life. He observes the same in every other form of mental activity in the case of women. However brilliant in the girl, it has no durability. These things, however, I admit, though undoubtedly indicating inferiority, might not be taken as sufficient to exclude women from public functions.

We will, therefore, pass on to a more serious form of inferiority. I refer to the special tendency of women to hysteria. In common language, the word hysteria (hysterical, &c.) is often used to designate any form of mental excitement or strong emotion. This, of course, is a misuse of words. I have heard it said that men “get hysterical” over political issues, over Parliamentary candidatures in this country, Presidential elections in the United States, &c. Such talk, however, is merely synonymous with saying that they get excited, but mere excitement of the passions or emotions does not necessarily imply hysteria.¹ The symptoms of true hysteria, in women, the exaggeration of trifles into issues of absorbing importance, the flushing, the stertorous breathing, &c., are familiar to common observation, and may be found detailed in any medical treatise on the subject. Now this form of nervous and mental disturbance, is, I submit, almost wholly confined to women. It is not to be denied, of course, that men, or rather boys, occasionally exhibit hysterical symptoms of the genuine type. But these cases are always comparatively rare. With women, on the contrary, hysteria is the commonest disorder.

It varies, of course, enormously in degree, from being a mere tendency exhibiting itself in slight and unimportant nervous symptoms to cases in which it becomes positive insanity and even acute mania. It has been calculated, I believe, that at the lowest estimate one woman out of every four or five is more or less subject to hysteria in one or other of its forms. The Government report, published in Germany in 1902, on the employment of women in post offices and other public departments, shows how heavily this form of nervous and mental disease handicaps women in the exercise of very simple administrative duties in that country. I am not aware whether a similar report on the subject has been issued in Great Britain. The very word hysteria, from [ύζτερα] (womb), is a proof that the disease has been from time immemorial associated with the female sex; and this is none the less significant, whether or no we accept the opinion that the womb itself has an exclusive connection with it. Hysteria, then, being a form of mental disturbance especially affecting women, and by no means to be confounded with mere emotional excitement, which may exist and proceed from a variety of causes equally in both sexes, surely it would be advisable for those impartial male persons who clamour for the admission of women to all political functions to suspend their enthusiasm at least until they have looked this subject up in recent medical treatises.

Scarcely less important is the characteristic in women often remarked upon, namely, the curious absence so frequently seen of a sense of justice, as such.² This, which so often vitiates their moral character (using the phrase in its true and widest sense), is, I think, itself deducible from their inability to appreciate abstract considerations generally, or, indeed, to interest themselves in any subject which does not centre in an individual. They care, not for principles, but for persons; they hate and love, not causes, but men. That, under certain circumstances, a defective moral sense is very liable to be engendered by this tendency, is obvious – for the simple reason that a moral principle is a universal and abstract rule and no respecter of persons.

In concluding this portion of the subject, I will call attention to one singular inconsistency in Feminists. The physical weakness of woman is commonly held a sufficient ground for the possession of certain privileges and exemptions, but the mental weakness of woman, which may or may not exist, but of which there is at least *prima facie* evidence, is held to be no valid ground for denying her access to functions involving grave responsibilities. Now this is an instance of the strange perversity which feminist sentimentalism engenders. (When I use the word sentimentalism, I must remind you, I intend not as most people do, to denote an excess of sentiment beyond what I like myself, but a *one-sided* sentiment whatever its amount may be.) The Feminist cannot see that granted that he admits the first he is ethico-logically bound to admit the second. However, I know there are some who are prepared to adopt a logical attitude. A dear friend of mine, one of the most prominent English Socialists, observed to me recently that while he was absolutely convinced of the physical, intellectual, and moral inferiority of woman to man he was nevertheless in favour not only of political but of all other equality between the sexes, which for that reason he thought would do no harm. I am afraid we cannot all be quite so sanguine on this head. However, this is at least a consistent point of view.

And now let us deal with our last heading for discussion, which turns mainly upon this last point. I have sketched out very briefly a few of the grounds which might lead us to think that the organic difference between man and woman is of a very deep lying character and does involve

the mental inferiority of the female sex, of a kind and degree justifying exclusion from political functions.

This, however, is a matter difficult to prove to everybody's satisfaction. Let us, then, for the sake of argument, concede the point of intrinsic unsuitability, and enquire whether, even though a case were not made out on this ground justifying exclusion from the franchise, there might yet be other grounds which, at the present time at least, would render the concession of political functions to women unjust or undesirable.

In the *Legal Subjection of Men* (Twentieth Century Press, 1896) the privileges of women over men in the matter of law and its administration in this country will be found described in detail. These inequalities exist. But that is not all. Feminists only claim equality with men in so far as it has agreeable consequences for women. And this applies all along the line. Did you ever hear of "advanced" women clamouring for equality in the matter of military service or even for the right to become police constables? One often hears the Feminists' wail over the economic inequality between men and women. They claim, and justly claim, equal wages for equal work, no preference to men over women. With this we are all agreed. *But have you ever heard of a Feminist demanding equal penalty for equal crime?* Because I never have. Oh, no! Here comes in the "poor weak woman" whine. The muscular weakness of women (in spite of, as is admitted, a greater constitutional vigour than in man) is held to be sufficient to relieve the woman of the larger part of the responsibility for her actions in so far as criminal law is concerned, and yet no protest against injustice is made by those whose voice is so loud otherwise in denouncing sex-inequality. As Mr. Collinson, of the Humanitarian League, has pointed out, one great difficulty in getting rid of brutality in punishments is the one-sided sexual nature of such brutality, viz., that it affects the male sex only.

The Feminists, in their eagerness to admit muscular inferiority in women, with a view to justifying sex-privilege before the law, forget that they are giving away part of their own case. The inferiority in the matter of muscular strength of the female sex, if it be conceded, must imply a strong presumption of mental inferiority. Oh! exclaims someone, physical and mental strength are seldom united in the same individual. Quite right, I answer. This holds between individuals of the same sex but not between one sex and another, and for the following reason. The sex-class Man, say, possesses a certain measure of inherent vital force (if you like), a certain average of potential; as energy, capacity, or power. This power may realise itself in any given individual as physical at the expense of mental, or as mental at the expense of physical, but, over the whole range of the male sex both balance one another. If, however, you admit in the case of women a consistent average inferiority in power over the whole sex, on one side of its manifestation, viz., the physical, the presumption is obviously strong that this expresses an inferiority in the total sex-capacity, mental as well as physical. The argument from the individual member of a class cannot be applied to the class as such, any more than the single instance can subvert the rule. For the above reasons I would advise woman's-righters to choose the one side or the other. If they stick to the weakness of woman physically as ground for woman's privileges and immunities, let them give up prating of equality otherwise. If they contend for equality let it at least be an even equality all round.

We come now to a last and very important fact, and that is that if we take our stand on universal adult suffrage, there being a vast majority of women in the population, we are simply handing over the whole administration of affairs to the female sex. At any time if the female sex chooses to vote solid it can upset the entire male vote. Now, I ask, are you prepared for this? And I think I need hardly say more on this point.

The conclusion I draw from the above facts alone, and apart from all other considerations, such as those previously indicated, is, that setting aside the question of the intrinsic suitability or unsuitability of the female sex for the exercise of political functions it is at least not just or equitable that women should exercise such functions – even the suffrage – (1) So long as women possess sex privileges as against men, or so long as they are not prepared to accept the whole duties and responsibilities of life in an equal degree with men; (2) That it is undesirable they should be given the franchise at all so long as the acquirement of the vote by women would possibly mean the political subjection of man, owing to the excess of the female population. I contend that so long as women have special privileges at criminal law, special favouritism at civil law, special exemption from military service, the right of maintenance, when married, by the husband, &c., it is neither just nor expedient that they should, in addition, by the concession of the franchise, be placed in a position to dominate men politically by sheer weight of numbers.

Footnote:

1. The mere shedding of tears per se, an ebullition of temper, a display of enthusiasm, however unusual in intensity, a wave of emotional sentiment (started, as so often happens, by collective suggestion), a one-sided or even “cranky” insistence upon a particular aim; all these things have usually no connection what ever with the special pathological condition termed hysteria. Excitement is only one symptom of hysteria. As well say that every person with a flushed face is suffering from scarlet fever as that every person who gets excited is therefore hysterical. Of course, as we all know, all the above symptoms are commonly stigmatised as “hysterical,” which in such cases is merely a term of abuse by those who are annoyed by them. Where there is any approximatively or even conceivably adequate external cause for the display of an emotion, recourse to a pathological explanation is unwarranted and gratuitous. Besides, there are many pathological mental conditions other than hysteria. If I am not mistaken, Hippocrates was the first medical authority to whom a description of true hysteria was attributed, and which is, I believe, surprisingly accurate even when compared with present-day manifestations of the malady.

2. Of course, on saying this, one is fairly bombarded with irrelevant insistence on the fact that men can act unjustly, a proposition which, of course, no one denies. The point here is that women, as a rule, cannot even understand the principle of justice as such, or irrespective of their liking or disliking for individuals concerned in a particular application of it. Many men are sometimes swayed by personal prejudice, but women seem almost invariably to be so.

Source: ‘Female Suffrage and Its Implications,’ in *Social Democrat*, Vol.8, no.9, 15 September 1904. pp.533-545.

The “Monstrous Regiment” of Womanhood (1907)



All parties, all sorts and conditions of politicians, from the fashionable and Conservative west-end philanthropist to the Radical working-men’s clubbiter, seem (or seemed until lately) to have come to an unanimous conclusion on one point – to wit, that the female sex is grievously groaning under the weight of male oppression. Editors of newspapers, keen to scent out every drift of public fancy with the object of regaling their “constant readers” with what is tickling to their palates, will greedily print, in prominent positions and in large type letters expressive of the view in question, whilst they will boycott or, at best, publish in obscure corners any communication that ventures to criticise the popular theory or that adduces facts that tell against it. Were I to pen an impassioned diatribe, tending to prove the villainy of man towards woman, and painting in glowing terms the poor, weak victim of his despotism, my description would be received with sympathetic approval. Not so, I fear, my simple statement of the unvarnished truth.

Now, I think it will be admitted, as a general principle at least, by all parties in the present day, that equality before the law, as it is termed, is the first condition of liberty, and that where you have respect of persons in this connection, you are destitute of the primal elements of personal freedom. According to the popular theory just indicated, respecting the position of women, we might expect to find every law framed in such a way that women should invariably come off less than second best in any dispute with men: in short, that law would be enacted and administered solely to the advantage of men. Is this so in actual fact?

Let us first take our existing marriage laws. We shall find that in England whilst the woman is practically relieved of all responsibility for the maintenance of her husband, he can be compelled by poor law to maintain her under a penalty of three months’ hard labour for leaving her without provision, should she choose to apply to the parish. On anything that by latitude of interpretation can be deemed ill-usage or neglect, she can, if rich, obtain judicial separation with alimony from the divorce court, or, if poor, a magisterial order for separation with weekly maintenance from the police court. Jackson versus Jackson has decided that a wife can leave her husband at will, that he cannot raise a finger to compel her to remain with him or to come back, neither can she be imprisoned for contempt of court for refusing to obey an order for restitution of conjugal rights; in other words, it is decided that the contract of marriage is the single case of a contract which one of the contracting parties is at liberty to break without reason given, and without

compensating the other party. But it is well to remember that it is only one of the parties that has this liberty, for *Bunhill versus Bunhill* gives the wife the right to follow an absconding husband and break into his house, if necessary, for the purpose of compelling cohabitation.

He, on his part, is precluded by the decision in *Weldon versus Weldon* from obtaining restitution of conjugal rights even by way of action; he is liable, however, for his wife's postnuptial torts, so that she has only to slander or libel some person without his knowledge or consent, and whilst she comes off scot free, even though possessed of property, the husband can be cast in damages. Trespass to land, trespass to goods, injuries done through negligence, all these actions coming under the legal definition of "torts," render the husband liable, no matter what private wealth the wife may possess.

Now, let us take the single instance on the opposite side – the perennial grievance of the woman's-righter which is deemed sufficient, apparently, to swallow up everything else. How often do we hear it said in tones of intense indignation, as conclusively proving the vile tyranny of man, that while the husband can obtain a divorce from his wife on the ground of adultery alone, the wife, in order to obtain such relief, has to prove an additional charge of cruelty. I think that there is no greater evidence of the bogus character of the sentiment talked on this question than the fact that this trumpety argument is the only one its votaries can adduce. Apart from the circumstance, well known to students of the Divorce Court, that it is the uniform practice of judges to twist every act of impoliteness or trivial ill-temper on the part of the husband into "legal cruelty," the reason of the distinction must be obvious to any one not blinded by his or her prepossessions on the subject. I am certainly the last to advocate any binding on either side, and would gladly see divorce obtainable by the properly formulated demand of either party, but it is quite clear that under our present conditions of society with its bases of individual property-holding, whilst it would be grossly unfair to continue to enforce marital responsibility on a man for a woman whose offspring was of doubtful paternity, the grievance on the side of the woman against the man in case of adultery has no more than a sentimental significance: Even then, when the case becomes gross, as where a strange woman is introduced under the common roof, the wife can obtain relief on the elastic plea of technical or legal "cruelty." One would think that if the bewailers of the pretended oppression of woman do not want to make themselves ridiculous, they would drop this preposterously "manufactured" grievance, since it is obvious that the distinction made in this case is entirely owing to the economical liabilities of the husband from which the wife has the good luck to be exempt. Looking at the matter all round, I think, then, no one can deny that the existing marriage laws are simply a "plant" to enable the woman to swindle and oppress the man.¹

Turning now from the civil law to the criminal law, we find a similar – or even greater – disparity of treatment. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, of course, whilst flogging, the tread-mill, and other brutal forms of punishment have been retained for male offenders, they have been abolished for females, so that though a man may be subjected to torture and degradation for mere breaches of prison discipline, a woman is exempted from them for the most heinous crimes. As happened a few years ago in Ireland, a woman may torture her children to death and there is no outcry for the lash, yet surely if you do not flog the female child-torturer you have no right to flog any other human being. The sex-favouritism of modern penal law is

made more conspicuous by the ever-recurring howl of the “base, bloody, and brutal” grand juror for the lash to be applied to new classes of offences (for men of course).

But the most atrocious instances of sex-privilege occur in connection with the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885. Whilst the abduction of a girl under eighteen, or the seduction of one under sixteen, involves the man concerned in serious penalties, the girl or the woman gets off scot free, and this even though she may have been the inciting party. This is carried to the extent that a young boy of fourteen may be himself induced to commit a sexual offence by a girl just under sixteen – that is to say, nearly two years his senior – and he can be sentenced to imprisonment, followed by several years in a reformatory, whilst the law holds the inciting girl absolutely guiltless. The villainy of such an enactment is unparalleled, more particularly when one considers that a girl approaching sixteen is often practically a woman, whilst a boy of fourteen is seldom more than a child.

If we turn from the law itself to the administration of the law, we find, if anything, still more startling enormities. I do not propose to give many instances, or any, at length, inasmuch as my readers may find such galore by consulting any daily paper. I may, however, refer to a case tried a few months back in which a woman killed her husband by throwing a lighted paraffin lamp at him in the course of a quarrel. Will it be believed that this woman was – not convicted of murder and recommended to mercy, not even convicted of manslaughter – but acquitted in flying colours, because, forsooth, she whined and alleged in her defence that the act was done on the spur of the moment when she did not fully realise the inflammable nature of paraffin oil. This was the flimsy rubbish that judge and jury complacently accepted from the mouth of a woman. Everyone knows that, had the husband in a fit of exasperation suddenly forgotten the properties of paraffin, and had let the lamp fly at the head of some drunken virago of a spouse – everyone knows how the judge would have pointed out how, according to the law of England, this was a clear case of wilful murder, how the jury’s verdict would have been in accordance with his summing-up, accompanied, perhaps, with a recommendation to mercy, which the Home Secretary would have “carefully considered,” announcing after a few days, that on a thorough review of the facts of the case he regretted “he saw no reason for interfering with the course of the law,” and how the wretched victim of sex-injustice would have been consigned to the tender mercies of the hangman, probably after having, like the witches of old, “admitted the justice of his sentence” – the unjustly condemned always do that!

A similar case was heard on the 23rd of May 1894, at the Middlesex sessions. A woman who had stabbed her husband so that he was lying in a dangerous condition in the hospital was released on her own recognisances. Her excuse was that she was drunk at the time. The husband was condemned, however, to pay 5s. a week for her support, at which she grumbled, alleging that he could well afford £1 a week. A short time after she came back and again assaulted the husband. She was this time fined a trifling sum with the alternative of fourteen days’ imprisonment!

The case of the constable, Cooke, at Wormwood Scrubbs, may still be remembered by some of my readers. If ever there was a case of provocation reducing the crime of murder to one of excusable homicide, surely this was one, and the jury, who convicted Cooke of murder on the technical point of law, showed that they thought so, by the rider to their verdict. But Cooke, having the misfortune to be born a man, is, in spite of the recommendation, promptly hanged by

Mr. Asquith. A still more recent case is that of the young workman, Walter Smith, at Nottingham, whom Mr. Asquith similarly hanged, in this case, even in the teeth of local public opinion, with the moral certainty that the shooting was, if not a pure accident, as some thought, the act of an insane person. Take again, the infamous trial of Mr. Noel of Ramsgate. Here was a man, who, without a tittle of evidence, was kept in gaol with a capital charge hanging over him for weeks. Yet so far was local public opinion from showing any sympathy for the unfortunate victim that this rabble of small shop-keepers and lodging-letters thought it necessary to reward the agent who had worked up the charge against him. with the public presentation of a purse of sixty guineas. Take, again, the case of Hogg of Hampstead. This man, it is well known, after the police had done their best to connect him with the charge in the Piercey murder, was able to prove so conclusive an *alibi* that his impeachment could not even be entertained.

Yet, in spite of this, public opinion of the baser sort was not to be baulked of its prey, and on the date of his late wife's funeral, Hogg narrowly escaped being lynched at the hands of a mob. For what? For having had the misfortune to be the husband of Mrs. Hogg, who had been murdered by some one else – and that a woman. Given the case of a woman found murdered, the method of policemen on the look-out for promotion is to fix upon some wretched man who has known the woman (anyone will do). This is called a “clue.” The finger is pointed at this man and public opinion thus worked up into the requisite state with regard to him. The manufacture of “circumstantial” evidence is then easy. Say the woman had been murdered with a knife. A carving knife is found in the back kitchen of the murderer designate! a circumstance scarcely compatible with innocence! Say the woman has been shot. The bullet found in the deceased fits the bore of a revolver known to be in the possession of the murderer as by Treasury fixed upon. (N.B. – The fact that two million of this sized revolver bullet are turned out annually makes no difference.) Conclusive evidence of guilt!!! Is she poisoned? Some supposed lover of hers, or her sister's, or her cousin's is proved to have an empty bottle of vermin-killer in the recesses of his scullery cupboard. – Evidence which no jury under the sway of current sentiment could resist.

Mr. Noel of Ramsgate was kept in durance and brought up before the bench to make a seaside holiday week by week, on not even as much evidence as this. James Canham Read was condemned and hanged on admittedly perjured evidence (for which, of course, the Treasury never dreamt of prosecuting), and on that of three mutually self-contradictory witnesses. The very attitude of public opinion towards a man accused of the murder of a woman is significant. If he is confident, it is said he is trying to brazen it out. If he is despondent, it is conclusive proof of a sense of guilt. One would like to know what manner a man, charged with the murder of a woman, ought to assume in order to set himself right with public opinion.

It only requires any one to read his newspaper carefully to see that if the law is designed with the object of favouring women, the administration of the law is worked ten times more to this end. I need only allude to breach of promise cases. Here the woman is allowed to plunder the man at her will as a punishment for a refusal to wreck his own life, and possibly her: as well, in a marriage which he feels would be unhappy. This is a scandal which has been often enough discussed, but which, nevertheless, chiefly affects the well-to-do classes. But the instances already given show the grossest and most flagrant inequality before the law, not in civil but in criminal accusations.

Can anyone deny that in all cases where a man has been instrumental in causing the death of a woman, the coroner, the magistrate, the judge, the jury will do their utmost to twist and wrench the act into a murder charge? But when a woman has been instrumental in causing the death of a man, in how many cases will a verdict of “wilful murder” be returned? One requires only to read one’s paper with a critical and unbiased mind in this respect, and one can only come to one conclusion – that there is a steady, unconscious sex-prejudice at work in public opinion against the man because he is man and in favour of the woman because she is woman.

Woe betide the luckless husband or paramour of a woman who has come to a violent end. As in the cases quoted of Noel at Ramsgate and Hogg at Hampstead, a perfect blood-lust infects the public mind. A bestial sentimentalism, which flings aside every consideration of common justice, seems to spread over the whole community. Contrast this with the sentiment evoked by the sweet female poisoner – Mrs. Maybrick, for instance, and others that I must not name, because, having only poisoned men, they have, of course, been acquitted. For the tender-hearted British small middle-class juryman, above all things, holds “Womanhood” in honour, even where associated with homicidal proclivities.

Compare the case of the excitement and adjournment of Parliament over Miss Cass some years ago, who was said to have been wrongfully arrested for solicitation, with the perfect equanimity with which arbitrary police arrests of men in the street nightly take place without attracting notice. The difference in the value put upon the life and liberty of the sexes by public sentiment is sometimes not without a grim humour. About a year ago a paragraph went the round of the papers headed *Cannibalism on the Niger*. It stated that a recrudescence of cannibalism had shown itself in the Niger territory, narrated how a man had been killed and eaten in spite of the protests of European residents, but that no steps to punish the delinquents were taken. A few days afterwards, it went on to say, a woman was killed and eaten, and this time, we were told, “the authorities felt bound to interfere.” Accordingly the two negroes concerned were seized and promptly hanged. Now I contend that however much the Western European may have become convinced of the superior sanctity of the female over the male sex, it is unfair to allow this dogma to play a part in administering justice to negroes who know nothing whatever about it. The poor ignorant negro, who finds that the killing and eating of a man evokes a simple remonstrance and knows nothing of the deification of womanhood, naturally thinks that what is sauce for the gander is sauce for the goose, and kills and eats accordingly. And surely before you hang him, you ought to give him instruction in the new *cultus*.

The way in which public opinion is hocused over the whole question is significant. As already stated, the ear of the average man is open on the one side and deaf on the other, and as a consequence the newspapers are open on the one side only. Hence out of twenty cases, civil or criminal, into which the sex question enters, nineteen of which will probably represent flagrant injustice to men, and flagrant partiality to women, but the twentieth may have the semblance of pressing a little hardly on the woman – out of these twenty cases, while the nineteen will be passed by without remark, the twentieth, the exception, will be seized upon with a hawk-like grip, trumpeted forth in every paper, exaggerated and commented upon in every key of indignation as illustrating the habitual tyranny of vile truculent man towards downtrodden woman and the calculated injustice of the courts to women. That’s the way the “trick” is done, and public opinion artificially and sedulously kept in its present course.

It can hardly have failed to be observed by everyone, how vast a difference exists between the energy with which any injustice to men is protested against as compared with a corresponding injustice to women, and a still greater difference in the results of the protest. Injustice towards men is perhaps protested against but in nine cases out of ten the protest is tame and remains barren, but a protest against any assumed harshness in the case of women, however trifling, is invariably and immediately effective. Again, a wrong which touches both sexes, let us say, is protested against. It is remedied as far as women are concerned and the protest dies out, even though men may suffer more than before from it. As an instance of this, take the outcry against the flogging of women in Russia, and the protest raised by a meeting in Hyde Park, not against the general ill-treatment of Russian political prisoners, not against flogging, altogether, but a protest embodied in a resolution taking women out of the category of common humanity, and exclusively denouncing cruelties exercised towards female prisoners, thereby implicitly countenancing such cruelties when perpetrated on men.

The “advanced” women present on the occasion referred to, to their shame be it said, did not insist on making the resolution apply to both sexes. And these are the persons who are so eloquent on the subject of “equality.” Again, take Mr. Labouchere. Mr. Labouchere made it his business in Truth to hunt up every obscure case of girl-flogging in the country, and to trumpet it forth in his journal as though it were a crime compared to which common murder were a venial affair. But now, had Mr. Labouchere one word for the brutal floggings of boys, not by private individuals, but in national institutions, such as reformatories and training ships? Not one. What he expressly denounced was not flogging, but girl-flogging.

Again British public opinion is dissolved with indignation at the notion of the solitary woman being taken liberties with in a railway carriage, and demands the heaviest punishment for the offender. But what has either the law or public opinion to say to the female blackmailer? She for years plied her trade on the Metropolitan Railway unmolested by the police. She is never prosecuted, and the law gives her every facility for bringing false charges whilst public opinion treats the matter as a joke, or as of no importance. The late judge Baron Huddleston stated that in his opinion men stood in much greater need of protection against women than women against men.²

I think on a survey of the facts given, every unbiased person must admit that women, so far from being oppressed, are steeped up to the teeth in sex-prerogative. In short, if their position is called one of oppression, I can only say that this new-fashioned oppression is to me absolutely indistinguishable from old-fashioned privilege! But if this be so we have to ask ourselves the reasons given for some of these privileges, at least. A considerable section of them are undoubtedly based on the traditional “weakness” of women, as compared with men. Now as regards this point, I would suggest that though women are unquestionably as a rule, weaker *muscularly* than men, yet there are circumstances under which, for practical purposes, the strongest man is as helpless as the weakest woman.

In an age when disputes were generally determined by individual prowess, this argument may have had some point. But I submit that in the hands of the law, the policeman, the gaoler or the hangman, the relative difference of muscle between the sexes has absolutely no significance

whatever. The strong man about to be flogged or hanged, even though a Samson, is in no better case than the weakest girl. Again, the invention of fire-arms has, on another side, obliterated the importance of the difference in muscular strength between the two sexes. A weak woman armed with a revolver can hold a Hercules well in check.

This point of the muscular inferiority of women to men is often confounded with another point in reality quite distinct – that of constitutional vigour. Now, although as already stated, women are undoubtedly, as a rule, inferior in muscular strength to men, the opposite is true as regards their vitality and physical endurance, although popular opinion credits them with a greater weakness here also. It is well known to the medical profession that a woman can pass through a physical strain and recover herself in a manner and to an extent that no man can. I do not propose dwelling on this point, as it is generally admitted by all medical authorities and has been often enough conceded by opponents in this very controversy.

It is illustrated by the excess of the adult female over the adult male population in this country (about a million) notwithstanding that male births are considerably in excess of female. In addition to this, Lombroso and other competent authorities have recently discovered that the nerve-sensibility of women, and hence their susceptibility to pain, is much less than that of men. This being the state of the case, I maintain that any argument based on the “weakness of women” in favour of a different treatment of women to that accorded to men falls completely to the ground. Women, at the present day, so far as their “weakness” is concerned, have exactly the same claim to considerate treatment at the hands of the law and of public opinion, as men have, neither more nor less.

I may as well take the opportunity of dealing with an objection which is almost sure to crop up as regards favouritism to women in the matter of criminal punishment. It is undeniable that imprisonment for women means a very different thing from what it does for men – its sting being for them completely taken out. So true is this that women prisoners have only got to make a firm stand against any regulation to get it altered. A little while ago fifty women refused to carry out an order made by the Governor of Wormwood Scrubbs for bringing coke into the laundry. If men had refused to obey any regulation they would most probably have got the lash till they yielded. But what was the lot of these women. The Governor at once politely cancelled his regulation and “order was restored”!! Such is the farce of penal discipline in the case of women. Now, in any demand that may be made for equality in this matter, I am met by this argument – “Are you not in favour of abolishing all forms of brutal punishment?” I say yes, in common with most Socialists and Democrats, I am in favour of all forms of corporal and of capital punishment whatsoever being abolished and of reducing imprisonment to simple reclusion. It is then argued: – “But surely the abolition of these things in the case of women is better than nothing”; it is at least a step. My answer is that in the first place it is *not* a step, but generally a shirking of the whole question. And further I reply by putting another case. Supposing that it were proposed for certain forms of punishment to be abolished for persons possessing incomes over £300 a year, but retained for all whose incomes fell below that figure.

Precisely the same argument might be applied. “It is better than nothing!” – “it is a step.” Yet, you know that all with one consent would protest that if (say) capital punishment is to be retained at all, it would be monstrous to let a murderer off because he possessed over £300 a year

and hang another who had been working on £50 a year. All would say this and properly so, however strong might be their opposition to capital punishment in itself. The protest would be in the name of equality before the law. Now this is precisely my case. In both instances you are punishing the criminal for what he cannot help and not for his crime. Every increment of penalty you inflict upon a man over and above what you inflict upon a woman for the same or an equal crime, I maintain is a legal infamy. *It is a punishment not for the offence but for the crime of having been born male.*

Now let us take the other side of this woman question. Let us consider the alleged disabilities of women. I have already disposed of one of the alleged injustices to women in discussing the marriage laws; it is, therefore, not necessary to allude to it here. First and foremost, then, comes the question of the franchise. The Woman's Rights advocate is, of course, ever shrieking over the fact that the female sex has not got the suffrage. On the monstrous iniquity of this, she will expatiate in press or on platform by the column or by the hour. (She ignores the fact that a legally privileged body – the Royal Family for example – commonly does not possess the suffrage and yet is not counted “oppressed.”) Now let it be granted as an abstract proposition that women ought to have the suffrage and that the vote is a necessary condition of equality between the sexes. Conceding this, for argument's sake, I contend that, as far as the rights of women are concerned, (1) the want of the suffrage is altogether unimportant, and (2) the granting of the suffrage *immediately and without conditions* could not possibly accord with the principle of equality between the sexes.

As to the first point, when you find that every law relating to sex-questions and specially touching women is constructed with a view to giving women prerogatives as against men, as has been the case with the recent laws respecting marriage, and other matters, and when you find that the administration is even more partial to women than the laws themselves, I think one may fairly say that the case for women having direct control over legislation and administration is, even from the point of view of women's rights, not a pressing one. I think it will be admitted that supposing *per impossible* that parsons and landlords invariably administered the law, not in the interests of their own class but of the agricultural labourer – I say, I think if this were so – the case for appointing working-men justices, though theoretically as strong as before, would at least lose much of the urgency that it has now. Yet so it is with the legislators and administrators of law, as far as women are concerned. In this country, in North America and in the British colonies, at least, men make and administer laws not in favour of their own but of the other sex.

Let us turn to the second point, that the immediate and unconditional granting of the suffrage to women would be incompatible with equality between the sexes and give rise to a sex-tyranny exercised by women upon men, not, it is true, directly, but through and by means of men themselves. Such would be the case for the following reasons. Firstly, there is the question of population. I assume, of course, universal suffrage, for both sexes, which is the only principle worth discussing in this, connection. The population of women exceeds that of men in these and most other countries – very considerably indeed in Great Britain. Now, the result of this on the basis of Universal Adult Suffrage, if conceded directly and unconditionally, is obvious. We should simply have the complete domination of the female vote. This would be moreover reinforced by, at the very least, a large minority of the male vote. For it is important to bear in mind, that whilst chivalry, gallantry, etc., forbids men to side against women,³ it is a point of

honour amongst female upholders of woman's rights that they shall back up their own sex, right or wrong. Universal female suffrage, therefore, under present conditions, might easily come to mean the *despotism of one sex*.

But it is sometimes alleged that the *great bulk* of women would not vote solid with their sex, inasmuch as they are not "political women." In reply to this I have only to point to the case of Wyoming and other places in America, where, as I am informed, every public office is filled by a woman, except, mark you, that of police constable, and where a man can perform no legal act without the consent of his wife, as also more recently in New Zealand. Again it is alleged that just as men on juries judge women leniently, so women on juries would judge men leniently, more especially, it is said, as the quality of mercy is stronger in women than in men. I can only answer that this also is not confirmed by experience. In the case of Wyoming the verdicts brought by the female juries against male offenders have been often of so vindictive a ferocity as to have amounted to a public scandal.

Once more, it is alleged that with the removal of the so-called disabilities under which women at present labour i.e., the lack of the franchise, the closing of one or two of the professions, etc. – the prerogatives, the chivalry now accorded to and claimed for women, would disappear, leaving the sexes really equal before the law. I again answer that experience does not lend colour to this forecast. For it would almost seem that, *in exact proportion to the removal of any real grievances that may once have existed, has the number of female privileges increased*. At the present day, women have infinitely more advantages as against men than at the beginning of the nineteenth century, let us say, when they were suffering under one or two genuine disabilities (e.g., the laws regarding the earnings of the married woman now long since repealed). Then, before a law-court, a man-party in a suit had at least some chance of fair play against a woman opponent. It is not so now. Then, a female criminal had not, as now, any assurance of practical immunity from the severities of the penal law.

The other chief grievance in addition to the want of the suffrage is that some of the professions are closed to women. I ask, "What profession?" In the United States no trade or profession whatever, that I am aware of, is closed to women as such. In this country the medical profession, the one most sought after by women, is open, and, as far as I know, the law and the church are the only important callings, at all likely to be adopted by women, that are closed to them. And why is this so? Simply, because there has been no movement on the part of women for opening them. The moment women begin to agitate for admission to the legal profession. There is not the least doubt whatsoever that they will obtain it within a year or two. At all events this terrible hardship sinks down to the fact that one or two callings are legally closed. Moreover, as a set-off even against this, you have the enormous reputation, literary and otherwise, which a woman can acquire with slender means. The ability and industry utterly insufficient to raise a man out of the level of mediocrity is often adequate to furnish a woman with a name and fame equal to an income for life. I do not wish to mention individuals, but some instances will probably occur to many of my readers.

Such is the present state of the woman question – a steady determination on the part of public opinion to believe that women are oppressed – a steady determination on the part of women to pose as victims – in the teeth of facts of every description showing the contrary; a further

determination to heap upon them privilege on the top of privilege at the expense of men under the impudent pretence of “equality between the sexes.” The grievances that women labour under as women resolve themselves into three the fact (1) that the wife has to prove technical cruelty in addition to adultery on the part of her husband (a very easy thing to do) in order to obtain a divorce; (2) that women have not as yet the parliamentary franchise (although without it they succeed in getting nearly every law framed and administered in their favour), and (3) that one or two callings are closed to them (albeit in most branches of intellectual work it is far easier for them to make a profitable reputation with moderate ability than for men). These are the three main grievances existing in this country at present and usually quoted to show the burdens under which divine Womanhood (with a big W) is groaning.

Is it too much to ask my readers for ever to clear their minds of cant on the matter and to honestly say whether these disabilities, such as they are, counterbalance the enormous prerogatives which women otherwise possess on all hands. Defend these prerogatives if you will, but do not deny that they exist and pretend that the possessors of them are oppressed.⁴

The foregoing, then, I repeat, is the present state of the woman question – as it exists in our latter-day class society, based on capitalistic production. The last point that we have to consider is as to the relation of this sex-question to Socialism. Some years ago, on its first appearance, I took up, my esteemed friend August Bebel’s book *Die Frau* in the hope of gaining some valuable hints or at least some interesting speculations on the probable future of sex-relations under Socialism. I was considerably disgusted, therefore, that for the “halfpennyworth of bread” in the form of real suggestion I had to wade through a painfully considerable quantity of very old “sack” in the shape of stale declamation on the intrinsic perfection of woman and the utter vileness of man, on the horrible oppression the divine creature suffered at the hands of her tyrant and ogre – in short, I found two-thirds of the book filled up with a second-hand hash-up of Mill’s *Subjection of Women* and with the usual demagogic rant I had been long accustomed to from the ordinary bourgeois woman’s-rights advocate. It was the reading of the book in question that induced me to take up this problem, and to make some attempt to prick the bladder of humbug to which I was sorry to see that Bebel had lent his name.

In doing this I of course acquired the reputation of a misogynist. This is the natural fate of any one who attempts to expose that most shamelessly impudent fraud (the so-called woman’s-rights movement) which was ever supported by rotten arguments, unblushing misrepresentations, and false analogies. I have given some instances of the former in the course of this chapter. I will give one instance of a transparently false analogy which is common among Socialists and Radicals. It is a favourite device to treat the relation between man and woman as on all fours with the relation between capitalist and workman. But a moment’s consideration will show that there is no parallel at all between the two cases. The reason on which we as Socialists base our persistent attack on the class-privileged man or woman – on the capitalist – is because we maintain that as an economical, political, and social entity he or she has no right to exist. We say that the capitalist is a mere parasite, who ought to and who eventually will disappear. If it were not so, if the capitalist were a necessary and permanent factor in society, the attitude often adopted by Socialists (say, over trade disputes) would be as unfair and one-sided as the bourgeois represents it to be. Now, I wish to point out that the first thing for the woman’s-rights

advocates to do, if they want to make good the analogy, is to declare openly for the abolition of the male sex.

For until they do this, there is not one tittle of resemblance between the two cases. It is further forgotten that the distinction between men and women as to intellectual and moral capacity is radically different from that between classes. The one is a difference based on *organic structure*; the other on *economic circumstance*, educational advantage and social convention. That such a flimsy analogy as the above should ever have passed muster shows that the blind infatuation of public opinion on this question extends even to some Socialists.

It will be observed that I have not discussed the question of the intellectual and moral superiority, equality, or inferiority of women to men. I am content to concede this point for the sake of argument and take the plainer issue. What does Socialism, at least, profess to demand and to involve? Relative economic and social equality between the sexes. What does the woman's-rights movement demand? Female privilege, and when possible, female domination. It asks that women shall have all the rights of men with privileges thrown in (but no disagreeable duties, oh dear no!), and apparently be subject to no discipline but that of their own arbitrary wills. To exclude women on the ground of incapacity from any honourable, lucrative, or agreeable social function whatever, is a hideous injustice to be fulminated against from platform and in press – to treat them on the same footing as men in the matter of subordination to organised control or discipline is not to be thought of – is ungentlemanly ungracious, unchivalrous! We had an illustration of this recently. At a meeting held not long since, the chairman declared that all interrupters of speakers should be promptly put out. A man at the back of the hall did interrupt a speaker and was summarily ejected. Subsequently a woman not only interrupted, but grossly insulted another speaker, but the chairman declared that he could not turn a woman out. So it is. A woman is to be allowed, of course, full liberty of being present and of speaking at a public meeting, but is not to be subject to any of the regulation to which men are subject for the maintenance of order.

And this is what woman's-rights advocates and apparently some Socialists term equality between the sexes!! Advanced women and their male supporters in demanding all that is lucrative, honourable, and agreeable in the position of men take their stand on the dogma of sex-equality. No sooner, however, is the question one of disagreeable duties than "equality" goes by the board and they slink behind the old sex-immunity.

This sentiment also plays a part in the franchise controversy. Let women have the franchise by all means, provided two things, first of all: provided you can get rid of their present practical immunity from the operation of the criminal law for all offences committed against men and of the gallantry and shoddy chivalry that now hedges a woman in all relations of life⁵; and secondly, provided you can obviate the unfairness arising from the excess of women over men in the population – an excess attributable not only to the superior constitutional strength of women, but still more, perhaps, to the fact that men are exposed to dangers in their daily work from which women benefit, but from which women are exempt, inasmuch as they are, and claim to be, jealously protected from all perilous and unhealthy occupations. Now, surely it is rather rough to punish men for their services to society by placing them under the thumb of a female majority which exists largely because of these services.

Of course all the economic side of the question which for this very reason I have touched upon more or less lightly falls away under Socialism. Many Socialists, indeed, believe that the sex-question altogether is so entirely bound up with the economic question that it will immediately solve itself on the establishment of a collectivist order of society. I can only say that I do not myself share this belief. It would seem there is something in the sex-question, notably, the love of power and control involved, which is more than merely economic. I hold rather, on the contrary, that the class-struggle to-day over-shadows or dwarfs the importance of this sex-question, and that though in some aspects it will undoubtedly disappear, in others it may very possibly become more burning after the class-struggle has passed away than it is now. Speaking personally, I am firmly convinced that it will be the first question that a Socialist society will have to solve, once it has acquired a firm economic basis and the danger of reaction has sensibly diminished or disappeared.

Nowadays any one who protests against injustice to men in the interests of women is either abused as an unfeeling brute or sneered at as a crank. Perhaps in that day of a future society, my protest may be unearthed by some enterprising archaeological inquirer, and used as evidence that the question was already burning at the end of the nineteenth century. Now, this would certainly not be quite true, since I am well aware that most are either hostile or indifferent to the views set forth here on this question. In conclusion, I may say that I do not flatter myself that I am going to convert many of my readers from their darling belief in "woman the victim." I know their will is in question here, that they have made up their minds to hold one view and one only, through thick and thin, and hence that in the teeth of all the canons of evidence they would employ in other matters, most of them will continue canting on upon the orthodox lines, ferreting out the twentieth case that presents an apparent harshness to woman, and ignoring the nineteen of real injustice to man; misrepresenting the marriage laws as an engine of male, rather than of female, tyranny; and the non-possession of the suffrage by women as an infamy without a parallel, studiously saying nothing as to the more than compensating privileges of women in other directions.

Working-women suffer to-day equally with working-men the oppression of the capitalist system, while middle-class women enjoy together with middle-class men the material benefits derived from a position of class-advantage. But in either case, as I have shown, as women, they enjoy a privileged position as against men as men. Only the will not to recognise the truth on this question can be proof against the evidence adduced.

Notes

1. Since the above was written, an act has been passed practically freeing the woman from the obligation of fidelity. She may now commit adultery and still retain her claim on the man if she allege "neglect" or "cruelty." The courts will probably consider "neglect" proved if she showed that her husband has not taken her out when she wished to go, or has refused her a silk dress, or has occasionally stayed too late at night from home. As for cruelty, the wife has only to smash her husband over the head with a poker while a witness is in the room. The husband may be

tempted to observe that his wife has a bad temper. On a proof of his having thus abused his wife before strangers the court would doubtless hold a charge of “cruelty” to be “fully made out.”

2. In this as in most other cases of this kind, we may observe, the allegation is considered a mere joke, that men are in danger from women, because forsooth, the courts are administered by men. just as if this mattered when, though they are administered by men it is true, yet in all cases where the sex-question enters they are “worked” so exclusively in the interest of the other sex, that no barrister dare suggest that a swindling, blackmailing woman is anything worse than a poor, hysterical creature, on pain of losing his case.

3. So much is this the fact, that, as before pointed out, in the worst blackmailing cases, the defendant’s counsel is bound in the interests of his client to pretend that he doesn’t wish to imply anything against the female witness except that she was liable to hysterical delusions. In another connection, it is seen in cases of infant-murder, when the indignation of modern public opinion is turned not against the mother who has committed the murder, but against the putative father who has had nothing to do with it; truly a new and improved conception of justice, though a trifle vicarious, which the new Feminist cultess has the merit of having originated.

4. Before leaving this side of the question, I may allude to a quasi-argument, supposed to be crushing, which is sometimes brought forward when it is suggested that in view of the fact that all women are not angels, they should not be allowed to work their undisputed will with the men they come in contact with. “Women,” it is pleaded, “are what men have made them.” My answer to this is, that women are just as much what men have made them as men are what women have made them – nay, if there is a difference it is against women, since in the nursery, during the impressionable period of childhood, boys are entirely under their control.

5. A friend of mine is fond of arguing that the privileges of women are simply the obverse side of laws for the protection of the weaker. On this principle I would observe that any system of tyrannical privilege can be condoned. For example, it might be urged that the power of the Southern state planter over his slaves was necessary to the protection of the physically and numerically weaker white race against the ferocious negro. A similar argument is, in fact, used to-day to justify the action of negro-lynching mobs. Any system of oppression may be explained away, if one chooses, as being designed for the “necessary protection” of the oppressor against the oppressed.

Source: ‘The “Monstrous Regiment” of Womanhood’ in volume *Essays in Socialism New & Old* (1907), pp.108-119.

Anti-Feminism (1908)

The “Note” on the Female Suffrage question in your issue of the 7th inst. I venture to regard as a striking illustration of how the most cultured minds may be warped by feminist prejudice. I am not a habitual reader, still less an admirer, of the “leading” English journal, but if the *Times* suggests that – all law resting ultimately on a basis of physical force – laws passed by means of female suffrage which are disapproved of by the majority of men might stand the chance of remaining a dead letter, it is surely doing nothing worse than propounding an obvious proposition.

Your reference to the “physical efficiency of legislators” or to Mr. Balfour’s height are surely beside the point, and are based on one of the common fallacies of feminist argument, to wit, the failure to distinguish between (1) the individual of a class as against the class itself as class, and (2) one class as against another class, as such. Now women form a sex-class over against men as a sex-class, and the sex-class men admittedly have the physical strength necessary to give effect to law, on their side. The question of strength is, it may here be remarked, obviously concerned with the mass of the electorate *behind* the legislator, and in no way, as you would seem to imply, with the legislator personally considered.

You further pour scorn on the idea that women are ever likely to promote anti-man legislation, or to endeavour to extend the overwhelming privileges of their sex at present obtaining, alike in the civil and criminal law, and still more in the administration of the law. The probability of this happening is, however, by no means very remote. As a prominent member of the present Ministry said to me some years ago, “all that these women want in clamouring for the suffrage is to pass rascally laws against men”! The fact that this gentleman recently voted for the second reading of the Suffrage Bill does not alter the truth of his one-time remark.

You appear to entirely ignore the sense of sex-solidarity’ present in women and absent in men. Who is it that clamours loudest for the exemption from punishment of the murderers of lovers and husbands but the female crew, whose motto is “Our sisters, right or wrong”?

Reckoning on the absence of sex-solidarity in men you may be right in thinking that as long as this continues men may consent to be made the lackey-administrators of anti-man women-made laws. But will the present state of things necessarily last? Is it quite impossible that on the female vote swamping the register for a sufficient length of time the existing wave of feminist sentiment may die down, and men may acquire a sense of sex-solidarity even sufficiently strong to lead them (for example) to refuse to be the instruments in punishing their “brothers” for offences committed against women? How about the question of physical strength then?

“A la guerre, comme à la guerre.”

E. BELFORT BAX.

[In his terror Mr. Bax has missed one point, which was that it is inconceivable that “if women had the vote they would all belong to one great anti-man party and would seek to form a government composed of their own sex alone.” The sense of sex-solidarity may be more present in women than in men, but does Mr. Bax seriously suggest that it is great enough to set every wife in political opposition to her husband? And yet unless this happens almost universally, his fears amount to nothing more than a nightmare. But, even if Mr. Bax were right in his forecast, his would hardly be a very worthy reason for refusing women the vote. What sort of a democracy is it in which half the people are disfranchised because the other half are afraid of them? – The WRITER OF THE NOTES.]

Source: ‘Anti-Feminism’ in *New Age*, 21 March 1908, p. 418-419

Mr. Belfort Bax Replies to his Feminist Critics (1908)

Amid the various writers who have favoured THE NEW AGE with their views on the question of Female Suffrage, none have really traversed my original contention, as contained in my first article. That contention was, that occupying as they do a privileged position before the law – not only in itself, but still more in its administration – as against men, women have no just claim to the franchise. That the votaries of Female Suffrage feel this, is proved by the fact that their most serious efforts at arguments turn upon the iniquity of subjecting women to “man-made laws,” their staple policy throughout their agitation being, by dint of lying assertions and insinuations, ceaselessly repeated, to create the impression on the public mind that the existing state of the law and its administration not only does not favour women, but is actually unfair to “the sex.” Now, as I have pointed out, to anyone in the least acquainted with the theory and practice of the English law, there can be no doubt whatever that the latter, in theory and still more in practice, is entirely and without any exception whatever, one-sided and partial to women and against men.

The only correspondent of THE NEW AGE who has really touched the point at issue at all, while admitting the substantial truth of my remarks, confines himself to suggesting exaggeration on my part and observing that our infamous anti-man marriage laws were unjust “not on one side only.” But I must deny the charge of exaggeration, a denial that can be substantiated by illustrative cases galore. As regards the marriage laws, I insist that the unfairness is wholly and solely on one side.

But I must here make an explanation. There does exist *on paper* one slight concession of fairness towards the husband. The divorce law, namely, ordains that an adulterous wife, owing to the fact that by her adultery she can introduce into the family, and compel her husband to support, a bastard child, can be divorced by the *husband* on proof of adultery alone, whereas for a *wife* to obtain divorce from her husband (in which case, of course, the above reason does not obtain), it is necessary to prove cruelty in addition to adultery. Now, believer as I am that marriage ought to be an absolutely free union, it is certainly not my case to defend the existing marriage laws as a system. But I do say that, given that system and our present property and family relations generally, nothing can be more reasonable or more equitable as between the man and the woman than this provision of the English law respecting divorce.

Yet when brought to book and challenged to give a concrete instance of the unfairness of “man-made laws” to woman anent which the woman’s righter is perennially blathering at large, it is invariably this very innocent and natural provision of the divorce law that is trotted out, it being the solitary instance in which the law does not overtly favour the woman at the expense of the man. But I have said that this provision exists on paper merely, and so it does, since in practice it remains a dead letter. For the discrimination in question is now practically abolished, anything which the wife objects to – coming home late at night, going out to a party without taking her with him, holding her hands when she attempts to scratch or bite him – being adjudged technical cruelty by the husband within the meaning of the law. Per contra, the Act of 1895 condones

expressly the adultery of the wife, providing she can successfully plead “neglect” (an elastic term) on the part of the husband. So much for this solitary case in which the Feminist, to his horror and indignation, finds that the law does not for once avowedly favour women at the expense of men. But apart from this isolated example, the whole marriage law is one tissue of favouritism to the woman and injustice to the man, as I have already shown.

And yet we find in “advanced” journals tirades like the following: “Any fool, any blackguard, any coward, is wise enough and worthy enough to be allowed a legal and a holy licence to torture and insult a woman. Anything with the title of husband in his pocket may goad and stab and lash and sear the soul of the slave we call a wife” (*Clarion*, July 17) Unfortunately, the champion liar who can gush forth the mendacious, sentimental slush, of which the foregoing is a sample, does not stand alone. His performance is but part of an anti-man crusade of misrepresentation and falsehood carefully organised and skilfully engineered, the object of which is, and has been, to inflame public opinion against men in the interests of female privilege and of female domination.

Feminists well know that the most grotesquely far-fetched cry anent the injustice of man to woman will meet with a ready ear. They well know that they get here fond and foolish man on his soft side. Looking at the matter impartially, it is quite evident that man’s treatment of woman is the least vulnerable point in his moral record. Woman, as such, he has always treated with comparative generosity. But it is, of course, to the interests of the abettors of female domination to pretend the contrary. Accordingly everything has been done to excite prejudice in favour of woman as the innocent and guileless victim of man’s tyranny, and the maudlin Feminist sentiment of the “brute” man has been carefully exploited to this end. The result of two generations’ agitation in the above sense is seen in the existing state of the law, civil and criminal, in which the “Woman’s Movement” has succeeded in effecting the violation of every principle of rectitude towards the male side of the sex-equation. The existing laws connected with marriage which place the husband practically in the position of legal slavery as regards the wife is typical of the whole.

That the present “Votes for Women” movement is only a phase of the anti-man crusade which Feminism has been carrying on for nigh two generations past with the aid of the Press, is shown, not only by the persistent efforts to represent “man-made laws” as unjust to women, but by the incidental remarks of Suffragette leaders in which the sex animus is shown, no concealment being made of the intention to use the suffrage for rivetting on man the chains of legalised female oppression. For example, Mrs. Pankhurst recently represented one of the functions of emancipated “Womanhood” to be the handing over of the luckless male to the Female blackmailer by raising the “age of consent” above sixteen!! The allusion made at the same time to the “daughters of the working class” is a piece of demagoguery too thin to deceive anyone as to the venomous sex-spite animating this outrageous proposal.

Again, in the *Daily News* for July 30 a suffragette objects to a woman being punished for murdering her child, protesting that the father, who had had nothing to do with the crime, ought to have been in the dock in her place!

In the present agitation we see merely the culmination of a Feminist campaign organised with scarcely any attempt at concealment, as I have said, on the basis of a sex-war. But this sex-war is at present one-sided, the man's case goes by default. There is no sex-conscious man's party to be appealed to and to engineer public opinion in favour of the claims of the most elementary justice for him, as here is a sex-conscious woman's party to further any and every iniquitous claim of the female sex. So long as the present state of things lasts, organised determination on the one side and indefinite gullibility on the other, are likely to maintain the ascendancy of the Feminist cult and increase the sphere of female privilege.

It has often been remarked that even if the suffrage were granted, the enforcement of the laws decreed by a female majority would be dependent on the goodwill of men. This observation we are accustomed to find greeted by Feminist jeers. The jeers may be justified for the moment, but the intrinsic truth of the observation remains none the less. So long, namely, as the Woman's Party can continue to bulldoze men as they have done up to the present, so long will they be able to make men obey and enforce their behests, whether formulated directly through the suffrage or indirectly by hoodwinking public opinion as they do now. But when once men get tired of this, when once the reaction sets in and a sex-conscious Man's Party forms itself, then Heaven help the women!! The anti-man ranting sisterhood do not seem to realise what the position of their sex would be if men took to refusing to act against their "brothers." They think it the most natural thing in the world for women to talk and act in this strain as regards their "sisters." The explanation, to my mind, is simple. They instinctively feel that man is *more than sex*, that he stands for humanity in the concrete, whereas woman stands, par excellence, for sex and sex alone. As I have often pointed out before, common phraseology recognises that while man has a sex woman is a sex. The hollowness of the sham of the modern dogma of equality between the sexes is shown by the fact that the assumption of inferiority is called into requisition without any hesitation when there is anything to be gained by it for the cause of female privilege.

The dogma of equality is reserved for pleading for the franchise, for the opening up of the professions, and similar occasions. According to the current theory, while women are fully equal to men in capacity for government, administration, etc., and hence, while justice demands that these spheres should be accessible to them, they are so inferior to men in the capacity to control their actions and to distinguish right from wrong, that it is not to be thought of that they, poor weak women, should be treated with the same impartiality or severity by the law as is dealt out to men. Women nowadays "want it," not "both ways" merely, but all ways. At least as good arguments may be produced to prove that the apparent muscular inferiority of women to men is not fundamental, as are adduced to prove that the apparent intellectual inferiority is not fundamental. There are plenty of instances of extraordinary bodily strength in women. And yet we never hear these arguments. Why?

Because Feminists have no interest, but quite the contrary, in perverting the truth on this side, whereas on the other, their demands require that they shall prove equality – the aim being to ensure for women all honourable, agreeable, and lucrative occupations in life, while guarding them carefully from all rough and disagreeable work and from all unpleasant responsibilities. Hence it suits their book to admit the physical, while denying the mental, inferiority. My constitutional objection to privileged classes extends also to a privileged sex. Hence my (as some

deem it, intemperate) zeal in exposing the hollow humbug on which the practical demands of the “Woman’s Movement” rest.

Turning again to the present agitation, it is noteworthy how the evidence as to the numerical strength of the Suffrage movement adduced by its advocates is about on a level with the arguments advanced in support of the general principle of Feminism. A stage army, the vanguard of which probably amounts to some five hundred, which can on occasion, from all England, be raised to ten thousand (among these, girlish youth and innocence being particularly prominent), such is all that has yet been achieved, and such it is that we are asked to regard as representing the public opinion of England. However, one may suppose that the Feminists are so accustomed to their statements otherwise being allowed to pass by default, that they have come to regard the supineness and gullibility of public opinion in these matters as a safe speculation. Hence, at the beginning of the twentieth century the figure of British Womanhood rises up before us, reeking with privilege, and, in alternate strophes, tearfully whimpering and threateningly shrieking that she has not enough, that she wants more! Such, at least is the Womanhood of the Feminist agitation. In concluding this controversy, I can only reaffirm my original position unshaken, and that is, that whatever other arguments there may be for or against “Votes for Women,” certain it is, under any ordinarily recognised standard of fairness and equality, that so long as women enjoy those privileges before the law at the expense of men which they now do, it is unjust that they should be given facilities for increasing, them by the concession of the franchise.

Source: ‘Mr. Belfort Bax Replies to his Feminist Critics’ in *New Age*, 8 August 1908, p. 287-288

Why I Am an Anti-Suffragist (1909)

I am glad Mrs. Montefiore conquered her lofty feminist disdain and stooped to “troubling to read” and even to reply to my humble statement of the reasons why I am an anti-suffragist. That she has replied I am especially glad, since she has thereby confirmed for any unbiased reader the weight of those reasons. As against my contention with regard to the systematic privileging of women by the law and its administration she has nothing to adduce beyond a flaw in the Old Age Pensions Act (there are, it is admitted, many such), an anomaly in the confused law as regards marriage with an alien, and a harshness in the Poor Law, none of which things could be twisted by any possibility into a case of male sex privilege as such, save by a controversialist hard pressed for an argument. What I have maintained, and still maintain, is the deliberate tendency of modern legislation and of modern administration, backed by an influential public opinion to separate women as a privileged class from men. This incontrovertible statement, Mrs. Montefiore has not attempted to gainsay, but, on the contrary, her sense of fairness has got the better of her and compelled her, in her excellent remarks about prison flogging at the end of her article, to point my moral and adorn my tale.

It is true she traverses my allegations as regards the treatment of the “suffragettes” in gaol. But on this point I am prepared to prove that at least, as to treatment now and for eighteen months past, she is wrong and I am right. Mrs. Montefiore’s imprisonment dates from the very beginning of the present agitation. If I remember rightly, she was among the very first to indulge in the demonstration of going to Holloway rather than pay a harmless and necessary fine for creating a disturbance before the House of Commons. The treatment of the suffragettes during the first week of these imprisonments was, I believe, that accorded to ordinary female offenders.

But Mrs. Montefiore had scarcely been released before the treatment as second-class misdemeanants was decreed for all Suffragettes and has been maintained ever since. Not only so, but I was perfectly right in saying that the additional privileges indicated by me over and above this was given to the two Pankhursts during their last imprisonment and have, I understand, been continued in the more recent cases. Mrs. Despard, in a speech, has, in fact, acknowledged the favoured treatment accorded her and her colleagues. Will Mrs. Montefiore deny the above to be facts? Certainly no male Socialist ever had this exceptional treatment.

My opponent pleads for women to be regarded as human beings pure and simple and not as a sex. Unfortunately, this is hardly possible. Apart from the indirect sex-characteristics which, interpenetrate their whole nature and activity, it would seem as though they cannot forget their sexual organs. Thus the “Suffragettes” deliberately adopt a policy of scimmages and rough-and-tumbles and then whimper about impossible “indecent assaults” on the part of the wicked men-stewards whose function it is to resist their efforts at disorder, attempted rapes to the accompaniment of organ-*obligato* in the Albert Hall, etc.! Whether these wild fictions are the result of hysterical hallucination or are lies sans phrase I will not pretend to decide, but, anyway, they tend to show the extreme difficulty of even Suffragettes forgetting their sexual side in the narrow sense of the phrase. It would seem impossible for the unhallowed hand of man to touch their sacrosanct if riotous persons without setting their sexual imaginations at work. I should not

have mentioned this but for Mrs. Montefiore's challenge as to forgetting the sexual character of women and thinking of them merely as human beings.

If Mrs. Montefiore seriously calls in question the privileged position of woman as against man in the present day, I am afraid it shows that she reads her newspaper with an eye blind to all she does not wish to find there. The law and its administration reflects an influential section of public opinion. This public opinion regards it as axiomatic that women are capable of everything men are capable of, that they ought to have full responsibility in all honourable and lucrative functions and callings. There is only one thing for which unlimited allowance ought to be made on the ground of their otherwise non-existent womanly inferiority, and that is their own criminal or tortious acts! In a word, they are not to be held responsible, in the sense that men are, for their own actions when these entail unpleasant consequences for themselves. On the contrary, the obloquy and, where possible, the penalty for the wrong-doing is to be shifted on to the nearest wretched man with whom they have consorted. I cannot quote unlimited cases, but, by way of illustration I will mention two that occur to me on the spur of the moment.

Some three years ago a woman deliberately shot at and wounded a solicitor (a married man) with whom she had had relations. The act was so premeditated that it came out in evidence she had been practising shooting with the revolver for days before-hand. There was, moreover, no question of a child in the case, and not even one of financial embarrassment, as she was in receipt of a quarterly allowance under a trust. Hence the case presented itself as a cold-blooded one of attempted murder without a single circumstance of attenuation. The woman was sentenced to the very lenient penalty of seven years penal servitude. (Had a man attempted to murder in this way a jilting mistress he would have received, without doubt, twenty years at least, if not a life sentence.). Now, it seems incredible but it was a fact, that a campaign was immediately started throughout the whole of the press, largely by "advanced" women and male feminists in favour of this dastardly female criminal, who only fell short of being a murderess by accident! The second case is that of Daisy Lord last year. To read the gush on that occasion one might have thought that the murder of new-born children represented the highest ideal of motherhood. This Daisy Lord became for the nonce a kind of pinchbeck Madonna in the eyes of the feminist public. Such women as the above ought of course to have equal voting rights with men, but equal consequences for their actions – oh, dear no! The extent to which feminist sentiment can fling justice to the winds in these days, is shown by the savage demand, in cases of infant murder, for vicarious vengeance on one who, as regards the offence in question, is wholly innocent, to wit, on that vile and obnoxious person "the man."

This feminist attitude of public opinion has been sedulously cultivated, not only by means of journalism, but in literature and art for over a generation, the aim being to portray the "man" as an ignoble, mean creature, as a foil to the courage, the resource, the gentle virtues of the woman. It is done too in a very subtle way. Who has not seen the well-known picture representing the Thames Embankment at night, and an "unfortunate" possessing an angelic face being taken from the river, with a gentleman and lady in evening dress who have just got out of a cab in the foreground, the gentleman with ostentatious callousness – brute that he is – turning away and lighting a cigarette, and the lady – gentle creature – bending over the dripping form and throwing her hands up in sympathetic horror? It is by clap-trap of this sort that sentimental feminism is evoked and nourished. Only the other day I received a provincial Socialist paper (ILP)

containing a *feuilleton* with the story of a woman who had killed her baby, and who died after a few weeks in prison – the moral being apparently the monstrous wickedness of imprisoning such women at all, rather than rewarding them with a comfortable pension for life. There are well-known writers in leading magazines who systematically take delight in painting their own sex in an abject light, by way of pandering to current feminist prejudices.

The privileged position of women is illustrated in a small way by railway compartments for “ladies only,” by reserved seats in the British Museum reading room, etc. The New York elevated railway has, I read, begun to reserve whole carriages for women from which men are rigidly excluded, no matter how full the train may be otherwise. For, be it remembered, although men are forbidden access to female reserves, women in all these cases have the run of the whole available space. There are no male reserves. This game was tried on last year in the LCC tramcar from Tooting. Fortunately, one fine morning some enterprising young men were found who had the pluck to be “unmanly” and “unchivalrous” enough to fling the female crowd in all its weakness and womanhood remorselessly aside and board the trams themselves. The reserve tram, which proved to be illegal, was then dropped.

Mrs. Montefiore denies that Feminists who are also Socialists desire anything other than absolute equality. If so, I would suggest to these worthy comrades that they occasionally made their protests heard against the existing favouritism of the law and its administration as regards women – not to speak of custom and conventional sentiment – rather than concoct bogus grievances on the other side.¹ Mrs. Montefiore quotes with approval the saying of Mrs. Lida Parce that “woman” needs the ballot to “enable her to remove those special and artificial disabilities which have been placed upon her by male legislation.” Now, I must again insist that Mrs. Montefiore should know as well as I do that at the present time in this country no such disabilities exist – any apparent grievance being invariably traceable as necessary corollary to the obligation of the husband to maintain his wife. Should any collateral consequence of this vassalage of the husband involve some slight inconvenience to the wife, the Feminists pounce upon it and begin to shriek for all they are worth! (The cases adduced by Mrs. Montefiore are themselves mainly connected with the husband’s compulsion to keep his wife.)

If Mrs. Montefiore is right in asserting that our Socialist votaries of the Feminist cult only claim equality, I can only say that others (including some of those with whom Mrs. Montefiore herself has erstwhile consorted) have distinctly expressed the intention of themselves and their adherents to use the vote to legislate against men. Moreover this tendency has shown itself already, I believe, in some of the puritanical legislation of Australia. With the sex-bias as manifest as it is in the average Woman’s Righter, it could hardly be otherwise. Women form nowadays a powerful sex-trust. Men do not. On the contrary, they use their political power to confer privileges on the opposite sex, which they seem always to prefer before their own.

One word in conclusion. Mrs. Montefiore rashly takes for granted that the men I referred to as somewhat unwillingly giving their assent to Female Suffrage and in secret preferring Manhood Suffrage are not Socialists. *They are Socialists*. If they were not Socialists there would obviously be no reason for reticence or secrecy as to their real inclinations or convictions. The Socialist Party has been rushed into an official acceptance of the Feminist dogma, but this does not necessarily mean that all Socialists accept it precisely with enthusiasm, although from want of

courage, or perhaps from (what I should deem) a mistaken view of policy, they may choose in public to keep their own counsel.

Footnote:

1. I have just cast my eye down Lady McLaren's Woman's Charter given in to-day's paper. One of the demands is, I see, that "no married woman should be bound to accept a foreign domicile." This is delightful! A poor man cannot get work in this country and has to take a position abroad. At her sweet whim his wife may live apart from him as a single woman and compel him to keep her all the same! Here we have a splendid example of "woman's right" to treat man as a slave!

Source: Why I am an Anti Suffragist, *Social Democrat*, Vol.13, no.5, May 1909, pp.200-206.

Women's Privileges and "Rights" (1909)

An anonymous lady writing over the signature "Fair Play" treats the readers of the *Social-Democrat* to what an admirer describes as a "spirited reply" to my article *Why I am an Anti-Suffragist*. There is one thing for which I am grateful to my "spirited" opponent and that is that she has the candour to throw overboard at starting the hollow pretence that sex-equality is the aim of the female-suffragists. "Women demand," she says, "both deference from, and equality with, men." So there we have it. She goes on to state that they lay claim to this "deference" on the ground of their sex. Socialists who profess to believe in equality and also in Feminism, please note! This "deference" to sex she apparently claims on the ground of chivalry, but here I would remind "Fair Play" that, as she herself points out, chivalry has nothing to do with sex as such.

Chivalry may exact a "deference" toward a sick or an aged woman as it may toward a sick or infirm man. But the attempt to make it run on the lines of sex-distinction is untenable on any rational ground. An ordinary healthy strong woman has no more claim to be an object of special chivalry than an ordinary healthy strong man. If men are muscularly stronger than women, women are, as has often been pointed out, constitutionally stronger than men. Women can bear much severer strains than men can, with impunity. The recuperative power of the female organism is well-known to physiologists.

But there is a curious zeal on the part of Feminists to insist on this point of the muscular inferiority of women to men while indignantly repudiating inferiority in all other directions. Thus "Fair Play": "But though nature has handicapped women physically, she has not done so as far as brains are concerned." Now as far as most persons' observation and reading of well-known facts are concerned, it is indubitable that they point, *prima facie*, to an, at least, equally great, if not greater, mental inferiority to men than the physical (muscular) inferiority – so strongly emphasised by Feminists. It is neither less nor more easy to rebut or contest the physical inferiority than it is the mental. The reason of the aforesaid procedure on the part of Feminists is, however, not far to seek. The only semblance of ground for the privileging of women, for their exemption from all the disagreeable duties of citizenship, is this ground of physical weakness. But when it comes to the question of mental weakness that is quite another story. Although we might naturally expect inferiority on the physical side to involve inferiority on the psychical side also, not perhaps in any given individual, but taking the sex as a whole, and although facts point to, at least, equally great mental as physical inferiority between the average woman and the average man, we are nevertheless asked to ignore all these considerations, and in a humble and contrite spirit accept the Feminist dogma that women, while physically weaker, are mentally as good as men – with the practical corollary, of course, that while all honourable or remunerative functions ought to be open to women, they are to be jealously guarded from all arduous occupations as also from the legal consequences of their own criminal or tortious acts.

I instanced the Tooting tramway incident as an act of commendable pluck on the part of those concerned in it to boldly challenge the attempt of woman's righters to "jump the claim" to chivalry as a special right of the sex they champion. But there is another point Feminists conveniently overlook. It is this: That granting the "weakness" argument, this very weakness, to

whose claim chivalry may per se be granted, forfeits its claim when it presumes upon that claim and becomes aggressive. Aggressive weakness deserves no quarter – *à la guerre, comme à la guerre*.

“Fair Play” indulges in the usual talk about the injustice of women who pay taxes not having votes. “No taxation without representation” has been, as we all know, the political mot d’ordre of the middle classes in their struggle for independence against noble and monarch. It is the affirmation of the dependence of political power on acquired property; but the modern Socialist is precisely engaged in combating the notion of basing political rights on a property qualification at all, so for him, at least, the argument in question can have no special weight. For the rest, the terrible grievance of taxation without representation seems to me, in any case, somewhat exaggerated. I rent a humble dwelling in a French town, for which I duly pay my “*impôt de l’état*,” without any right to vote for candidates for the Chamber; but yet, strange to say, I don’t feel myself groaning under a particularly monstrous injustice. Provided the recognised governmental functions of protection, etc., are duly carried out, I fail to see that the payment of a moderate tax for them involves such an outrageous violation of rectitude as many other things in our present social order. Taxes rest on private property, which is guaranteed to the holders by the existing State. Hence it seems not unnatural that all possessed of private property should pay proportionate taxes, quite apart from the question of direct representation. When the State levies a personal or blood tax – e.g., conscription – it is quite a different matter. This does not rest on property, but on the personal life and labour of the individual. Here a claim to direct personal participation in the machinery of government is infinitely stronger. But an obligatory personal service of this nature the State never claims from women.

Women bear children, it is said. Good. But there is no governmental compulsion that they should do so. They do so in the performance of a natural function, not as a public duty. All that the State demands of women in this connection is that they shall not kill their babies when they have them, and even this is considered hard on the poor, oppressed creatures (cf., the Daisy Lord agitation). The absurdity of comparing the risks of childbed with those of the battlefield and its horrors, only shows the extremities to which Feminists are reduced for weapons to refute a very obvious and straightforward argument.

“Fair Play” commends Georges Sand for her disregard of convention in her life. But who is it that most slavishly licks the boots of Mrs. Grundy in questions, say, of free marriage, in which Georges Sand so conspicuously (and rightly as I think) asserted her claim to personal freedom? Just women! It is precisely on the ground of the servile puritanism of women to conventional moral shibboleths that many persons, not otherwise adverse to woman suffrage, dread any increase in the direct influence of women in public affairs. “Fair Play,” like other Feminist advocates, seizes upon questions of minor social “deferences” and carefully omits to notice the main indictment of anti-suffragists, namely, the privileged legal position of women under “man-made law” and administration, a position which the avowed aim of Suffragists is to strengthen and extend. The woman, who is alleged to be mentally equal to man, is excused the legal punishment for her crime because she is a woman. A workman was hanged in Ireland last week for flogging his female child to death; a woman a few years ago, also in Ireland, in a well-known cause célèbre, for a precisely similar offence, viz., torturing a child to death, got twelve months’ imprisonment. Let “Fair Play” defend such iniquities as this (which, in a minor form, are

occurring weekly and daily) if she dare! The WSPU would presumably, while maintaining the death sentence on the man, reduce that of the woman to three months' imprisonment as a first-class misdemeanant!

The cant about "brute force" is not impressive. As "Fair Play" must know, "brute force" is the final appeal of every institution and every right. What Feminists want is to have the "brute force" at the disposal of men exercised in favour of women. They want to set men to "bully" other men into submission to the demands of the female sex. This is the true meaning of the agitation for the franchise. It is not a question of sweet reasonableness versus brute force, but of brute force exercised on behalf of one sex rather than another. Suffragists want to place the female sex in a position to legislate, i.e., to command the brute force of the State (wielded by men) in their own interests. Hence the denunciation of "man-made law" which already gives woman a position of legal domination over the man, but not enough apparently to satisfy the rapacious will-to-power possessed by the Feminist members of the sex.

The task of Feminism is to paint a privileged sex in the colours of an oppressed one. Naturally this difficult task can only be accomplished by a game of "bluff" of the most impudent kind and by the wholesale "hocussing" of public opinion by falsehoods, and at the same time by the most strenuous attempts to prevent the light of fact being let in. Of the latter there has been evidence only recently within the SDP in the demand of Mr. Herbert Burrows at the Conference that the pamphlet published by the Twentieth Century Press, *The Legal Subjection of Men* – in which the present state of the law and its administration as between the sexes is given – should be suppressed, and also in the representations made to the Editor from a "Women's Committee" of the body that I should be muzzled and any statement of mine adverse to Feminism be excluded from the party organs. For the former we have only to consult the current literature of Feminism in the daily and weekly press. The desperate attempt to secure privileges for the Suffragettes is a topical case in point.

Those who "gas" most about "political" offences and "first-class" prison treatment know perfectly well (1) that there is not and never has been any distinction in English law or custom drawn between "political" and other offences as regards prison treatment. They know well enough that men galore, among them Socialist speakers imprisoned for the technical offence of obstruction, have had no "first-class" treatment and that no one has suggested they should have. They also know (2) that even if the distinction as to "political" imprisonment existed – breaking windows, assaulting the police, persistent personal molestation, etc., could not possibly be regarded as other than common law offences obnoxious to an ordinary common-law punishment. In fact, the sympathisers with Suffragettism are quite aware that they are playing a comedy in the hope of hoodwinking public opinion. This comedy became screaming farce when Mr. Keir Hardie posed as the innocent and indignant redresser of female wrongs, and suggested to the Home Secretary that the law needed amending to raise prison treatment of women to a level with that of men! Fancy these petted and pampered hussies – who, after deliberately breaking the law, are allowed to assault warders, throw their food and utensils out of window, having previously smashed the same – with practical impunity – having then only to go without their dinners for a day or two in order to have their sentences of two or three months remitted; and think of what would happen to a man did he venture upon but a tithe of the outrages these despicable females on the hunt for cheap martyrdom allow themselves with perfect assurance, relying upon their sex

immunity and the limitless forbearance of male authorities! Heroism is a cheap commodity when one knows beforehand there is no danger of any unpleasantness worth speaking of, no matter what one does. For men the lash, the plank-bed and weeks of semi-starvation and solitary confinement! For women, at worst, a few days of arrest in cells, the airiness and comfort of which the Secretary of State personally supervises! And yet there are Socialists who profess to think it unjust that a section of the community, weltering in privilege of every description, should not, at the same time, be accorded the political rights accruing to the section deprived of these advantages. Truly, there is no accounting for the operations of sex-prejudice in certain minds. No, no, my "spirited" female friend, justify the name you have assumed and show us that you have a distant notion, at least, of what constitutes "Fair Play," as regards this question!

Source: Women's Privileges and "Rights," *Social Democrat*, Vol.13 no.9, September 1909, pp.385-391.

Uni-Sexual Criminal Law (1910)

Dr. Oldfield's piteous whine for exempting women from the extreme penalty of the law while retaining it for men is hardly calculated to attract to his society those in whom the modern Feminist propaganda has left a rudimentary sense of justice. He has simply let the cat out of the bag. It now appears that the so-called "Society for the Abolition of Capital Punishment" is no more than a blind; it really amounts to a Feminist "fake" for securing immunity for women from crimes for which the law exacts the extreme penalty for men. "What argument can any reasoning man have for perpetuating upon our statute book the crime of woman-hanging?" Answer: Precisely the same argument (if any) that the aforesaid "reasoning man" has for "perpetuating on our statute-book the crime of" **man-hanging** – neither more nor less.

Dr. Oldfield presumably believes in Female Suffrage. He believes, that is, that women are intellectually capable of full political rights with men, and yet, on the other hand, he denies them to be morally capable with men of distinguishing right from wrong. "The passions that sway women to murder," he says, "are such as to make them wholly irresponsible for their actions." If so it is quite clear that the inferiority of woman to man is of such a stupendous character that any talk of sex-equality is not merely unsound, but is on the face of it absurd. Most unprejudiced persons would probably consider that the statement above quoted, while applying to some female criminals also applied to some male criminals. But Dr. Oldfield wants to make sex the dividing line.

If Dr. Oldfield refers to the *crime passionel*, and wishes to exempt this particular form of crime from the death penalty, why should he limit the exemption to one sex only? For my own part, I can see no reason whatever for special leaning towards the *crime passionel* in either sex. But be I right or wrong in this, there is no gainsaying that this type of crime is to be met with in both sexes alike. Of course, we have the usual snivelling appeal for chivalry towards the gentle murderess – the baby-farmer, the wholesale poisoner, the "female bluebeard"! My own feeling is that male chivalry ought really, if it is worth anything, to proclaim Divine Woman to be above the law, once for all – this would simplify matters, and be something like an adequate recognition of the "dignity of Womanhood."

Dr. Oldfield does not disdain the demagogic art of working up an effect by harrowing his readers —only unfortunately rather stale drugs have had to be used for the process – a case alleged to have occurred some 150 years ago at Oxford, and something which probably never actually happened at all (at least in this country), viz., the scalding to death of female prisoners. The only instance in which this punishment is recorded as having been inflicted, I believe I am right in saying, was on a mere man, named Rose, in the reign of Henry VIII. Dr. Oldfield, however, thinks, I suppose, that mere men (other than himself) don't mind the procedure so much as women.

I have described Dr. Oldfield's society as a blind for something other than what it professes. I go further, and say that its policy of sex-favouritism constitutes it the worst enemy of its avowed aim. If there is anything likely to retard that complete abolition of capital punishment which so

many of us desire, in the present state of public feeling, it is the abolition of the death-penalty for women. As Mr. Collinson, of the Humanitarian League, has more than once pointed out, these uni-sexual penal laws are the greatest foes of progress in humanity. The abominable enactment of 1820, which abolished flogging for women while retaining it for men, has left our prison system saddled with the lash ('for men only,' of course) ever since. "Should we hang women"? Yes, emphatically, precisely so long as we hang men, and no longer!

E. BELFORT BAX.

P. S. Dr. Oldfield tries to score a point by maintaining that the non-enfranchisement of women justifies a difference between the penal sauce for goose and gander. But many men also do not possess the franchise. So his argument, stripped of feminist sentiment, resolves itself into the following proposition: "No non-electors ought to be hanged"

Source: 'Uni-Sexual Criminal Law' in *New Age*, 16 May 1910, p. 59

Feminism and Female Suffrage (1910)

First and foremost amongst the rights claimed by Feminists for women is the political franchise. The reasons for this claim are based, one on abstract justice, the assumption being that women are, on the average, substantially similar and equal to men in intellectual and moral capacity; and the other on the practical consideration that, as things are, women constitute a cruelly-oppressed section of the community, and that, as with any other division of the community similarly situated, the political franchise is the first essential to their obtaining their legitimate social rights.

Now, in the present article it is proposed to deal exclusively with the last point while conceding the other for the sake of the argument. In doing so, I propose to show, as briefly as possible, not only, that women at the present time, considered as women and apart from the class to which they belong, suffer no sort of social injustice to which the men of their class are not equally exposed, but, on the contrary, that as women they enjoy privileges, and hence constitute a privileged order of human beings, not only as against the men of their class, but as against men generally, us men. If this be so, I contend not only does the practical urgency of the Suffrage claim, even if it were conceded in the abstract, fall to the ground, but even the abstract right itself would disappear, since the granting of it would amount to the piling up of an additional privilege on an already privileged class.

That the object of a large number of these women who are now clamouring for the franchise is not merely to maintain but to extend their legal privileges is evident to anyone. They want the suffrage as a weapon wherewith to carry on a sex-war, with a view to the dominance of the female. That this means countering evolution with a vengeance I will merely remark in passing. In early forms of life the female may perhaps be taken as representing the most important element of the species. As the male element evolved, however, the higher function of the species became more and more absorbed by the male, and the female more and more relegated to the function of reproduction. The subordination of the female element by the male has been a characteristic feature of evolution from the lower to the higher throughout the whole course of biological, as of sociological, development.

But to address ourselves to our more immediate purpose, which is to show the privileged status of women before the law, alike in itself and still more in its administration. Let us begin with the civil law, and, first of all, with that relating to the status of the married woman. No woman can be imprisoned for debt ("contempt of court") no matter what means she may possess, although her husband may be for the non-payment of her debts. Not even can her property be attached for the payment of a debt if settled on her in due form. Neither can she be served with a bankruptcy order unless in relation to a business carried on apart from her husband and in her own name. She is free to leave her husband, and he has no legal power to detain her or compel her to return. He has no control over her personal property. She, on the other hand, can obtain an order for restitution of conjugal rights, by which he is ordered to return, or she can obtain alimony or maintenance, according to her "station in life."

The husband is responsible for any slander or libel she may commit although he knew nothing of it or even disapproved it. He is liable, that is, for damages and costs, while she escapes with absolute impunity. From the above it will be seen that the infamous British law sticks at no outrage on the most elementary principles of common rectitude in privileging the married woman at the cost of her husband. Not that this is by any means a complete statement of the case. To have given such, with the necessary detail and references to law reports, would have carried us much beyond the limits admissible in the present article.

Among all the women's rights advocates I am not aware of one who, in her zeal for equality between the sexes, has ever suggested abolishing the right of maintenance of the wife by the husband. On the contrary, they are usually only too eager to increase the husband's burdens in this connection. By an Act passed in 1895 this liability for maintenance was extended to a wife notwithstanding her adultery. It must be remembered here that it is not alone by actual statute that wives are favoured at the expense of their husbands, but that judge-made or decision law is even still more operative in this direction. As has been remarked of the judges in this matter, "every moth-eaten scrap of privilege which is in favour of the wife they retain. All privileges of the husband, no matter how firmly established, they deny as ever having existed." An illustration of this is to be found in the statement of Lord Halsbury in the Jackson case that a husband had never the right in English to restrain his wife! The pro-Feminist bias of judges is no less marked in civil than in criminal proceedings.

Let us now turn to the criminal law. A wife enjoys, at present in this country, practical immunity for all offences of which her husband is the victim. Gaol and public obloquy are the lot of the husband, as we all know, for similar offences towards the wife. The wife, without forfeiting her right of maintenance, may insult, slander, or libel her husband. The wife is free to neglect every one of her recognised duties, while the husband has no redress. If, on the other hand, the husband neglects her he is at once liable to a police-court separation order with confiscation of property, or wages, for her maintenance. It must be remembered here that everything of which the wife chooses to complain (e.g., coming home late at night) will be held by the Court to constitute neglect, just as everything the wife chooses to call cruelty will be construed as such by a similar chivalrous tribunal. A husband can be arrested and imprisoned for deserting his wife, whereas a wife may desert her husband with impunity.

But it is not so much in the letter of the law that its sex-favouritism is most conspicuously illustrated. It is in the spirit of its administration that this sex-favouritism appears in its strongest light. An assault by a woman on a man, certainly by a wife on her husband, is lightly punished if at all. That this is so can be tested by anyone who likes to read the police reports regularly. Again, a case is hardly known of a woman being sentenced to imprisonment for bigamy. Men commonly receive seven years for this offence. Similarly, a woman is practically allowed full freedom to commit perjury in the Divorce Court with a view to establishing a case of adultery against her husband. Let the husband but try the same game on and he will find quite another pair of shoes awaiting him. Even if the perjury be committed to exculpate himself – a thing regarded as a matter of course in the wife – the husband is by no means secure from the danger of penal servitude.

The only case in which perjury is permitted to a man without consequences is where it is committed (say in the Divorce Court) in order to guard or whitewash the character of a woman. The letter of the law in criminal cases is supposed to apply equally to both sexes, but the practical difference in its application is so flagrantly glaring as to hardly need animadversion. We all know the savagely vindictive sentences passed by police magistrates and judges for the most trivial wife assaults and for common assaults generally where a female is the object of them.

As regards indecent assaults, the late Baron Huddleston remarked that in his experience men required far more protection against women than women against men. The reason for this is obvious. It is hardly known, even in the most malicious charge of this kind, that the female plaintiff has ever been prosecuted, much less convicted, for perjury. With this absolute immunity, this dastardly form of blackmailing has naturally flourished among a certain section of the female population. It is even encouraged by the law, for by the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 a boy of fourteen can be convicted for committing a sexual offence with a girl of sixteen, to which he was actually incited by the latter, who, by virtue of her sex, is held guiltless by the law. I know of a case in which a female was produced as witness against several boys, younger than herself, whom she had seduced, but the Court held that this precocious creature could not be punished, although her victims were duly sent to gaol.

As regards prison treatment, it is well known that flogging is absolutely abolished by the Act of 1820 where women are concerned. Hanging is practically abolished by usage for women who murder men. Women, if they find prison discipline irksome to them, have, as a rule, only to create a sufficient disturbance to get it relaxed. A very flagrant case of this kind occurred some years ago at Wormwood Scrubbs. In any case the duration of sentence is, on the average, about one-third that which a man would receive for a like offence, while the "hard-labour" is generally little more than nominal.

I have above given a few of the leading points in the favouritism of the law towards women. Those who wish to pursue the matter in further detail, list of cases etc., may be referred to a pamphlet published some twelve years ago by the Twentieth Century Press entitled *The Legal Subjection of Men*. This pamphlet, I may observe, which gives the state of the law and its administration at the time of writing, and which holds good in all essentials to-day, has been studiously ignored and boycotted by the feminist faction, well knowing, as they did, that a perusal of it would have burst up once for all that exploitation of popular ignorance and prejudice on which their agitation is based. In the face of the statement of law and of facts there given, the game of bluff by which the advocates of "woman's rights" succeed in drawing tears from guileless simpletons by diatribes on the cruelly unjust status of Women under man-made laws, would have ceased to be possible. We will now turn to an argument which is sure to crop up. What, it may be said, has all this to do with the right of women to the franchise? Women, it may be urged, are not responsible for these iniquitously sex-biassed laws, or for the administration of the law. The answer to this is, that the chief argument for the imperativeness and urgency of votes for women insisted on by Suffragettes is mainly the unfairness of treatment meted out to women. Now, it is clear that when it is shown that much-decried man makes laws wholly and solely in the interests of the opposite sex and to the detriment of his own, any conclusions drawn

from the contrary assumption vanish in smoke. If it be alleged, further, that women do not want these privileges, my reply is, why do they not say so in the course of their agitation?

Instead, not only do those who are most zealous in clamouring for the franchise do their best to bluff their dupes by posing as the victims of a non-existent male oppression, but they, often enough, expressly proclaim their intention of pressing forward legislation the effect of which would be to enhance the existing privileges of their sex. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that, although it may be true that women in general are not directly responsible for the present state of the law and public sentiment, this is largely due to the persistent action of the feminist agitation during the last two generations, so that sex-conscious women at least, are in a very definite sense responsible for it. Finally, their position, as a specially privileged class, is surely incompatible with the claim to the possession in addition thereto, of the political rights of those not so privileged.

In the present article I have only dealt briefly with one aspect of this question. I may point out in conclusion that the existing state of public opinion on the subject registers the fact that sex-conscious women have exploited the muscular weakness of their sex and have succeeded in forging a weapon of tyranny called "chivalry" which enables them to ride rough-shod over every principle of justice and fair play, Men are cowed by it, and fail to distinguish between simple weakness per se which should command every consideration, and that aggressive weakness which trades upon "chivalry" and deserves no quarter.

Source: 'Feminism and Female Suffrage' in *New Age*, 30 May 1910, p. 88-89

A Creature of Privilege (1911)

The case for Anti feminism or Virilism – understanding by the term the opposition to the assumption of an equality of capacity between the sexes, and of the consequences drawn from that assumption to wit of admitting or even thrusting women into all public functions and into possession of all rights hitherto occupied or possessed by men – rests upon the fact that that initial assumption has never been proved and that the prima facie evidence of its fallacy, which has dominated the views of mankind in general on the subject to within two or three generations ago, has never been rebutted. The practical problem before us to-day as regards the position of the sexes resolves itself into three questions: -

- (1) Is there an appreciable difference in capacity between the sexes?
- (2) Granting a difference to exist, is it of such a nature as to render it desirable or undesirable that women should occupy the same place that men do in the community or render it possible that they should fulfill the same functions? (When I say desirable I mean of course from the point of view of efficiency and the common welfare.)
- (3) Does democratic equity demand a mechanical equality at any price between the sexes such as is professedly contended for by feminists and the great symbol of which is the demand for female suffrage?

These three questions are intimately connected. The first question would be answered, willingly or unwillingly, by most responsible persons, even on the feminist side, in the affirmative. To deny a difference, even a fundamental difference, between the sexes in view of the facts is scarcely possible. I believe there are some persons on the feminist side who will go even this length but they are not numerous. It is in the second and third questions that the main diversity of view comes out. The feminist denies that the difference involves inferiority or, if it does, inferiority sufficiently marked for absolute social and political equality to jeopardise the interests of the community. The antifeminist, on the contrary, does regard the admitted difference as involving inferiority, at least in certain directions or, to put it politely, unsuitability for the performance of certain functions. With regard to the third question, perhaps the strongest divergence appears, the feminist maintaining that no matter how great the inferiority, how great the unsuitability, and in consequence, how great the prejudice to the community as a whole, democratic equity demands the concession at all costs of the suffrage and all that the suffrage implies. The antifeminist or, as I prefer to call him, the Virilist, on the contrary, denies that the political equality postulated as a democratic principle necessarily applies to sex.

It applies, of course, to differences of class and to differences of race, at least where races are approximately on the same level of development. There you have to do with economic distinctions, traceable to the possession or not of wealth, or differences deducible from tradition language and physical environment. In the case of sex it is otherwise. Here a deep lying physiological distinction is involved. Here, therefore, you have a new element imported into the case, which bars your appeal to the general democratic principle of equality, which has never

contemplated this element till the present feminist agitation arose, and hence the acceptance of the principle of democratic equality, as hitherto understood, by no means necessarily involves the advocacy of the concession of political power to women. To assume without further discussion that the principles of democracy necessarily as such include the demands of feminism is a begging of the question.

However I do not propose on this occasion to discuss at length these fundamental questions affecting our view on the relative positions of the sexes. For the sake of argument, I am prepared to concede the feminist case as it is stated by its advocates. Let us assume complete mechanical equality between the sexes, such as feminists demand to be at once feasible and desirable. The important questions then arising are first of all where the incidence of inequality obtains at the present time and secondly whether the equality, which is professedly aimed at by the feminist party, is not a blind concealing other and even opposite aims to those professed. The advocates of female suffrage base at least the urgency of their claim, if not the claim itself, on the fact that without the franchise women must be unfairly treated by man-made law and its administration. They allege that man-made law is invariably in the interests of the male sex, and must in the nature of things be so. Now, I have already on various occasions shown up this shameless falsehood in its true light, but inasmuch as there are always enough persons ignorant of law and fact in this connection, and with sentimental proclivities ever ready to accept eagerly any statement tending to show woman in the role of victim and man in that of oppressor, one can hardly restate the truth of the case often enough and I therefore propose to give here a brief review of the facts.

First of all let us take the marriage laws of the present day in England.

(1) The law of breach of promise, as is well known, enables the woman to obtain oftentimes vindictive damages against the man for refusing to marry her after having once engaged himself to her, notwithstanding that the breaking off of the engagement on his part may be on the best of grounds and really for the advantage of both parties. Should the woman in the course of her action commit perjury she is never under any circumstances prosecuted; on the contrary, even in such case the male victim is glad enough to settle the matter with money payment (e.g., £3,000, *Gore v Lord Sudeley*, June 10th 1896). It is vain to argue that the law of breach of promise exists also for the man, since it is well known that his legal right in the matter is hardly more than formal and practically a dead letter, while on the other hand, in the case of the woman, no element of misrepresentation or undue influence on her part will cause her to lose her right to compensation. An experienced intriguing woman of the world of thirty or forty may thus entrap a boy of three and twenty with perfect success.

(2) According to the law of England, the right of maintenance accrues solely to the woman. Formerly this privilege was made dependent on her cohabitation with the man and generally decent behaviour to him. Now even these limitations cease to be operative, while the man is liable to imprisonment and confiscation of any property he may have. A wife is now at full liberty to leave her husband, while she retains her right to get her husband sent to gaol, if he refuses to maintain her; to put the matter shortly, the law imposes on the wife no legally enforceable duties whatever towards her husband. The one thing which it will enforce with iron rigidity, is the wife's right of maintenance against her husband/ In the case of a man of the well

to do classes, the man's property is confiscated by the law in favour of his wife. In the case of a working man the law compels the husband to do corvee for her as the feudal serf had to do for his lord. The wife on the other hand, however wealthy, is not compelled to give a farthing towards the support of her husband, even though disabled by sickness or by accident; the single exception in the latter case being, should he become chargeable to the parish, in which case the wife would have to pay the authorities a pauper's rate for his maintenance.

In a word, a wife has complete possession and control over any property she may possess as well as over her earnings, the husband on the other hand is liable to confiscation of capitalised property or earnings at the behest of the law courts in favour of his wife. A wife may even make husband bankrupt on the ground of money she alleges that she lent him, a husband on the other hand has no claim to his wife for any money advanced, since a husband is supposed give, and not to lend, his wife money or other valuables.

(3) A husband is responsible for the torts of his wife against parties at the same time that the present law gives him no control over her in any way whatever. As the late Sir Lockwood expressed it: "If Mrs. Jackson slanders or libels any person, that person can take proceedings, not against Mrs. Jackson but against Mr. Jackson." And this although Mrs. Jackson, of her own will, has left Mr. Jackson and is living apart from him. Similarly, a wife is held by the law to be guiltless of practically any crime committed in the presence of her husband, murder excepted.

(4) No man can obtain a separation or divorce from his wife (save under the Act of 1902, a police court separation for habitual drunkenness alone) without a costly process in the High Court. Every woman can obtain, if not a divorce, at least a legal separation by whining to the nearest police court for a few shillings, which her husband, of course, has to pay. The latter, it is needless say, is mulcted in alimony "at the discretion of the court." This "discretion" is very often of a queer character for the luckless husband. Thus, a working man only earning twenty shillings a week may easily find himself in the position of having to pay from seven to ten shillings a week to a shrew out of his wages.

In cases where a wife proceeds to file a petition for divorce the way is once more smoothed for her by the law at the husband's expense. He has to advance her money to enable her to fight him. Should the case come on for hearing the husband finds the scale still more weighted against him: every slander of his wife is assumed to be true until he has proved its falsity; the slightest act or a word during a moment of irritation, even a long time back, is twisted into what is termed "cruelty", even though such has been provoked by a long course of ill treatment and neglect on the part of the wife. The husband and his witnesses can be indicted for perjury for the slightest exaggeration or inaccuracy in their statements, while the most calculated falsity in the evidence of the wife and her witnesses is passed over.

Not even the grossest allegation on the part of the wife against the husband, even though proved in court to be false, is sufficient ground for the husband to refuse to take her back again, or from preventing the court from confiscating his property, if he resists doing so. Knowledge of the unfairness of the court to the husband, as all lawyers are aware, prevents a large number of men from defending divorce actions brought by their wives. A point should here be mentioned as regards the action of a husband for damages against the seducer of his wife. Such damages

obviously belong to the husband as compensation for his destroyed home life. Now, even these damages our modern judges in their feminist zeal have converted into a fund for endowing the adulteress, depriving the husband of any compensation whatever for the wrong done him. He may not touch the income derived from the money awarded him by the jury, which is handed over by the court to his divorced wife.

It would take us too long to go through all the privileges, direct and indirect, conferred by statute or created by the rulings of judges and the practice of the courts in favour of the wife against the husband. It is the more unnecessary to go into them here, as they may be found in detail as illustrative cases in a pamphlet, in which I collaborated, entitled: *The Legal Subjection of Men* (Twentieth Century Press).

It remains as regards this question of divorce to notice the one point in the divorce law which can possibly be twisted into the semblance of a grievance for the woman. I refer to the rule that, in order to obtain relief, the wife has to prove cruelty in addition to adultery, while the husband is required to prove adultery alone. This is the one straw which the feminist convulsively clutches when confronted with the infamous partiality towards women of the whole body of the English law and its administration. It has done duty now so long that it is getting a little worn, but as the one ewe lamb in the shape of a colourable grievance against divine woman, it is a treasure of inestimable value to the feminist advocate. We will therefore devote a few words to it. Now, I may say at once that so far as I am concerned, this rule might be swept away to-morrow as it probably will be very shortly, without my taking the trouble to lift a finger in its defence.

But any impartial person, who regards the question from the standpoint of present and past conditions, must, I submit, come to the conclusion, that it is prima facie a perfectly reasonable provision. It has its origin mainly in the simple fact that while the woman by her adultery may bring a bastard child into her husband's family, for the maintenance of which he is responsible, the husband, by his adultery, has produced no material injury to the wife. Hence, given the existing conditions of property holding and the conventional views as to the marriage relation, as to the justification of which in themselves I say nothing in this place, given this state of things, I submit, nothing can be more reasonable or fairer than the distinction made by the law in this matter. However, as above hinted, the rule in question is likely soon to be set aside altogether; and meanwhile, its effect notwithstanding feminist objurgating, is more illusory than real, since in our days the judges of the Divorce Court will accept practically anything the wife chooses to complain of as sufficient evidence of legal cruelty, to enable the wife to get her decree. The worst of this is that the farcical legal cruelty of the Divorce Court is often used by feminist judges as an excuse for depriving the husband of the custody of his own children.

The neglect of the husband or family on the part of the wife is no ground for the relief of the husband from his obligation for maintenance &c. Neglect of the wife by the husband is, however, a ground for judicial separation with the usual consequences alimony &c. "Thus," as it has been put, "between the upper and the nether millstone cruelty on the one hand, neglect on the other, the unhappy husband can be legally ground to pieces whether he does anything or whether he does nothing." Personal violence, while severely punished on the part of the husband, is an amusement that the wife can resort to with impunity.

If she is prosecuted by the husband, the result will be at most a fine which he himself has to pay. Should she in very extreme cases be sentenced to imprisonment, the husband, if a poor man, is practically compelled to take her back to live with him on her release. The law in this respect would be better understood if I mention a case, which came under my notice some years ago, in which a humane magistrate had to make a treaty with a married woman who had nearly murdered her husband, by which he consented to let her off scot free, provided she graciously agreed to a separation. Presumably the wretched victim had still to support this female brute. Legally he would have been liable to do so, should she become chargeable to the parish.

From a case taken haphazard from *Lloyd's News*, March 6th 1910, a wife had been allowed under an order of the Court of Chancery to take the whole of her husband's income as well as her own, leaving the husband totally without means to support the children, although presumably the wife being deprived of the custody of the children, had caused the divorce by her "misconduct." This shows to what incredible length the feminist current has influenced the power of the law. From the same journal in another case, the husband had petitioned for divorce, the wife counter-claiming judicial separation, the parties having made it up and being again together. The judge, on the application of the husband's counsel, dismissed the petition for divorce, but declined to dismiss the wife's counter-claim, reserving that for future decision; therefore, the wife living with her husband, who had abandoned his claim and condoned the wife's faults, had still the claim of the wife held in pressure over him, and also her right to apply for a trial of that claim at any time; a monstrous violation, it would appear, of the rectitude of all judicial procedure.

By the decision in the Jackson case above referred to, no compulsion can be exercised on the wife to compel her to obey an order of the court for the restitution of conjugal rights. This had already been provided for so far as the direct action of the law is concerned by Lord Cairns's Act of 1884, which took away the right of the court to enforce obedience by imprisonment or by the attachment of property.

But by a cynical stroke, this same law enacted that the husband's property might be confiscated in the case of disobedience. The Jackson case which decided against the husband's personal rights to retain his wife in the house when she proposed to leave him, i.e. to enforce his legal right to cohabitation is simply in full accordance with the prevailing tendency to free the woman and enslave the man. The Law Lords some years ago extended the principle involved in the above tendency to Scottish law. Previously the law of Scotland allowed desertion for five years to constitute a divorce with the right of re marriage. This arrangement was practically upset by a decision in the House of Lords in 1894, when they refused to grant divorce to a man whose wife had left him for four years and taken her child with her. They justified their new interpretation of the law on the ground that the man did not really want her to come back to him.

But inasmuch as this plea can be started in every case where it cannot be proved that the husband had absolutely grovelled before his wife, imploring her to return, and possibly even then, since the sincerity even of this grovelling might conceivably be called in question, it is clear that the decision practically rendered this old Scottish law inoperative for the husband. As for bigamy, every newspaper reader must be aware that while a man not uncommonly receives seven years for this offence, I think I am not wrong in stating, that no woman has ever been in recent years imprisoned for marrying again during her husband's lifetime.

Having given a cursory statement of the present condition of the law and its administration as regards the matrimonial relation, we will now proceed to deal with the question of the relative incidence of the criminal law on the two sexes. We will start with the crime of murder, especially the murder of a husband or wife, a lover or sweetheart. The law of murder is nominally the same for the woman as for the man, but the effectiveness of its provisions in the two cases is very different.

The general principles as regards women accused of the crime of murder may be roughly formulated as follows: -

The least excuse is deemed sufficient to reduce the crime from murder to manslaughter. In order to secure a conviction, the evidence must be at least ten times as strong as the minimum evidence which would carry a conviction in the case of a man. Should the verdict be one of murder, the death penalty is almost invariably commuted probably at the instance of the jury as well as of the judge. If, as is usually the case, the woman is convicted of manslaughter instead of murder, an almost invariably light and oftentimes merely nominal sentence is passed. For older cases I may refer those interested to the pamphlet before mentioned, but a recent case of a particularly flagrant character may be here given extracted from the Morning Leader (September 23rd, 1908). Mrs. E.B.C, twenty six, widow, was remanded at Marylebone on a charge of murdering her husband. A post mortem examination of deceased revealed a portion of a hat pin three inches in the left lung.

At the inquest, Mrs. C. said, her husband had told her it ran into him and broke off as he was getting into bed. After the funeral the relatives returned to the house and deceased's two brothers entered the room and called prisoner aside. One of them asked her if she ran the hat pin into her husband. "Yes," she replied, "I did it in a fit of passion." He then returned to the room and said "Ladies and gentlemen, Elsie has owned up that she stabbed Arthur in a fit of passion." Finally at the trial the jury found her guilty of manslaughter and on her declaring that she was maddened by her husband accusing her of immorality, she was merely bound over. Now here is a case which had a man been in the dock and his wife the victim, he would undoubtedly have been convicted of murder and probably hanged. But the woman is let off scot free.

A similar case, not quite so recent, is the following: Extract from The Times for January 9th and 16th, 1905, R.G., forty nine, who fatally stabbed A.S., a barrister at law, with whom she had lived for upwards of thirty years, on December 21st, 1904. She was alleged to have stabbed him in the back with a knife at their residence. Jury returned a verdict of manslaughter and she was sentenced by Mr. Justice Darling to six months in the second division!

A further case may be cited, taken from a report in the News of the World of February 28th, 1909. A young woman shot at the local postman with a revolver, the bullet grazed his face, she, having fired point blank at his head. Jury returned a verdict of not guilty although the revolver was found on her when arrested, and the facts were admitted and were as follows: At noon she left her house crossing three fields to the house of the victim, who was at home and alone; upon his appearing she fired point blank at his head, he banged to the door and thus turned off the

bullet, which grazed his face and “ploughed a furrow through his hair.” She had by her, when arrested, a revolver cocked and with four chambers undischarged.

These cases are good illustrations of the attitude taken by judges and juries towards the crimes of murder and attempted murder when committed by women against men. What that attitude is, where crimes of identical nature are committed by men against women, we have only to open our morning newspapers to see.

Let us now take the crime of violent assault with attempt to do bodily injury. The following cases will serve as illustrative examples: — From the News of the World (May 9th, 1909): A nurse in Belfast sued her lost swain for breach of promise. She obtained £100 damages, although it was admitted by her counsel that she had thrown vitriol over the defendant, thereby injuring him, and the defendant had not prosecuted her. Also it was admitted that she had been carrying on with another man. From the Morning Leader of July 8th 1905 I have taken the following extraordinary facts as to the varied punishment awarded in cases of vitriol throwing. That of a woman, who threw vitriol over a sergeant at Aldershot and was sentenced to six months imprisonment without hard labour, while a man, who threw vitriol over a woman at Portsmouth, was tried and convicted at the Plants Assizes on July 7th, 1905 and sentenced by Mr. Justice Bigham to twelve years penal servitude.

As regards the first case, it will be observed that notwithstanding her crime, which in the case of the man was described by the judge as “cowardly and vile” and meriting twelve years penal servitude, the woman was rewarded by damages for £100 to be obtained from the very man whom she had done her best to maim for life, besides being unfaithful to him, and who had generously abstained from prosecuting. But it is not merely in cases of murder, attempted murder or serious assault that justice is mocked by the present state of our law and its administration in the interests of the female sex; the same attitude is observed, the same farcical sentences passed on women, whether the crime be theft, fraud, common assault, criminal slander, or other minor offences.

We have the same preposterous excuses admitted, the same preposterous pleas allowed, and the same farcical sentences passed, if indeed any sentence be passed at all. The following examples I have culled at random: — From John Bull (February 26th, 1910): At the London Sessions Mr. Robert Wallace had to deal with the case of a well-dressed woman living at Hampstead, who pleaded guilty to obtaining goods to the amount of £50 by false pretences. In explication of her crime it was stated, that she was under a mistaken impression that her engagement would not lead to marriage, that she became depressed, and that “she did not know what she said or did”; while in mitigation of punishment it was urged the money had been repaid, that her fiancé could not marry her if she was sent to gaol, and that her life would be irretrievably ruined; and she was discharged. From the Birmingham Post (February 4th, 1902): M.W., twenty six, clerk, pleaded guilty to embezzling £5 1s. 9d., on November 16th £2 2s. 4d. on December 21st, and £5 0s. 9d. on December 23rd last, the moneys of her employers. Prosecuting counsel said prisoner entered prosecutor’s employ in 1900, and in June last, her salary was raised to 27s. 6d. a week. The defalcations, which began a month before the increase, amounted to 134. She had falsified the books, and when suspicion fell upon her, destroyed two books in order as she thought to prevent detection. Her counsel pleaded for leniency on the ground of her previous good character, and

because she was engaged. The Recorder merely bound her over, stating that her parents and young man were respectable, and so was the house in which she lodged. A correspondent mentions in the Birmingham Post of February 8th, 1902, a case where a woman had burned her employer's outhouses and property doing £1,800 worth of damage and got off with a month's imprisonment.

On the other hand the same judge at the same Quarter Sessions thus dealt with two male embezzlers C.C., twenty eight, clerk, who pleaded guilty to embezzling two sums of money from his master in August and September of 1901, amounts not given, was sent to gaol for six calendar months, and S. Gr., twenty four, clerk, pleaded guilty to embezzling 7s 6d and 3s. For the defence it was urged that the prisoner had been poorly paid and the Recorder, hearing that a gentleman was prepared to employ the man as soon as released, sentenced him to three months hard labour. A further and more recent case, and one which is also mentioned in John Bull of February 26th, 1910, is worthy of being noted here: A sentence of a month's hard labour was passed by the Mortlake magistrates on a porter convicted of stealing sixpenny worth of milk from a churn at Barnes railway station. He had been in the employ of the railway company for ten years and nothing was known against him apart from this—at least the only thing against him was that he had not been born a woman.

In cases of annoyance and harassing of men in their business occupation or profession by women, however aggravated, and however serious the injury, the magistrate will generally tell the prosecutor that he cannot interfere. This incident is so common in police court reports that hardly any newspaper reader could fail to remark it. In the opposite case, that of a man harassing a woman, he is invariably called upon to find sureties, failing which he is sent to gaol.

We now come to one of the most infamous pieces of one sided sex-legislation on the statute book I refer to the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1886. The Act in its entire inception shows sufficiently the cloven hoof of feminist bias, but it contains one provision which, to use the Yankee phrase, "fairly licks creation" for its brazen bare faced outrage on every elementary sense of justice. It is well known that the English law has never regarded the corruption of minors by a woman as a crime or even as a misdemeanour. But the Act in question goes a step further. While consecrating this female sex-privilege, it enacts in effect that a boy of fourteen years can be prosecuted and sent to gaol for an offence to which he has been instigated by a girl just under sixteen years, whom the law of course on the basis of the aforesaid sex-privilege holds guiltless.

When one considers the usual greater precocity of girls than boys, the iniquity of such a measure as this will appear in its strongest light. A particularly bad case in point was decided on appeal from the Central Criminal Court to the Court for Crown Cases reserved in June 1894, in which a designing female wretch appeared as witness against a number of boys younger than herself, whom it came out in cross examination, she had been directly instrumental in debauching. In some respects this clause of what is known as Mr. Stead's Act, puts the coping stone on to the legal privileging of women, since here all semblance even of justice and fairness is flung to the winds, and the legal sex-privilege stands forth naked and unashamed. In the pamphlet before referred to will be found a number of illustrative cases collected by the late Dr. Lawson Tait of Birmingham, from his own experience as medical officer of police showing the direct

encouragement offered by the law, as it at present stands, to blackmail and bogus charges on the part of women.

It must not be forgotten as regards the citation of criminal cases illustrating the infamous partiality of the law and its administration towards female prisoners, that one whole class—probably the most numerous—and certainly the most important class of such cases, the law of libel, as it stands to-day, bars anyone from alluding to, individually. I refer to the acquittal of women notoriously guilty on the evidence. This last class of cases as already stated, cannot be used in illustration of the partiality of the law, owing to the incidence of the law of libel, which gives an acquitted person the right of action no matter how notoriously wrongful the acquittal may have been.

We have seen now the privilege at the expense of the man which the law itself and still more its administration affords to women. It remains to consider the preferential treatment in prison after conviction. What prison discipline is for the male offender is perfectly well known: He is liable, in addition to severe physical labour as part of his penalty, to the torture of the plank bed; and for any breach of prison discipline may be given the punishment of flogging. Now, female prisoners are expressly exempted as such from all these frightful aggravations of confinement in gaol. The work they have to do is invariably of a light character, laundry work, needle work, etc...

They are not condemned at night to the plank bed, but are allowed an ordinary mattress and pillow with bed covering, while by the law of England no woman can be flogged for the most heinous offence, even as a part of her sentence, much less at the behest of prison justices for mere breach of rules. It must not be forgotten either here that a sentence of imprisonment on a woman compared with that on a man in a like case is often not more than a third of the duration. A woman has moreover special privileges as regards good conduct marks, and as to the chances generally of being released before her time has expired.

The history of the suffragette movement in this direction is instructive when, according to the newspapers, the prisoners were allowed with practical impunity to bite, scratch, and kick the wardresses, and to throw their food and utensils through the window, and for a long time had only to go for two or three days without their dinner to be let out scot free. Let us picture to ourselves what would have happened to a man under like circumstances: solitary confinement for weeks, bread and water diet, plank bed, lash, &c, even if he were not brought before the magistrates for additional sentence for assault. But even all these exemptions did not satisfy the females in question. Did not they and their male backers make the welkin ring for weeks together with a veritable howl of indignation at the harsh treatment they received—they being political prisoners, if you please?

As regards this last point, most of those who shouted loudest must have known perfectly well that up to that time never had there been recognised in English law or custom any difference as regards prison treatment between political and other offences. How often have male Socialist speakers been imprisoned for the technical offence of obstruction without a voice being raised as to their not receiving first class treatment? Moreover, even had such a distinction ever existed, those who shrieked loudest on the subject could hardly have been so devoid of intelligence, one would think, as not to see that breaking windows, assaulting the police, &c., could not be

considered otherwise than as common law offences, rendering those guilty of them liable to the ordinary punishment for such misdemeanours. Everyone knows that the term “political offence,” apart from actual insurrection, refers to spoken or written words, the attempt to maintain the right of public meeting in the face of, say, a Government order to the contrary, and has never been used to cover the vulgar, silly, and objectless police offences, by which the suffragettes made themselves notorious.

From the state of things of which the foregoing is a very imperfect sketch, it is evident, we are confronted in modern society, in addition to the only too obvious class opposition which divides the possessors and controllers of the land and means of production of wealth, generally from the propertyless proletariat, with another line of demarcation, this time having not an economical, but a physiological basis: that of sex. We have, in fact, society divided into two portions, with the dividing line of sex. One side is held fully responsible for its actions before the law, and fully amenable to the penalties provided by the law for offences, the other section is not held responsible for its actions or, if it is, only in an attenuated degree, and is practically immune from at least all the severer penalties of the law. Such is the position, as regards this much debated question, of the social status and relations of the sexes at the present day.

Now there may be various arguments for the granting of the suffrage to women, as there are undoubtedly many weighty reasons against it, based on the physical intellectual and moral characteristics of women, but quite apart from these considerations, nay, even granting for the sake of argument the justice of the pro suffragists case, even then, I say, so long as women remain as they are to-day in a position of privilege, which exempts them to a large extent from the pains and penalties for committing crimes and breaking the law, generally to which men are liable, so long, quite apart from any other consideration, to talk of their having a right to the suffrage on the ground of democratic justice is a farcical absurdity.

But, it will be observed by the feminist, “women are not responsible for these privileges, which are the work of male legislation!” “All they are asking for is equality!” I have even heard it said: “Your argument tells in favour of admitting women to the franchise, if, as you say, this legislation in which women have had no hand is so bad!” This sounds like a plausible argument, but unfortunately it won’t work. For as a matter of fact, women are largely responsible for the whole body of one sided sex-legislation, which has arisen within the last half century. It is they who have created the public opinion that has rendered it possible. It has been by a ceaseless agitation, by an untiring misrepresentation of fact, by nobbling members of the Press and of Parliament, that the infamous laws we have been considering have come into being.

This has been the work of precisely the same type of women, and in so far as they are yet living, even of the individual women themselves, who are at the present moment clamouring for the franchise. It is only necessary to listen to the leaders of the modern suffrage movement for a few minutes, to find out that their aim is to use the suffrage as a means of forcing on to the statute book more one sided legislation of the same description. What else is the meaning of the outcry against man made laws and of the reiterated assertion that women will never get their rights until they obtain suffrage. No suggestion here that women already possess privileges of which equity would deprive them!

The extent to which “political” women cling to the most iniquitous privileges of their sex is aptly illustrated by the agitation got up lately by the Suffrage Societies for the reprieve of the Italian murderess Napolitano in Canada, who had been condemned to death for having in the most cold blooded manner butchered her husband in his sleep. Verily anything female has the heartfelt sympathy of the “anti-man” suffragette!!

On the contrary, the whole walk and conversation of the present day female agitator is a proof, if such were needed, that it is hoped to exercise directly, by means of the franchise, a similar pressure and for a similar object to that previously exercised indirectly, which we have to thank for the existing sex-privileges.

That the granting of the suffrage to women, in spite of what is often said as regards this point, means sex-tyranny over men by women, is sufficiently indicated by recent results. For example, New Zealand, where, as is well known, women possess the franchise, has recently afforded an instructive case of such tyranny. In the conscription law lately passed there, which of course affects men alone, it is provided that no alcohol shall be permitted in the camps of the citizen soldiers. But this is not all. A deputation of women some time ago interviewed the responsible Minister to exact assurances that the law should not be evaded. That the desired assurances were given was hailed by the spokeswoman of the deputation as a great triumph for the principle of female suffrage. “Did women not possess the vote,” said she, “such a deputation would have been put off with the reply that men must have their drinks!”

If this is not sex-tyranny I do not know what is. Again in Australia (Victoria) where women also possess all political and municipal rights, a law, I understand, has been passed reserving in the parks’ special seats for women, on which, if any man rest, he shall be heavily fined. To come nearer home, in that special resort of the advanced person, the Garden City at Letchworth, teetotalism has at the biennial referendum been hitherto enforced against a majority of male votes by the female inhabitants. Now seeing that it is generally the male proletarian who, after his day’s work, wants his drink, we have here another instance upon a small scale of a piece of sex-despotism.

I put the case once for all, in conclusion, to all advanced women who pretend to advocate equal laws between the sexes, political and otherwise—“are you able to drink of the cup that men drink of and to be baptised with the baptism that men are baptised with?” You know perfectly well that you do not believe you are able and that if you were able, you would certainly not be willing. You know quite well in your heart of hearts, however much you may profess it with your lips, not only that you are not willing to surrender one iota of your present privileges, but that your talk of equality is but a blind!

What you are really aiming at is not merely the consolidation of your existing privileges, but the acquirement of as many fresh sex-privileges, political, social, or economical, as you can obtain. You know perfectly well that the notion of protesting against the sex-privileges you enjoy as unjust has never entered the head of any of your number. Your aim, I again insist, addressing, as I am, of course, the leaders of the present feminist movement, and excluding possible exceptions in the rank and file, your aim is the conversion of the female sex into a dominant sex noblesse!

As a proof that this is the object of the modern woman's agitation, we have only to cast our eyes down the clauses of Mrs. M. Laren's Woman's Charter, one of which is that the husband, in addition to his present burdens, should be compelled to pay a weekly sum to his wife, ostensibly as wages for her housekeeping services, which bien entendu she may perform badly or well or not at all without forfeiting her right to be paid for them at full rate. Another clause is that a wife is to be under no obligation to follow a husband who is compelled by circumstances, in order to earn a livelihood for himself and her, to reside out of the country.

In your endeavours in this respect you are aided by that sex-glamour of which Schopenhauer speaks and by which the bulk of men are hypnotized. You are well aware that it is this sex-blindness which prevents large numbers of men from seeing things as they really are, and upon this you mainly rely for the success of your agitation!

Source: A Creature of Privilege. *The Fortnightly Review*, 110(85) November 1, 1911. p. 919ff

The Problem of Modern Feminism (1912)

We may trace the origin of modern Feminism in a fairly continuous line back to the eighteenth century – to protagonists in revolutionary and pre-revolutionary literature – notably to Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. From that time onward the Feminist question has always been present, though it only became prominent during the second half of the nineteenth century.

It was about the end of the sixties that the Woman's Suffrage plank first made its appearance in the modern Socialist movement, in the original International at the instance of Michael Bakounin and his followers, and was one of the few proposals emanating from that quarter that was accepted by the Marx party. But for a long time the question remained in the background, being hardly referred to at all in the earlier programmes of the Continental parties. In fact, in the German party the "Woman Question," as apart from the general Social question, first received serious attention in 1883 in Bebel's book, the first edition of which was issued under the title of *Woman in the Past, Present, and Future* contained very much Woman and very little Socialism. (In the later editions, under the title *Woman and Socialism*, it is only fair to say, the proportions have been altered.) In this work, Bebel, who virtually admits in his preface that the bulk of the party at that time was against him, maintained the dogma of the equal capacity of woman with man, with its corollary, the right of women to occupy all positions and exercise all functions hitherto controlled by men. In France, Lafargue was active on the Feminist side during the early eighties.

Since then the Feminist dogma has found much favour with Socialists everywhere, and the demand for Female Suffrage has been officially embodied among the planks in the immediate political platform of the Social Democratic party. At the same time, it has been sought to exercise a pressure within the party to prevent dissentient Social Democrats from expressing an adverse opinion.

Time was when Manhood Suffrage was the cry of all Democrats, and there are, doubtless, plenty of Social Democrats to-day who would be glad enough, if they did but dare, to take their stand on the old Suffrage platform, which was good enough for Chartists and earlier Socialists.

The fact is, of course, this sex question cuts athwart other issues. Hence it is that the conventional bourgeois, unwilling as he is to admit the sins of his class towards the proletariat, is often perfectly ready to smite his manly breast and deplore the assumed harshness of his own to the opposite sex. There is no logical reason for Socialism specially championing the position of modern Feminism. That Socialism must bring about changes in the position of women may be allowed, but the special direction of these changes must be the coefficient of the permanent physiological structure and functions of the female sex, with the new economic conditions and the resultant new social forces. To dogmatise on the future as to the precise nature of these changes at the present stage is eminently unscientific.

Let us take the practical issue of the Suffrage. People commonly talk as if the franchise was an end in itself rather than what it is, simply a means to other ends. But Feminists and Suffragists

know very well for what purpose they want the franchise. They intend to use their new weapon to give a further edge to what may be termed anti-man legislation. They rightly think that this class of law-making which they have been so successful in promoting indirectly for a generation past, they will in future, with the leverage of the vote, be able to promote directly with a still greater success. This is what lies behind all protestations of sex equality and the like. The equality desired is the species of equality the chief characteristic of which is to be "all on one side."

At the same time, some of the arguments adduced against Female Suffrage do not strike me in themselves as altogether conclusive. For example, it cannot be denied that the argument as to the sphere of women being the home, though undoubtedly true in the past, and though containing more truth to-day than the average Feminist would admit, has undoubtedly lost some of its force owing to the changed economic conditions of the present time. Then, again, I have heard it argued that contact with the rough and tumble of political life, with its intrigue, ambitions, sordid rivalries, etc., would defile the pure spirit of womanhood.

Well, here again I do not think the argument is altogether convincing, since the rabid Feminist might insist that the pet sex would, on the contrary, infuse an elevating spirit into public life, that a whiff of the breath of Womanhood (with a capital W) would act like magic in disinfecting political life and raising it to a uniform level of pure disinterested virtue. And although we may be personally quite convinced that such would not be the case, yet, seeing that the experiment has not yet been tried on any large scale or for any considerable length of time, it might not be easy to prove our conviction to anyone choosing to affirm the contrary.

Now the foregoing and some other arguments are put forward, I think, by many men with the unconscious desire to avoid acknowledging the real ground of their objections to Female Suffrage. They don't like to state this ground straight out. Some, if hard pressed, will try to shuffle out of admitting it, perhaps even to themselves. But their secret conviction is that women, as a sex, are organically inferior to men, not only physically, but intellectually and morally as well, and hence not fit to be trusted *promiscuously* (i.e. barring exceptions) with political power. Now, no man likes to say this, because it sounds rude and arrogant to "the ladies," even though the evidence, physiological, psychological, historical, and common observational for his conviction, is conclusive for him.

In my essay on *Female Suffrage and its Implications*, I have briefly indicated some of the main heads of this evidence and do not propose to enter into it again here. But I must insist on the fact that for me (barring one other reason which, though decisive for the moment, is not of a fundamental nature, and which I shall refer to directly) there seems no logical ground for opposition to the granting of the franchise to women save the recognition of inferiority, at least, an inferiority *ad hoc*. If one acknowledges complete equality in capacity between men and women, the case for the Suffrage seems to me, in itself, unanswerable.

I have said in itself, since, as things are at present in this and most other countries, even if the capacity for political and administrative judgment were conceded, there is another ground on which, so long as it obtains, it would be just to refuse women the franchise. And this ground is the fact that women at present constitute an almost boundlessly privileged section of the

community. A woman may, in the present day, do practically what she likes without fear of anything happening to her beyond a nominal punishment. The English marriage laws, with their right of the wife to maintenance, give her almost unlimited power to oppress her husband. (See a case reported in detail, with names and witnesses, etc., in *John Bull* for September 19, 1908.)

Not very long ago a case occurred in the north of England where a workman, out of employment, was about to be committed to prison at his wife's behest for omitting to pay her the weekly allowance ordered by the court. Exasperated, the poor fellow struck his tyrant a fatal blow – hanged! About the same time a wife, during an admittedly trifling tiff with her husband, stabbed him fatally with a hatpin – released on her recognisances. These two cases are typical. It is this practical immunity of women from all consequences for their actions upon which the crew of Suffragists traded. Had they been liable to one quarter of the penalties men incur they would have “thought” a good many times before inciting to raid the House of Commons or to commit other breaches of the law. As it is, they knew the worst they had to fear was a short term of pampered imprisonment. Male Socialists have had to go to prison, not for trying to raid the House of Commons, but for merely breaking some local bye-law while maintaining the right of free speech.

Do not let us forget that the women who are loudest in bawling for the Suffrage do so on the ground that they are not sufficiently privileged already, and that, as we have said, to obtain the supremacy over men, the savagely vindictive laws against men and complete immunity for women they consider their due, they require the leverage the vote will give them. Under the circumstances one would like to examine with a very strong electric light the intellects of those persons who profess to believe in equality between the sexes, and who yet, as things are to-day, can advocate Female Suffrage.

Their idea of equality is, I suppose, “All yours is mine and all mine's my own.” No military service for women, and yet they shall dictate war or peace! No corporal punishment for them, and yet they shall decide on the maintenance of corporal punishment for men in prisons, etc.! No liability to maintain husband or children, and yet the right to decree laws relating to marriage; and many more such anomalies. For – let us make no mistake – no Feminist has the smallest intention of abandoning any one of the existing privileges of women. On the contrary, the intention of increasing the power and privileges of the sex is expressly declared without any subterfuge. And be it remembered the “adult suffrage” so much advocated by Socialists means an excess of a million female over male votes so far as Great Britain is concerned.

Socialist bodies proclaim “social and economic equality between the sexes” as one of their aims. Now, as a “stepping stone” towards this end, I would suggest to the advocates of sex equality (from the standpoint of our present society), besides equal wages for equal work, which we are all able to agree to, (1) *obligation of wife to maintain herself, also her husband if sick, and to contribute something to the maintenance of the children of the marriage; and further* (2) *equal punishment for equal crime as between men and women; and* (3) *abolition of all laws (e.g. the law as regards libel and slander) favouring women at the expense of men; and* (4) *the liability of women to all duties imposed on men.* I can imagine the sort of wry face the Feminists would make at the bare suggestion of these equitable demands. Otherwise, I would suggest that wherever “social and economic equality” between the sexes is proposed a note should be added

that (to borrow a phrase from the famous Rule in Shelley's case) the words be taken as "words of limitation," in short, that the term equality is to be understood in a non-natural sense as implying all the kicks for the brute man and all the halfpence for the angel woman. Otherwise unsophisticated comrades might be disposed to take it in a natural sense, which would involve a grievous misconception.

Now, speaking as a plain man, surely it would be unjust, quite apart from any question of intrinsic suitability, for women to possess the Suffrage until something like the conditions I have before formulated obtain. If others think that giving an already privileged order of human beings the franchise spells equality, I do not.

But supposing the present balance of inequality in favour of women were remedied, there would then remain solely the question of the average inferiority of women. Now here I must again point out that the exercise of the vote is mainly a means to an end – the progress and well-being of society. Hence, if women on the average show an inferiority all round to men, or even an inferiority in the power of practical and equitable judgment in public affairs, then there is no injustice in refusing them "in the bulk" the right of interfering in these matters, where they are *hypothesi* less competent than men.

Here we have to deal with a question of fact and evidence. For those who, like myself, regard the evidence for the inferiority as conclusive, there is no possible alternative to opposition to a disintegrative force such as can only be harmful to progress. To discuss the question as to the nature of the evidence would take us outside the immediate purpose of this chapter, but I deny that those to whom the evidence for incapacity appears conclusive can consistently be otherwise than opponents of Female Suffrage in all its forms. For to favour it in the teeth of such a conviction would mean sacrificing the interests of society to a barren abstraction, to wit, the abstract right to exercise a function whether fitted for it or not. And to this no one who really values progress ought surely to be prepared to consent.

The Feminism of modern public opinion, which is reflected in recent statutes and judicial decisions and in the administration of law generally, has been very persistently and very subtly fostered for more than a generation past. The Feminist attitude of public opinion has been sedulously cultivated not only by journalism but by modern literature and art, especially such as is of a popular character. The aim has been to portray Man as an ignoble, mean creature, as a foil to the courage, resource, and gentle virtues of Woman. Who has not seen a well-known picture representing the Thames Embankment at night, and the "unfortunate," possessed of an improbably angelic face, being taken from the river, with the gentleman and lady in evening dress, who have just got out of the cab, in the foreground, the gentleman with ostentatious callousness – brute that he is! – turning away and lighting a cigarette, and the lady – gentle creature! – bending over the dripping form and throwing up her arms in sympathetic horror?

It is by claptrap of this sort, both literary and artistic, that sentimental Feminism is both evoked and nourished. Some time ago I received a provincial Socialist paper (I.L.P.) which contained a *feuilleton* consisting of the story of a woman who had killed her baby and died after a few weeks in prison – the moral being apparently the monstrous wickedness of imprisoning such women at all, rather than rewarding them with a comfortable pension for life. There are well-known writers

I could name who seem to take peculiar pleasure in painting their own sex in an abject light by way of pandering to current Feminist prejudices.

The result of all this nurture of the public mind in Feminist sentiment is everywhere noticeable. An influential section of public opinion has come to regard it as axiomatic that women are capable of everything of which men are capable, and therefore they ought to have full responsibility in all honourable and lucrative functions and callings. There is only one thing for which unlimited allowance ought to be made on the ground of their womanly inferiority, otherwise so strenuously denied, and that is their own criminal or tortuous acts! In a word, they are not to be held responsible, in the sense that men are, for their own actions when these entail unpleasant consequences for themselves. On the contrary, the obloquy and, where possible, the penalty for the wrong-doing is to be shifted on to the nearest wretched man with whom they have consorted. I cannot quote unlimited cases, but, by way of illustration, I will mention two that occur to me at the moment of writing.

A few years ago a woman deliberately shot at and wounded a solicitor (a married man) with whom she had had relations. The act was so premeditated that it came out in evidence she had been practising shooting with the revolver for days beforehand. There was, moreover, no question of a child in the case, and not even one of financial embarrassment, as she was in receipt of a quarterly allowance under a trust. Hence the case presented itself as a cold-blooded one of attempted murder without a single circumstance of extenuation. The woman was sentenced to the very lenient penalty of seven years' penal servitude. (Had a man attempted to murder in this way a jilting mistress he would *have* received, without doubt, twenty years at least, if not a life sentence.) Now it seems incredible, but it is a fact, that a campaign was immediately started throughout the whole of the press, largely by "advanced" women and male Feminists, in favour of this dastardly female criminal, who only fell short of being a murderess by accident!

The second case is that of Daisy Lord three or four years ago. To read the gush on that occasion one might have thought that the murder of new-born children represented the highest ideal of motherhood. This Daisy Lord became for the nonce a kind of pinchbeck Madonna in the eyes of the Feminist public. Such women as the above ought, of course, to have equal voting rights with men, but equal consequences for their actions – oh dear, no! If there is one demand which is popular with the Feminists, it is for raising the age of consent from sixteen to eighteen or twenty-one years, at which latter age, presumably, the right to the Franchise, if conceded, would come into operation. They are therefore evidently of opinion that the woman who has only just ceased to need the protection of the law in the control of her own body becomes immediately fully qualified to have a voice in the management of public affairs! The extent to which Feminist sentiment can fling justice to the winds in these days is shown by the savage demand, in cases of infant murder, for vicarious vengeance on one who, as regards the offence in question, is wholly innocent – to wit, on that vile and obnoxious creature, "the man."

The way in which the modern Feminist is dead to every sense of equity in the relations of the sexes as regards elementary fairness to the man's side of the sexual equation, is illustrated by such documents as Lady Maclaren's *Woman's Charter*. One of the demands it contains is that "no married woman should be bound to accept a foreign domicile." This is delightful! A poor

man cannot get work in this country and has to take a position abroad. At her sweet whim his wife may live apart from him as a single woman and compel him to keep her all the same! Here we have a splendid example of “woman’s right” to treat man as a slave! Suggestions of this sort, be it remembered, come from those who indignantly repudiate any desire for female privilege.

As regards this point of the protestations of zeal for equality between the sexes, when specially challenged, I would suggest to the Feminist advocate, male or female, that it would not be amiss if this zeal for sex equality ceased to assume the form of concocting bogus grievances on the woman’s side, and occasionally, at least, took shape in protests against modern one-sided sex legislation, and the favouritism uniformly shown to women in the courts, civil and criminal.

To this might be added a self-denying ordinance by which advanced ladies should agitate for the abolition of reserved seats for “ladies only” in the British Museum reading room, reserved compartments in railway carriages, etc. The New York elevated railway has, I read, begun to reserve whole carriages for women, from which men are rigidly excluded, no matter how full the train may be otherwise. For be it remembered that though all men are forbidden access to female reserves, women in these cases, as a rule, have the run of all available space, there being usually no male reserves. Were they to act thus, the advocates of Feminism would at least give an earnest of their sincerity in the matter of sex equality, which at present assumes such a questionable shape in their agitation and discourses.

Source: The Problem of Modern Feminism. Chapter VIII of *Problems of Mind and Morals*. Grant Richards, London 1912. Reprinted by Grant Richards, London 1920.

Literary Work (1918)

After *The Roots of Reality* had appeared, I bethought me of a promise to my old friend William Morris, made not long before his death, to write a history of that, even to most students, little-known event at the close of the French Revolution, Gracchus Babeuf's "Conspiracy of the Equals." This undertaking I now endeavoured to fulfil to the best of my ability, and the result was the volume entitled *The Last Episode of the French Revolution* (Grant Richard), which appeared in 1911. The book, though well enough reviewed, had the sale one expects from purely historical monographs having little or no bearing on current events or practical interest for the present time. It remains, however, as the only English study on the subject obtainable, even Bronterre O'Brien's translation of the contemporary Buonarroti's work having been out of print for more than half a century.

This was followed in 1912 by another volume of essays, entitled *Essays on Men, Mind, and Morals*, comprising some previously published and some unpublished pieces, among the former the article that originally appeared in the *International Journal of Ethics* on the Socialist view of the fundamental principles of morality, and my reply in the *Fortnightly Review* to Dr. Beattie Crozier's attack on Socialism. In November 1913 appeared *The Fraud of Feminism*, just after Sir Almroth Wright's *Unexpurgated Case against Woman Suffrage*. In this little book of less than two hundred pages I claim to have disposed of the arguments (save the mark!), so constantly heard and so seldom contradicted or refuted, of the advocates of Feminism. I have clearly drawn the distinction between Political Feminism (as I have termed it) and Sentimental Feminism.

The Political Feminist claims for women equal political and social rights with men. The Sentimental Feminist, under the sham pretence of chivalry, claims impunity for women from the unpleasant consequences of their own conduct. Between the two, and they are usually combined in the same person, we arrive at the delightful conclusion that women have a right to claim an equal position with men wherever it suits their book, i.e. in all honourable, agreeable, and lucrative positions, and at the same time to demand special treatment from that accorded to men whenever "equality" would spell unpleasant consequences for themselves – a charming doctrine truly for the female sex, in which the "equality" appears with its picturesque chivalry "all on one side."

My efforts in this book, as in previous essays, to expose the claptrap and lies of the advocates of Feminism have naturally not been to the taste of the Suffragette sisterhood, who have lost no opportunity of venting their petty spite in feeble efforts to say nasty things. I give just one instance of this. In the Spring of 1915 appeared a volume called forth by the war, entitled *German Culture, Past and Present*. It consisted largely of excerpts from my previous volumes on the social side of the Reformation in Germany, with two concluding chapters on Modern Germany. The book was very favourably received by the Press generally, but there was one dissentient voice in a certain London morning daily of strong Feminist tendencies, wherein appeared a notice in which every one detected the hand of the Suffragette. The lady in question, who, of course, wrote under the veil of anonymity, headed her article *Mr. Bax in extremis!* (she probably meant in excelsis!). After a few words of general attack on the ground that all the

contents were not new, she proceeded to single out and quote from the last chapter a couple of plain-sailing English sentences, upon which she pronounced her ipse dixit that the style was “bad” and the thought “jejune.”

Now, what does the reader think these two “bad” and “jejune” sentences purported to say? Simply that in the humble judgment of the author the influence of the writings of Nietzsche on Modern Germany was not as powerful as some writers on the war had represented. Of course, I may have been wrong in my view as to this, but I submit that to describe such an opinion, whether right or wrong, precisely as “jejune” indicates a singular ignorance of the correct use of the English language as possible with advanced womanhood.

As a matter of fact, these last two chapters of the book in question were written somewhat hurriedly, and in consequence one or two real if trivial errors had crept into them, which, unimportant as they were in themselves, were such as in the hands of a skilful critic bent on being “nasty” might (especially in a short notice) have been effectively exploited against me. These, however, my female critic had evidently neither the brains nor the knowledge to take advantage of. Accordingly, the foolish young woman who aimed at smartness achieved silliness.

Source: Excerpt from Chapter VII ‘Literary Work’ in *Reminiscences and Reflexions of a mid and late Victorian*, London 1918.

Feminism and The War (1918)



“The principles and propaganda of Feminism were running high in the land up to the outbreak of the war, and though for the time being undoubtedly overshadowed by the great events of the last two years, there is no reason for thinking that Feminism, theoretical and practical, will not reassert itself when the present crisis is over. In my book on the subject I have distinguished between political and sentimental Feminism.

The propaganda of Feminism has for its practical object to exalt the woman at the expense of the man. We have had echoes of sentimental Feminism during the war itself, notably, as already mentioned, in the case of Edith Cavell, where we have a woman exalted to the rank of a demi-goddess of heroism, while of the Belgian architect, Philippe Bancq, who suffered at the same time, for the same offence against the German invaders of his country, not a word has been said. Compare the case of Captain Fryatt, whose murder was even more in contravention of the laws of civilized war than that of Edith Cavell, and yet we hear of no streets named after him and no festivals in his honour! The general theory of sentimental Feminism seems to be that the shooting of one woman non-combatant outweighs the murder of ten men non-combatants. Such divinity doth hedge a female of the human species!”

“The present war is affording a stalking-horse for more nostrums than one. The trick is to trace the atrocities and misdeeds of the Prusso-German Government and armies to the absence in Germany of the influence of one’s own particular nostrum. Thus, the Feminist will try to persuade you that the crimes of the German Army are due to defects in the German character, arising from the absence of the cultus of Woman among German men and of the emancipation of Woman in the Feminist sense in the Fatherland. The shooting of Miss Cavell and sundry outrages on women in Belgium and the North of France, we are told, are referable to an insufficient spirit of gallantry or chivalry, i.e. of kowtowing to femalehood, on the part of German men. If female suffrage and female influence generally had been present in German social and political life, it is alleged, we should have had no war, or, in case of war, no “frightfulness,” and above all the sacrosanct sex would have been spared and treated with the due reverential awe which it becomes vile man to show in his dealings therewith. All this sort of talk is, I suppose, swallowed by a section of the British public at its face-value, being, as they are, utterly ignorant of the facts of the case.

Either the Feminists who seek to make propaganda for their theories out of the misdeeds of the German Army do not know these facts themselves or they are dishonest in their attempt to snatch an advantage out of the war-feeling of the British public. As having had some considerable experience of Germany and things German before the war, I can answer for it that there has been

now for years past as strong a current of Feminist sentiment and opinion in Germany as elsewhere, in all circles claiming to be advanced.

The only difference is that in Germany, owing to Militarism with its bloodtax, the incidence of which, of course, fell exclusively on men, the injustice of allowing the sex exempted from the blood-tax to swamp with their votes the male elector who was subject to it came home, perhaps, more to the average "man in the street" than in other countries where the same conditions did not prevail. Books on Feminism had a wide circulation. Women had played a part in political agitation for a generation past, at least, in the largest political party in Germany. There was no sex-bar in the matter of membership of that party, or of the share taken in the life of its organization.

There was and is, moreover, so far as I am aware, a special organization existing in Germany for the furtherance of female suffrage and other "planks" in the ordinary Feminist programme, while, morebetoken, one of its most prominent leaders is more violent in her jingoism than Count Reventlow himself. All the talk about the position of the German woman, by those who have never lived in Germany, and do not in most cases even know the language, deserves nothing but contempt. It serves the purpose, however, I suppose, of Feminists and advocates of female privilege in general, for pointing a moral and adorning a tale in favour of their own nostrum."

Source: Above paragraphs excerpted from chapter XII 'Concluding Reflexions' of Bax's *Reminiscences and Reflexions of a mid and late Victorian* (1918)