Freedom or Death

Emmeline Pankhurst
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Mrs. Hepburn, ladies and gentlemen:

Many people come to Hartford to address meetings as advocates of some reform. Tonight it is not to advocate a reform that I address a meeting in Hartford. I do not come here as an advocate, because whatever position the suffrage movement may occupy in the United States of America, in England it has passed beyond the realm of advocacy and it has entered into the sphere of practical politics. It has become the subject of revolution and civil war, and so tonight I am not here to advocate woman suffrage. American suffragists can do that very well for themselves.

I am here as a soldier who has temporarily left the field of battle in order to explain - it seems strange it should have to be explained - what civil war is like when civil war is waged by women. I am not only here as a soldier temporarily absent from the field at battle; I am here - and that, I think, is the strangest part of my coming - I am here as a person who, according to the law courts of my country, it has been decided, is of no value to the community at all: and I am adjudged because of my life to be a dangerous person, under sentence of penal servitude in a convict prison. So you see there is some special interest in hearing so unusual a person address you. I dare say, in the minds of many of you - you will perhaps forgive me this personal touch - that I do not look either very like a soldier or very like a convict, and yet I am both.

Now, first of all I want to make you understand the inevitableness of revolution and civil war, even on the part of women, when you reach a certain stage in the development of a community's life. It is not at all difficult if revolutionaries come to you from Russia, if they come to you from China, or from any other part of the world, if they are men, to make you understand revolution in five minutes, every man and every woman to understand revolutionary methods when they are adopted by men.

Many of you have expressed sympathy, probably even practical sympathy, with revolutionaries in Russia. I dare say you have followed with considerable interest the story of how the Chinese revolutionary, Sun Yat-sen, conducted the Chinese revolution from England. And yet I find in American newspapers there is a great deal of misunderstanding of the fact that one of the chief minds engaged in conducting the women's revolution is, for purposes of convenience, located in Paris. It is quite easy for you to understand - it would not be necessary for me to enter into explanations at all - the desirability of revolution if I were a man, in any of these countries, even in a part of the British Empire known to you as Ireland. If an Irish revolutionary had addressed this meeting, and many have addressed meetings all over the United States during the last twenty or thirty years, it would not be necessary for that revolutionary to explain the need of revolution beyond saying that the people of his country were denied - and by people, meaning men - were denied the right of self-government. That would explain the whole situation. If I were a man and
I said to you, "I come from a country which professes to have representative institutions and yet denies me, a taxpayer, an inhabitant of the country, representative rights," you would at once understand that that human being, being a man, was justified in the adoption of revolutionary methods to get representative institutions. But since I am a woman it is necessary in the twentieth century to explain why women have adopted revolutionary methods in order to win the rights of citizenship.

You see, in spite of a good deal that we hear about revolutionary methods not being necessary for American women, because American women are so well off, most of the men of the United States quite calmly acquiesce in the fact that half of the community are deprived absolutely of citizen rights, and we women, in trying to make our case clear, always have to make as part of our argument, and urge upon men in our audience the fact - a very simple fact - that women are human beings. It is quite evident you do not all realize we are human beings or it would not be necessary to argue with you that women may, suffering from intolerable injustice, be driven to adopt revolutionary methods. We have, first of all to convince you we are human beings, and I hope to be able to do that in the course of the evening before I sit down, but before doing that, I want to put a few political arguments before you - not arguments for the suffrage, because I said when I opened, I didn't mean to do that - but arguments for the adoption of militant methods in order to win political rights.

A great many of you have been led to believe, from the somewhat meager accounts you get in the newspapers, that in England there is a strange manifestation taking place, a new form of hysteria being swept across part of the feminist population of those Isles, and this manifestation takes the shape of irresponsible breaking of windows, burning of letters, general inconvenience to respectable, honest business people who want to attend to their business. It is very irrational you say: even if these women had sufficient intelligence to understand what they were doing, and really did want the vote, they have adopted very irrational means for getting the vote. "How are they going to persuade people that they ought to have the vote by breaking their windows?" you say. Now, if you say that, it shows you do not understand the meaning of our revolution at all, and I want to show you that when damage is done to property it is not done in order to convert people to woman suffrage at all. It is a practical political means, the only means we consider open to voteless persons to bring about a political situation, which can only be solved by giving women the vote.

Suppose the men of Hartford had a grievance, and they laid that grievance before their legislature, and the legislature obstinately refused to listen to them, or to remove their grievance, what would be the proper and the constitutional and the practical way of getting their grievance removed? Well, it is perfectly obvious at the next general election, when the legislature is elected, the men of Hartford in sufficient numbers would turn out that legislature and elect a new one: entirely change the personnel of an obstinate legislature which would not remove their grievance. It is perfectly simple and perfectly easy for voting communities to get their grievances removed if they act in combination and make an example of the legislature by changing the composition of the legislature and sending better people to take the place of those who have
failed to do justice.

But let the men of Hartford imagine that they were not in the position of being voters at all, that they were governed without their consent being obtained, that the legislature turned an absolutely deaf ear to their demands, what would the men of Hartford do then? They couldn't vote the legislature out. They would have to choose; they would have to make a choice of two evils: they would either have to submit indefinitely to an unjust state of affairs, or they would have to rise up and adopt some of the antiquated means by which men in the past got their grievances remedied. We know what happened when your forefathers decided that they must have representation for taxation, many, many years ago. When they felt they couldn't wait any longer, when they laid all the arguments before an obstinate British government that they could think of, and when their arguments were absolutely disregarded, when every other means had failed, they began by the tea party at Boston, and they went on until they had won the independence of the United States of America. That is what happened in the old days.

It is perfectly evident to any logical mind that when you have got the vote, by the proper use of the vote in sufficient numbers, by combination, you can get out of any legislature whatever you want, or, if you cannot get it, you can send them about their business and choose other people who will be more attentive to your demands. But, it is clear to the meanest intelligence that if you have not got the vote, you must either submit to laws just or unjust, administration just or unjust, or the time inevitably comes when you will revolt against that injustice and use violent means to put an end to it. That is so logically correct that we hear politicians today talk about the inherent right of revolution and rebellion on the part of human beings suffering from an intolerable injustice, and in England today we are having a situation brought about by men which exactly illustrates the case. We have got in Ireland today a very serious situation. I refer to the fact that for generations Irish agitators, Irish lawbreakers, Irish criminals, who have been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment in English convict prisons, have come over to America and have asked the people of the United States to give them money, to send them help in various forms to fight the Irish rebellion.

The Irish rebellion has at last, during the past few years, come into practical politics, and it has found shape in a measure which has now passed through the House of Commons and through the House of Lords, giving what the Irishmen so long wanted, home rule to Ireland. That is to say, next June, a parliament is going to be set up in Dublin, an Irish parliament, for the management of Irish affairs quite distinct from the government in London. The majority of men in Ireland desired it; presumably the majority of women acquiesced in their desire, but they were not asked whether they wished it or not. It is certain that in the course of the Irish rebellion women have taken a very prominent part; and it is rather a notable point to which I should like to call your attention, that when the imprisonments of Irishmen took place in the course of their political rebellion they were put almost invariably, after a certain amount of struggle, in the first division, and were treated as political offenders; but when women, helping the men, got into the coils of the law, all those women in Ireland who were helping the men to get home rule, were invariably treated as ordinary criminals and got ordinary criminals' treatment. You see, ladies, even in a
rebellion, there is an advantage in being a voter, and if you are not a voter you are liable to get very much worse treatment than the voters, even the law-breaking voters, get. Now, the situation today then is, that home rule for Ireland is to take effect early next year, or in the course of next year.

But there is a part of Ireland which does not want home rule. There is a part of Ireland which prefers to be governed from London. That is the north of Ireland, in the County of Ulster. For racial reasons, for religious reasons, for economic reasons, the majority of the people there do not want home rule at all. They call themselves Loyalists, Unionists, and they want to maintain the union with Great Britain in its present form. Directly the home rule bill passed, directly it was perfectly clear that Home Rule was to be granted, these people began to revolt. They had a leader, a man who formed a part of the last Conservative administration, Sir Edward Carson. A distinguished lawyer, a distinguished statesman: he is an Irishman. Sir Edward Carson came to be the leader of the Ulster rebellion. He has advocated civil war: he has not only advocated civil war, he has urged the men of Ulster to drill and prepare to fight if civil war comes to pass. The first stage in this rebellion was the signing of a great declaration on behalf of the Union. It is rather notable that not only men signed that declaration, but women signed it also; the women of Ulster were invited to sign the declaration along with the men. And to those people who say that the province of woman is quite apart from politics, and that women by nature take no interest in politics, I would like to say that more women signed that declaration than did men, considerably more.

Well, the last stage of this struggle, and the struggle is coming to a head, is this; that Sir Edward Carson has been making speeches in which he has gloried in having broken the law; he has challenged the British government to arrest him; arms have been shipped to Ireland; and there is not a club, a young men's club, a workingman's club, or the middle class or the upper class men's club, where they are not drilling and preparing for civil war. The law has already been broken, because there has been considerable riot in the streets of Belfast, and lives even have been lost, and I want to say to you in this meeting how much have you heard of all this in the American newspapers? Have you heard loud condemnation from English newspapers echoed in your own papers? No; the newspapers and you have accepted quite calmly the fact that revolution is preparing in Ireland, and not one of you, whether you are a newspaper editor writing leading articles in your sanctum, or whether you are a business man or a professional man, not one of you has questioned the right of those men in Ulster, although they are voters and have a constitutional means for getting redress for their grievances, the right of those men to resort to revolution if everything else fails.

Well, there is another picture, another contrast I want to draw. We have Sir Edward Carson preaching revolution and justifying bloodshed in defense of what he calls the rights of the manhood of Ulster, the right of having themselves governed in the way they prefer. He has not hesitated to advocate the shedding of blood because he says it is quite worthwhile to shed blood, of your own and other people's, in defense of your citizen rights, in the defense of your having the right to choose the form of government you wish. Sir Edward Carson has not been arrested;
Sir Edward Carson has not been charged with conspiracy; Sir Edward Carson has not been sent to jail. He has been making precisely the same kind of speeches that I made up to the month of March last, with this difference: that while he has justified the shedding of human blood in a revolution, I have always said that nothing would bring me to the point of claiming that we should destroy human life in the course of our woman's agitation. That is the only distinction between his speeches and mine, that he has advocated and justified the taking of life where I have always stopped short in my justification, at property, at inanimate objects. I have always said human life is sacred, and in a woman's revolution we respect human life, and we stop short of injury to human life.

Now, to those people who say that women are better treated than men when they break the laws, to those people who say that there is no need for women to take to methods of revolution, I want to draw this contrast; here is Sir Edward Carson, a man who presumably by his education and training, ought to be more respectful of the law than persons who are not either fit to understand the laws or to vote for those who make them. You have Sir Edward Carson, a chartered libertine, going to and fro in England and in Ireland, making these speeches; whereas you have me, a woman arrested and charged and sentenced to a long term of penal servitude for doing precisely what he has done, although he has not had the justification that I have, because, again I want to call your attention to the point, that Sir Edward Carson and his friends have the vote, and therefore have the legitimate and proper way of getting redress for their grievances, whereas neither I nor any of the women have any constitutional means whatever and no legitimate, recognized methods of getting redress or our grievances except the methods of revolution and violence.

Well now, I want to argue with you as to whether our way is the right one: I want to explain all these things that you have not understood: I want to make you understand exactly what our plan of campaign has been because I have always felt that if you could only make people understand most people's hearts are in the right place and most people's understandings are sound and most people are more or less logical - if you could only make them understand.

Now, I want to come back to the point where I said, if the men of Hartford had a grievance and had no vote to get their redress, if they felt that grievance sufficiently, they would be forced to adopt other methods. That brings me to an explanation of these methods that you have not been able to understand. I am going to talk later on about the grievances, but I want to first of all make you understand that this civil war carried on by women is not the hysterical manifestation which you thought it was, but was carefully and logically thought out, and I think when I have finished you will say, admitted the grievance, admitted the strength of the cause, that we could not do anything else, that there was no other way, that we had either to submit to intolerable injustice and let the woman's movement go back and remain in a worse position than it was before we began, or we had to go on with these methods until victory was secured; and I want also to convince you that these methods are going to win, because when you adopt the methods of revolution there are two justifications which I feel are necessary or to be desired. The first is, that you have good cause for adopting your methods in the beginning, and secondly that you have
adopted methods which when pursued with sufficient courage and determination are bound, in the long run, to win.

Now, it would take too long to trace the course of militant methods as adopted by women, because it is about eight years since the word militant was first used to describe what we were doing; it is about eight years since the first militant action was taken by women. It was not militant at all, except that it provoked militancy on the part of those who were opposed to it. When women asked questions in political meetings and failed to get answers, they were not doing anything militant. To ask questions at political meetings is an acknowledged right of all people who attend public meetings; certainly in my country, men have always done it, and I hope they do it in America, because it seems to me that if you allow people to enter your legislatures without asking them any questions as to what they are going to do when they get there you are not exercising your citizen rights and your citizen duties as you ought. At any rate in Great Britain it is a custom, a time-honored one, to ask questions of candidates for parliament and ask questions of members of the government. No man was ever put out of a public meeting for asking a question until Votes for Women came onto the political horizon. The first people who were put out of a political meeting for asking questions, were women; they were brutally ill-used; they found themselves in jail before twenty-four hours had expired.

But instead of the newspapers, which are largely inspired by the politicians, putting militancy and the reproach of militancy, if reproach there is, on the people who had assaulted the women, they actually said it was the women who were militant and very much to blame. How different the reasoning is that men adopt when they are discussing the cases of men and those of women. Had they been men who asked the questions, and had those men been brutally ill-used, you would have heard a chorus of reprobation on the part of the people toward those who refused to answer those questions. But as they were women who asked the questions, it was not the speakers on the platform who would not answer them, who were to blame, or the ushers at the meeting; it was the poor women who had had their bruises and their knocks and scratches, and who were put into prison for doing precisely nothing but holding a protest meeting in the street after it was all over. However, we were called militant for doing that, and we were quite willing to accept the name, because militancy for us is time-honored; you have the church militant, and in the sense of spiritual militancy we were very militant indeed. We were determined to press this question of the enfranchisement of women to the point where we were no longer to be ignored by the politicians as had been the case for about fifty years, during which time women had patiently used every means open to them to win their political enfranchisement.

We found that all the fine phrases about freedom and liberty were entirely for male consumption, and that they did not in any way apply to women. When it was said taxation without representation is tyranny, when it was "Taxation of men without representation is tyranny," everybody quite calmly accepted the fact that women had to pay taxes and even were sent to prison if they failed to pay them - quite right. We found that "Government of the people, by the people and for the people," which is also a time-honored Liberal principle, was again only for male consumption; half of the people were entirely ignored; it was the duty of women to pay
their taxes and obey the laws and look as pleasant as they could under the circumstances. In fact, every principle of liberty enunciated in any civilized country on earth, with very few exceptions, was intended entirely for men, and when women tried to force the putting into practice of these principles, for women, then they discovered they had come into a very, very unpleasant situation indeed.

Now, I am going to pass rapidly over all the incidents that happened after the two first women went to prison for asking questions of cabinet ministers, and come right up to the time when our militancy became real militancy, when we organized ourselves on an army basis, when we determined, if necessary, to fight for our rights just as our forefathers had fought for their rights. Then people began to say that while they believed they had no criticism of militancy, as militancy, while they thought it was quite justifiable for people to revolt against intolerable injustice, it was absurd and ridiculous for women to attempt it because women could not succeed. After all the most practical criticism of our militancy coming from men has been the argument that it could not succeed. They would say, "We would be with you if you could succeed but it is absurd for women who are the weaker sex, for women who have not got the control of any large interests, for women who have got very little money, who have peculiar duties as women, which handicaps them extremely - for example, the duty of caring for children - it is absurd for women to think they can ever win their rights by fighting; you had far better give it up and submit because there it is, you have always been subject and you always will be."

Well now, that really became the testing time. Then we women determined to show the world, that women, handicapped as women are, can still fight and can still win, and now I want to show you how this plan of ours was carefully thought out, even our attacks on private property, which has been so much misunderstood. I have managed in London to make audiences of business men who came into the meetings very, very angry with us indeed, some of whom had their telephonic communication cut off for several hours and had not been able to even get telegrams from their stock-brokers in cities far distant, who naturally came to our meetings in a very angry frame of mind, understand the situation; and if it has been possible to make them understand, if some of them even get fairly enthusiastic about our methods, it ought to be possible, Mrs. Hepburn, for me to explain the situation to an audience in Hartford, who, after all, are far enough off to be able to see, unlike men in our own country who are not able to see wood for trees.

I would like to suggest that if later on, while I am explaining these matters to you, there comes into the mind of any man or woman in the audience some better plan for getting what we want out of an obstinate government, I would be thankful and grateful if that person, man or woman, would tell me of some better plan than ours for dealing with the situation.

Here we have a political system where no reforms can get onto the statute book of the old country unless it is initiated by the government of the country, by the cabinet, by the handful of people who really govern the country. It doesn't matter whether you have practically every member of parliament on your side, you cannot get what you want unless the cabinet initiate legislation, a situation by which the private member has become almost of no account at all, the ordinary private member of parliament. He may introduce bills, but he knows himself that he is
only registering a pious opinion of a certain number of electors in his constituency; it may be his own; but that pious opinion will never find its way onto the statute book of his country until the government in power, the prime minister and his colleagues, introduces a government measure to carry that reform. Well then, the whole problem of people who want reform is, to bring enough political pressure to bear upon the government to lead them to initiate, to draft a bill, and introduce it in the first instance, into the House of Commons, force it through the House of Commons, press it through the House of Lords, and finally land it safely, having passed through the shoals and rapids of the parliamentary river, safely on the statute book as an Act of Parliament. Well, combinations of voters have tried for generations, even with the power of the vote, to get their reforms registered in legislation, and have failed. You have to get your cause made a first class measure; you have to make the situation in the country so urgent and so pressing that it has become politically dangerous for the government to neglect that question any longer, so politically expedient for them to do it that they realize they cannot present themselves to the country at the next general election unless it has been done.

Well, that was the problem we had to face, and we faced it, a mere handful of women. Well, whether you like our methods or not, we have succeeded in making woman suffrage one of the questions which even cabinet ministers now admit cannot indefinitely be neglected. It must be dealt with within a very short period of time. No other methods than ours would have brought about that result. You may have sentimental articles in magazines by the chancellor of the exchequer who seems to be able to spare time from his ordinary avocations to write magazine articles telling you that militancy is a drag on the movement for woman suffrage. But our answer to that is, methinks our gentlemen doth protest too much, because until militancy became to be known neither Mr. Lloyd George nor any statesman, no, nor any member of parliament, ever thought it was necessary to mention the subject of woman suffrage at all. Now they mention it constantly, to tell us what damage we have done to our cause. They are all urging us to consider the serious position into which we have brought the cause of woman suffrage.

Well now, let me come to the situation as we find it. We felt we had to rouse the public to such a point that they would say to the government, you must give women the vote. We had to get the electors, we had to get the business interests, we had to get the professional interests, we had to get the men of leisure all unitedly saying to the government, relieve the strain of this situation and give women the vote; and that is a problem that I think the most astute politician in this meeting would find very difficult. We have done it; we are doing it every day; and I think when you take that fact into consideration you will realize why we have been attacking private property, why we have been attacking the property of men so absorbed in their business that they generally forget to vote in ordinary elections, why we have attacked the pleasures of men whose whole life is spent in a round of pleasure, and who think politics so dull and so beneath their distinguished ossification that they hardly know which party is in power. All these people have had to be moved in order to bring enough pressure to bear upon the government to compel them to deal with the question of woman suffrage. And now that in itself is an explanation. There is a homely English proverb which may help to clear the situation which is this: "You cannot rouse the Britisher unless you touch his pocket." That is literally true. Perhaps you now can understand why we women thought we must attack the thing that was of most value in modern life in order
to make these people wake up and realize that women wanted the vote, and that things were
going to be very uncomfortable until women got the vote, because it is not by making people
comfortable you get things in practical life, it is by making them uncomfortable. That is a
homely truth that all of us have to learn.

I don't know, Mrs. Hepburn, whether I have used the domestic illustration in Hartford, but it is a
very good one: it is quite worth using again. You have two babies very hungry and wanting to be
fed. One baby is a patient baby, and waits indefinitely until its mother is ready to feed it. The
other baby is an impatient baby and cries lustily, screams and kicks and makes everybody
unpleasant until it is fed. Well, we know perfectly well which baby is attended to first. That is
the whole history of politics. Putting sentiment aside, people who really want reforms learn that
lesson very quickly. It is only the people who are quite content to go on advocating them
indefinitely who play the part of the patient baby in politics. You have to make more noise than
anybody else, you have to make yourself more obtrusive than anybody else, you have to fill all
the papers more than anybody else, in fact you have to be there all the time and see that they do
not snow you under, if you are really going to get your reform realized.

That is what we women have been doing, and in the course of our desperate struggle we have
had to make a great many people very uncomfortable. Now, one woman was arrested on an
occasion when a great many windows were broken in London, as a protest against a piece of
trickery on the part of the government, which will be incredible in fifty years, when the history
of the movement is read. Women broke some windows as a protest: they broke a good many
shopkeepers' windows: they broke the windows of shopkeepers where they spent most of their
money when they bought their hats and their clothing. They also broke the windows of many of
the clubs, the smart clubs in Piccadilly.

One of the clubs was the Guard Club. Well, the ordinary army man is not much in politics, but he
very often, because of his aristocratic and social connections, has considerable influence if he
would use it. One woman broke the windows of the Guard Club, and when she broke those
windows she stood there quietly until the Guard hall porter came out and seized her and held her
until the policemen came to take her to prison. A number of the guards came out to see the kind
of woman it was who had broken their windows, and they saw there a quiet little woman. She
happened to be an actress, a woman who had come into our militant movement because she
knew of the difficulties and dangers and temptations of the actress's life, of how badly paid she
is, what her private sorrows are and her difficulties, and so she had come into the militant
movement to get votes for actresses as quickly as possible, so that through the vote they could
secure better conditions. Some of the guards - I think men who had never known what it was to
earn a living, who knew nothing of the difficulties of a man's life, let alone the difficulties of a
woman's life - came out, and they said: "Why did you break our windows? We have done
nothing." She said: "It is because you have done nothing I have broken your windows." And
perhaps out of that woman's breaking of windows has come this new movement of men of my
country, where we find distinguished men who fought through the Boer war are drilling now like
Sir Edward Carson in Belfast, drilling men in order to form a bodyguard to protect the militant
women. Probably that broken window of the Guard Club did a good deal to rouse men to the defense of women and to the injustice of their situation.

Well, then the shopkeepers who could not understand why we should break the shopkeepers' windows. Why should we alienate the sympathy of the shopkeepers? Well, there is the other side of the question, gentlemen - why should the shopkeepers alienate the sympathy of their customers by refusing to help them to get political power, some power to make the condition of the woman who helps to earn the shopkeepers money by serving in his shop, easier than it is at the present time? Those women broke shopkeepers' windows, and what was the situation? Just at the beginning of the winter season when all the new winter hats and coats were being shown, the shopkeepers had to barricade all their windows with wood and nobody could see the new winter fashions. Well, there again is an impossible situation. The shopkeeper cannot afford to quarrel with his customers, and we have today far more practical sympathy amongst the shopkeepers of London than we ever had when we were quiet, gentle, ladylike suffragists asking nicely for a vote.

Well then, there were the men of pleasure, or the businessmen who were so busy earning money during the week that all they could think of when the week came to an end was recreation, and the great recreation in England today is playing golf. Everywhere on Saturday you see men streaming away into the country for the weekend to play golf. They so monopolize the golf links that they have made a rule that although the ladies may play golf all the week, the golf links are entirely reserved for men on Saturday and Sunday: and you have this spectacle of the exodus of men from London into the country to fill up the week-end with playing golf. They are not, ladies, putting their heads together thinking how best they can govern the country for you, what good laws they can make for you and for the world: they are there, all of them, getting their health, and I do not blame them for it, at the week-end. Well, we attacked the golf links; we wanted to make them think, and if you had been in London and taken a Sunday paper you would have read, especially if you played golf, with consternation, that all the beautiful greens that had taken years to make, had been cut up or destroyed with an acid or made almost impossible to play upon on the Friday night, and in many cases there were going to be important matches on the Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

Just to give you an illustration of the effectiveness of these methods in waking the Britisher up, in conveying to him that women want the vote and are going to get it even if we do not adopt quite the men's methods in order to do so. I was staying at a little house in the country on a golf links, a house that had been loaned to me to use whenever I could get away from my work, and several times in the course of that Sunday morning I got telephone calls from gentlemen who were prominent members of golf clubs in that vicinity. It so happened that the golf links where I was spending the weekend, had not been touched. Those links had been respected because some of the prominent women suffragettes happened to be members of the club, and those women who destroyed the greens - I don't know who they were, but it was no doubt done by women - spared the links where these women, whom they admired and respected, played. Well, then that morning I was rung up over and over again by excited gentlemen who begged that those golf
links should be spared, saying: "I don't know whether your followers know that we are all suffragists, on our committee, we are entirely in favor of woman suffrage." And I said: "Well, don't you think you had better tell Mr. Asquith so, because if you are suffragists and do nothing, naturally you will only add to the indignation of the women. If you really want your golf links spared you had better intimate to Mr. Asquith that you think it is high time he put his principles into practice and gave the women the vote." There was another gentleman who rang up and said: "The members of our committee, who are all suffragists, are seriously considering turning all the women members out of the club if this sort of thing goes on." "Well," I said, "don't you think your greater safety is to keep the women in the club as a sort of insurance policy against anything happening to your links?"

But this experience will show you that if you really want to get anything done, it is not so much a matter of whether you alienate sympathy; sympathy is a very unsatisfactory thing if it is not practical sympathy. It does not matter to the practical suffragist whether she alienates sympathy that was never of any use to her. What she wants is to get something practical done, and whether it is done out of sympathy or whether it is done out of fear, or whether it is done because you want to be comfortable again and not be worried in this way, doesn't particularly matter so long as you get it. We had enough of sympathy for fifty years; it never brought us anything, and we would rather have an angry man going to the government and saying, my business is interfered with and I won't submit to its being interfered with any longer because you won't give women the vote, than to have a gentleman come onto our platforms year in and year out and talk about his ardent sympathy with woman suffrage.

Now then, let me come to the more serious matters and to some of the more recent happenings. You know when you have war, many things happen that all of us deplore. We fought a great war not very long ago, in South Africa. Women were expected to face with equanimity the loss of those dearest to them in warfare; they were expected to submit to being impoverished; they were expected to pay the war tax exactly like the men for a war about which the women were never consulted at all. When you think of the object of that war it really makes some of us feel very indignant at the hypocrisy of some of our critics. That war was fought ostensibly to get equal rights for all whites in South Africa. The whole country went wild. We had a disease which was called Mafeka, because when the victory of Mafeking was declared everybody in the country, except a few people who tried to keep their heads steady, went absolutely mad with gratification at the sacrifice of thousands of human beings in the carrying on of that war. That war was fought to get votes for white men in South Africa, a few years sooner than they would have had them under existing conditions, and it was justified on those grounds, to get a voice in the government of South Africa for men who would have had that voice in five or six years if they had waited. That was considered ample justification for one of the most costly and bloody wars of modern times.

Very well, then when you have warfare things happen; people suffer; the noncombatants suffer as well as the combatants. And so it happens in civil war. When your forefathers threw the tea into Boston harbor, a good many women had to go without their tea. It has always seemed to me
an extraordinary thing that you did not follow it up by throwing the whiskey overboard; you sacrificed the women; and there is a good deal of warfare for which men take a great deal of glorification which has involved more practical sacrifice on women than it has on any man. It always has been so. The grievances of those who have got power, the influence of those who have got power commands a great deal of attention; but the wrongs and the grievances of those people who have no power at all are apt to be absolutely ignored. That is the history of humanity right from the beginning.

Well, in our civil war people have suffered, but you cannot make omelets without breaking eggs; you cannot have civil war without damage to something. The great thing is to see that no more damage is done than is absolutely necessary, that you do just as much as will arouse enough feeling to bring about peace, to bring about an honorable peace for the combatants, and that is what we have been doing. Within the last few days you have read - I don't know how accurate the news cables are to America. I always take them with a grain of salt - but you have read within the last few days that some more empty houses have been burned, that a cactus house has been destroyed and some valuable plants have suffered in that house, that some pavilion at a pleasure ground has also been burned. Well, it is quite possible that it has happened.

I knew before I came here that for one whole day telegraphic and telephonic communication between Glasgow and London was entirely suspended. We do more in England in our civil war without the sacrifice of a single life than they did in the war of the Balkan States when they had the siege of Adrianople, because during the whole of that siege, in the course of which thousands of people were killed and houses were shelled and destroyed, telegraphic communication was continuous the whole time. If there had been a stock broker in Adrianople who wanted to communicate with a customer in London, he could have done it; there might have been a little delay, but he was able to do it, but we, without the loss of a single life in our war, in this effort to rouse business men to compel the government to give us the vote, because they are the people who can do it in the last resort, we entirely prevented stock brokers in London from telegraphing to stock brokers in Glasgow and vice versa: for one whole day telegraphic and telephonic communication was entirely stopped. I am not going to tell you how it was done. I am not going to tell you how the women got to the mains and cut the wires; but it was done. It was done, and it was proved to the authorities that weak women, suffrage women, as we are supposed to be, had enough ingenuity to create a situation of that kind. Now, I ask you, if women can do that, is there any limit to what we can do except the limit we put upon ourselves?

If you are dealing with an industrial revolution, if you get the men and women of one class to rising up against the men and women of another class, you can locate the difficulty; if there is a great industrial strike, you know exactly where the violence is, and every man knows exactly how the warfare is going to be waged; but in our war against the government you can't locate it. You can take Mrs. Hepburn and myself on this platform, and now, without being told, how could you tell that Mrs. Hepburn is a non-militant and that I am a militant? Absolutely impossible. If any gentleman who is the father of daughters in this meeting went into his home and looked around at his wife and daughters, if he lived in England and was an Englishman, he couldn't tell
whether some of his daughters were militants or non-militants. When his daughters went out to post a letter, he couldn't tell if they went harmlessly out to make a tennis engagement at that pillar-box by posting a letter, or whether they went to put some corrosive matter in that would burn all the letters up inside of that box. We wear no mark; we belong to every class; we permeate every class of the community from the highest to the lowest; and so you see in the woman's civil war the dear men of my country are discovering it is absolutely impossible to deal with it: you cannot locate it, and you cannot stop it.

"Put them in prison," they said, "that will stop it." But it didn't stop it. They put women in prison for long terms of imprisonment, for making a nuisance of themselves - that was the expression when they took petitions in their hands to the door of the House of Commons; and they thought that by sending them to prison, giving them a day's imprisonment, would cause them to all settle down again and there would be no further trouble. But it didn't happen so at all: instead of the women giving it up, more women did it, and more and more and more women did it until there were three hundred women at a time, who had not broken a single law, only "made a nuisance of themselves" as the politicians say. Well then they thought they must go a little farther, and so then they began imposing punishments of a very serious kind. The judge who sentenced me last May to three years penal servitude for certain speeches in which I had accepted responsibility for acts of violence done by other women, said that if I could say I was sorry, if I could promise not to do it again, that he would revise the sentence and shorten it, because he admitted that it was a very heavy sentence, especially as the jury recommended me to mercy because of the purity of my motives; and he said he was giving me a determinate sentence, a sentence that would convince me that I would give up my "evil ways" and would also deter other women from imitating me. But it hadn't that effect at all. So far from it having that effect more and more women have been doing these things and I had incited them to do, and were more determined in doing them: so that the long determinate sentence had no effect in crushing the agitation.

Well then they felt they must do something else, and they began to legislate. I want to tell men in this meeting that the British government, which is not remarkable for having very mild laws to administer, has passed more stringent laws to deal with this agitation than it ever found it necessary during all the history of political agitation in my country. They were able to deal with the revolutionaries of the Chartists’ time; they were able to deal with the trades union agitation; they were able to deal with the revolutionaries later on when the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 were passed: but the ordinary law has not sufficed to curb insurgent women. They have had to pass special legislation, and now they are on the point of admitting that that special legislation has absolutely failed. They had to dip back into the middle ages to find a means of repressing the women in revolt, and the whole history shows how futile it is for men who have been considered able statesmen to deal with dissatisfied women who are determined to win their citizenship and who will not submit to government until their consent is obtained. That is the whole point of our agitation. The whole argument with the anti-suffragists, or even the critical suffragist man, is this: that you can govern human beings without their consent.

They have said to us government rests upon force, the women haven't force so they must submit.
Well, we are showing them that government does not rest upon force at all: it rests upon consent. As long as women consent to be unjustly governed, they can be, but directly women say: "We withhold our consent, we will not be governed any longer so long as that government is unjust." Not by the forces of civil war can you govern the very weakest woman. You can kill that woman, but she escapes you then; you cannot govern her. And that is, I think, a most valuable demonstration we have been making to the world. We have been proving in our own person that government does not rest upon force; it rests upon consent; as long as people consent to government, it is perfectly easy to govern, but directly they refuse then no power on earth can govern a human being, however feeble, who withholds his or her consent: and all of the strange happenings that you have read about over here, have been manifestations of a refusal to consent on the part of the women.

When they put us in prison at first, simply for taking petitions, we submitted; we allowed them to dress us in prison clothes; we allowed them to put us in solitary confinement; we allowed them to treat us as ordinary criminals, and put us amongst the most degraded of those criminals; and we were very glad of the experience, because out of that experience we learned of the need for prison reform; we learned of the fearful mistakes that men of all nations have made when it is a question of dealing with human beings; we learned of some of the appalling evils of our so-called civilization that we could not have learned in any other way except by going through the police courts of our country, in the prison vans that take you up to prison and right through that prison experience. It was valuable experience, and we were glad to get it. But there came a time when we said: "It is unjust to send political agitators to prison in this way for merely asking for justice, and we will not submit any longer."

And I am always glad to remind American audiences that two of the first women that came to the conclusion that they would not submit to unjust imprisonment any longer were two American girls who are doing some of the most splendid suffrage work in America today up in Washington. I think they are making things extremely lively for the politicians up there, and I don't know whether every American woman knows what those two women, working in conjunction with others, are doing for the disfranchisement of American women at this moment. I am always proud to think that Miss Lucy Burns and Miss Alice Paul served their suffrage apprenticeship in the militant ranks in England, and they were not slow about it either because one of them came, I believe it was, from Heidelberg, travelling all night, to take part in one of those little processions to Parliament with a petition. She was arrested and thrown into prison with about twenty others, and that group of twenty women were the first women who decided they would not submit themselves to the degradation of wearing prison clothes; and they refused, and they were almost the first to adopt the "hunger strike" as a protest against the criminal treatment. They forced their way out of prison. Well, then it was that women began to withhold their consent.

I have been in audiences where I have seen men smile when they heard the words "hunger strike", and yet I think there are very few men today who would be prepared to adopt a "hunger strike" for any cause. It is only people who feel an intolerable sense of oppression who would
adopt a means of that kind. I know of no people who did it before us except revolutionaries in Russia - who adopted the hunger strike against intolerable prison conditions. Well, our women decided to terminate those unjust sentences at the earliest possible moment by the terrible means of the hunger strike. It means, you refuse food until you are at death's door, and then the authorities have to choose between letting you die, and letting you go; and then they let the women go.

Now, that went on so long that the government felt they had lost their power, and that they were unable to cope with the situation. Then it was that, to the shame of the British government, they set the example to authorities all over the world of feeding sane, resisting human beings by force. There may be doctors in this meeting: if so, they know it is one thing to treat an insane person, to feed by force an insane person, or a patient who has some form of illness which makes it necessary; but it is quite another thing to feed a sane, resisting human being who resists with every nerve and with every fiber of her body the indignity and the outrage of forcible feeding. Now, that was done in England, and the government thought they had crushed us. But they found that it did not quell the agitation, that more and more women came in and even passed that terrible ordeal, and that they were not able with all their forcible feeding to make women serve out their unjust sentences. They were obliged to let them go.

Then came the legislation to which I have referred, the legislation which is known in England as the "Cat and Mouse Act". It got through the British House of Commons because the home secretary assured the House of Commons that he wanted the bill passed in the interests of humanity. He said he was a humane man and he did not like having to resort to forcible feeding; he wanted the House of Commons to give him some way of disposing of them, and this was his way: he said, "Give me the power to let these women go when they are at death's door, and leave them at liberty under license until they have recovered their health again and then bring them back; leave it to me to fix the time of their licenses: leave it in my hands altogether to deal with this intolerable situation, because the laws must be obeyed and people who are sentenced for breaking the law must be compelled to serve their sentences." Well, the House of Commons passed the law. They said: "As soon as the women get a taste of this they will give it up." In fact, it was passed to repress the agitation, to make the women yield - because that is what it has really come to, ladies and gentlemen. It has come to a battle between the women and the government as to who shall yield first, whether they will yield and give us the vote, or whether we will give up our agitation.

Well, they little know what women are. Women are very slow to rouse, but once they are aroused, once they are determined, nothing on earth and nothing in heaven will make women give way; it is impossible. And so this "Cat and Mouse Act" which is being used against women today has failed: and the home secretary has taken advantage of the fact that parliament is not sitting, to revive and use alongside of it the forcible feeding. At the present time there are women lying at death's door, recovering enough strength to undergo operations, who have had both systems applied to them, and have not given in and won't give in, and who will be prepared, as soon as they get up from their sick beds, to go on as before. There are women who are being
carried from their sick beds on stretchers into meetings. They are too weak to speak, but they go amongst their fellow workers just to show that their spirits are unquenched, and that their spirit is alive, and they mean to go on as long as life lasts.

Now, I want to say to you who think women cannot succeed, we have brought the government of England to this position, that it has to face this alternative: either women are to be killed or women are to have the vote. I ask American men in this meeting, what would you say if in your state you were faced with that alternative, that you must either kill them or give them their citizenship - women, many of whom you respect, women whom you know have lived useful lives, women whom you know, even If you do not know them personally, are animated with the highest motives, women who are in pursuit of liberty and the power to do useful public service?

Well, there is only one answer to that alternative; there is only one way out of it, unless you are prepared to put back civilization two or three generations: you must give those women the vote. Now that is the outcome of our civil war.

You won your freedom in America when you had the revolution, by bloodshed, by sacrificing human life. You won the civil war by the sacrifice of human life when you decided to emancipate the negro. You have left it to women in your land, the men of all civilized countries have left it to women, to work out their own salvation. That is the way in which we women of England are doing. Human life for us is sacred, but we say if any life is to be sacrificed it shall be ours; we won't do it ourselves, but we will put the enemy in the position where they will have to choose between giving us freedom or giving us death.

Now whether you approve of us or whether you do not, you must see that we have brought the question of women's suffrage into a position where it is of first rate importance, where it can be ignored no longer. Even the most hardened politician will hesitate to take upon himself directly the responsibility of sacrificing the lives of women of undoubted honor, of undoubted earnestness of purpose. That is the political situation as I lay it before you today.

Now then, let me say something about what has brought it about because you must realize that only the very strongest of motives would lead women to do what we have done. Life is sweet to all of us. Every human being loves life and loves to enjoy the good things and the happiness that life gives: and yet we have a state of things in England that has made not two or three women but thousands of women quite prepared to face these terrible situations that I have been trying without any kind of passion or exaggeration to lay before you.

Well, I might spend two or three nights dealing with the industrial situation as it affects women, with the legal position of women, with the social position of women. I want very briefly to say a few words about all. First of all there is the condition of the working woman. One of the things which gives strength to our agitation is that the women who are taking an active part in it are not the poorest women, are not the overworked women; they are the women who are held to be fortunate, the women who have no special personal grievance of their own. Those women have taken up this fight for their own sake, it is true, because they wish to be free, but chiefly for the sake of the women less fortunate than themselves. The industrial workers of Great Britain have
an average wage, mind you, not a minimum wage, an average wage, of less than two dollars a week. Think what would happen in any country if the men in industry of that country had to subsist on a wage like that. Thousands upon thousands of these women - because there are over five million wage earners in my country - thousands of these women have dependents; they are women with children dependent upon them, deserted wives with children dependent on them, or wives with sick husbands; they are unmarried mothers, or they are unmarried women who have old parents or younger brothers and sisters, or sick relatives dependent upon them. Their average income, taking the highly skilled woman teacher and averaging her wage with the unskilled home worker, the average income is less than two dollars a week. There you have in itself an explanation of an uprising of a very determined kind to secure better conditions; and when you know that the government is the largest employer of all the employers and sets a horribly bad example to the private employer in the wages that it pays to women, there you have another explanation. Constant economies are being affected in government departments by the substitution of women's labor for men's, and there is always a reduction in wages whenever women are employed. That is the industrial situation. To speak of the sweated home-worker would take too long, but there are women, women even with dependents, only able to earn three or four shillings a week, thousands of them, and having to pay with the increased cost of living, exorbitant rents in our great cities for single rooms, so that you get several families in one room: they cannot afford even to have a room for themselves. So much for the industrial situation.

Then there is the legal situation. The marriage laws of our country are bringing hundreds and hundreds of women into the militant ranks because we cannot get reform, the kind of reform that women want, of our marriage laws. First of all, a girl is held marriageable by English law, at the age of twelve years. When I was on trial they produced a little girl as a witness, a little girl who had found something in the neighborhood of the house of the chancellor of the exchequer, which was destroyed by some women, and this little girl was produced as a witness. It was said that it was a terrible thing to bring a little girl of twelve years of age and put her in the witness box in a court of law. I agreed, but I pointed out to the judge and the jury that one of the reasons why women were in revolt was because that little girl, whose head just appeared over the top of the witness box, was considered old enough by the laws of her country to take upon herself the terrible responsibilities of wifehood and motherhood, and women could not get it altered, no politicians would listen to us, when we asked to have the marriage law altered in that particular.

Then, the position of the wife. It is very frequently said that every woman who wants a vote, wants a vote because she has been disappointed, because she has not been chosen to be a wife. Well, I can assure you that if most women made a study of the laws before they decided to get married, a great many women would seriously consider whether it was worthwhile, whether the price was not too heavy, because, according to English law, a woman may toil all her life for her husband and her family, she may work in her husband's business, she may help him to build up the family income, and if he chooses at the end of a long life to take every penny of the money that woman has helped to earn away from her and her children, he can do it, and she has no redress. She may at the end of a long, hard life find herself and her children absolutely penniless because her husband has chosen to will the money away from her. So that you see when you
look at it from the legal point of view, it is not such a very, very great gain to become a wife in my country. There are a great many risks that go along with it.

Then take her as a mother. If the child of two parents has any property inherited from relatives, and that child dies before it is of age to make a will, or without making a will, the only person who inherits the property of that child is the child's father; the mother does not exist as her child's heir at all; and during the father's lifetime she not only cannot inherit from her child but she has no voice whatever in deciding the life of her child. Her husband can give the child away to be educated somewhere else or he can bring whomever he pleases into the house to educate the child. He decides absolutely the conditions in which that child is to live; he decides how it is to be educated; he can even decide what religion it is to profess, and the mother's consent is not obtained to any of these decisions. Women are trying to alter it, have tried for generations, but they cannot because the legislatures have no time to listen to the opinions and the desires of people who have no votes.

Well then, when it comes to the question of how people are to get out of marriage, if they are unhappy, under the laws of divorce, the English law of divorce is the most scandalous divorce law in the civilized world. There may be a few states in America, and I believe in Canada, where the same law obtains, but the English divorce law is in itself such a stigma upon women, such a degradation to women, such an invitation to immorality on the part of the married man, that I think that divorce law in itself would justify a rebellion on the part of the women. You get registered in law unequal standards of morals in marriage, and a married man is encouraged by law to think that he can make as many lapses as he thinks fit in marital fidelity; whereas, if one act of infidelity is proved against her the husband can get rid of her by divorce, can take her children away from her and make her an outcast. Women who have been clamoring for an equal divorce law for generations cannot get any attention. Well now, we have had a royal commission on divorce and we have had a report, but there is no security for women that they are to have justice under a new law so long as men are chosen by men to legislate and those men are likely to register the moral opinions of men, not the moral opinions of women, in legislation.

We have to look facts in the face. Part of the militant movement for woman suffrage has had that effect, that women have learned to look facts in the face; they have got rid of sentimentalities; they are looking at actual facts: and when anti-suffragists talk about chivalry, and when they talk about putting women on pedestals and guarding them from all the difficulties and dangers of life, we look to the facts in life as we see them and we say: "Women have every reason to distrust that kind of thing, every reason to be dissatisfied; we want to know the truth however bad it is, and we face that truth because it is only through knowing the truth that you ever will get to anything better." We are determined to have these things faced and cleared up, and it is absolutely ridiculous to say to women that they can safely trust their interests in the hands of men who have already registered in the legislation of their country a standard of morals so unequal for both sexes as we find on the statute books of England today.

When the divorce commission sat, evidence was given by all kinds of people, and women had
the experience of reading in the newspapers the evidence of the man who had been chosen by other men to preside over the divorce court, the judge whose duty it was to decide what was legal cruelty and decide whether women were to continue to be bound to their husbands or not. What did he say? I am glad to think that he is not in a position to give effect to his ideas any more; he now adorns the House of Lords: but he was still judge of the divorce court when he said, that in his opinion the wise wife was the woman who closed her eyes to the moral failings of her husband; and that was the man, women in this meeting, who had for years decided what was legal cruelty and what women were to endure or what they were not to endure in that relationship of husband and wife.

Well, can you wonder that all these things make us more militant? It seems to me that once you look at things from the woman's point of view, once you cease to listen to politicians, once you cease to allow yourself to look at the facts of life through men's spectacles but look at them through your own, every day that passes you are having fresh illustrations of the need there is for women to refuse to wait any longer for their enfranchisement.

Then, the latest manifestation, the latest cause of militancy has been the breaking of the great conspiracy of silence with regard to moral questions and the question of social disease that we have had during the last few years. I want to offer my testimony of gratitude to women like the lady who presides over us today and to the many of the medical men of the United States in making a lead in that direction. Before some of the suffragists had the courage even to study the question, these people spoke out; the medical profession in America has led the way, and through Dr Prince Morrow, and other men whose names we honor, we are at last beginning to know the real facts of the situation. We know this, that whatever women's wishes might be, it is their duty for the sake of the race, itself, to save the race, to insist upon having this question of the moral health of the nation approached from the women's point of view and settled by women in cooperation with men. It is our business to show the close relationship there is between the appalling state of social health and the political degradation of women. The two things go hand in hand. I have been reading a great many articles by very profound thinkers lately, and I see that somehow or other when you get men writing about them, even the best of men, they do evade the real issue, and that is, the status of women.

We women see so clearly the fact that the only way to deal with this thing is to raise the status of women; first the political status, then the industrial and the social status of women. You must make women count as much as men; you must have an equal standard of morals; and the only way to enforce that is through giving women political power so that you can get that equal moral standard registered in the laws of the country. It is the only way. I don't know whether men sufficiently realize it, but we women do realize it: we more and more realize it, and so women have nerved themselves to speak out on this question. First of all, we feel that what is most important is that women should know it. Ten years ago it would have been impossible for any woman or any man to speak openly upon that question on any platform, because women had been taught that they must keep their eyes closed to all these things; women had been taught that they must ignore the fact even that a large section of their sex were living lives of degradation
and outlawry. If they knew of it at all, they were told in vague terms that it was in order to make the lives of the rest of the women safe; they were told it was a necessary evil; they were told it was something that the good woman does not understand and must not know anything about. All that is now at an end. Women are refusing, men in this meeting, even if that were true, to have their lives made safe at the expense of their sisters. The women are determined. A good deal of the opposition to woman suffrage is coming from the very worst element in the population, who realize that once you get woman suffrage, a great many places that are tolerated today will have to disappear. It is perhaps a hard saying for many men that there will have to be self-control and an equal standard of morals, but the best men now, the scientists of every country, are supporting the woman's point of view.

It was thirty years ago in England that a splendid woman named Josephine Butler fought to establish an equal moral code for both sexes. She fought all her life; she was stoned; she was hooted; her meetings were broken up; her life was made absolutely dangerous; and yet that woman persisted and she secured the repeal of certain laws relating to prostitution which disgraced the statute books of our country. In those days the doctors were against her; practically everybody was against her. Men were told that it was necessary for their health that we should have an unequal moral code. Now that is all done away with and the foremost medical men and the foremost scientists are agreeing with the women; they are agreeing with the women that it is quite possible, and it is necessary for the sake of the race itself, that this equal moral code shall be established. Well, it is probably difficult; it is perhaps going to be difficult for generations; but it is to come, and it is out of the woman's movement that it is coming, because women today who have had the benefits of education, who have had the benefit of medical training and who have had the benefit of legal training, are informing their sex upon this question, and there is a good deal of opposition coming to it from strange directions; even people who have self-appointed themselves as the custodians of public morals are opposing the facts being told.

One of the strangest things that I have experienced for years is the fact that in New York, quite recently, copies of our paper, The Suffragette, in which were articles written by my daughter, quoting the opinions of medical men all over the world on this question, and relying on those quotations as a statement of fact, were offered for sale, and an attempt, a successful attempt temporarily, was made to prevent that paper being sold because it contained these articles telling the truth: and a book containing the articles in collected form prefaced with an article telling why this book was written, has also had an attack made upon it by that self-constituted guardian of public morals, Mr. Comstock, supported by certain sections of the American press. Well, that book is here tonight: that book is here on sale. That book was written, not for people of my age, not for people who if there are dangers to be faced have either escaped or suffered from them: that book was written for young people. That book was written so that women should know. What is the use of locking the stable after the horse is stolen? Prevention is better than cure. This book was written to convince everybody of the danger, to point out the plain facts of the situation, and to convince thoughtful people that only through the emancipation of women, only through the uplifting of women, can you ever effectively deal with the situation. We have tried, we women, for generations to undo some of this evil; we have had our rescue societies; we have
made all kinds of efforts; we have taken the poor unfortunate children who have been the outcome of this unequal code of morals between men and women, and what has happened? Matters have become sadly worse; we have scratched on the surface instead of cutting out the root of the evil. All that is changed. Today women are working in my country, are sacrificing and suffering to win the political enfranchisement of their sex, so that we may get better laws and better administration of the laws.

I could go on tonight pointing out to you how in my country small crimes against property, small thefts, small injuries to property are punished more severely than are any crimes committed against the physical and the moral integrity of members of my sex. I think I have said enough at least to make you understand that this uprising on the part of the British women has as much justification and as much provocation as any uprising on the part of men in their desire for political liberty in the past. We are not working to get the vote. We are not going to prison to get the vote, merely to say we have the vote. We are going through all this to get the vote so that by means of the vote we can bring about better conditions not only for ourselves but for the community as a whole.

Men have done splendid things in this world; they have made great achievements in engineering; they have done splendid organization work; but they have failed, they have miserably failed, when it has come to dealing with the lives of human beings. They stand self-confessed failures, because the problems that perplex civilization are absolutely appalling today. Well, that is the function of women in life: it is our business to care for human beings, and we are determined that we must come without delay to the saving of the race. The race must be saved, and it can only be saved through the emancipation of women.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I want to say that I am very thankful to you for listening to me here tonight; I am glad if I have been able even to a small extent to explain to you something of the English situation. I want to say that I am not here to apologize. I do not care very much even whether you really understand, because when you are in a fighting movement, a movement which every fiber of your being has forced you to enter, it is not the approval of other human beings that you want; you are so concentrated on your object that you mean to achieve that object even if the whole world was up in arms against you. So I am not here tonight to apologize or to win very much your approbation. People have said: "Why does Mrs. Pankhurst come to America? Has she come to America to rouse American women to be militant?" No, I have not come to America to arouse American women to be militant. I believe that American women, as their earnestness increases, as they realize the need for the enfranchisement of their sex, will find out for themselves the best way to secure that object. Each nation must work out its own salvation, and so the American women will find their own way and use their own methods capably.

Other people have said: "What right has Mrs. Pankhurst come to America and ask for American dollars?" Well, I think I have the right that all oppressed people have to ask for practical sympathy of others freer than themselves. Your right to send to France and ask for help
was never questioned. You did it, and you got that help. Men of all nationalities have come to America, and they have not gone away empty-handed, because American sympathy has been extended to struggling peoples all over the world.

In England, if you could understand it, there is the most pathetic and the most courageous fight going on, because you find the people whom you have been accustomed to look upon as weak and reliant, the people you have always thought leaned upon other people for protection, have stood up and are fighting for themselves. Women have found a new kind of self-respect, a new kind of energy, a new kind of strength: and I think that of all oppressed peoples who might claim your sympathy and support, women who are fighting this fight unknown in the history of humanity before, fighting this fight in the twentieth century for greater powers of self-development, self-expression and self-government, might very well attract the sympathy and the practical help of American people.

There hasn't been a victory the women of America have won that we have not rejoiced in. I think as we have read month by month of the new States that have been added to the list of fully enfranchised states, perhaps we who know how hard the fight is, have rejoiced even more than American women themselves.

I have heard cheers ring out in a meeting in London when the news of some new state being added to the list was given, cheers louder and more enthusiastic than I have ever heard for any victory in an American meeting. It is very true that those who are fighting a hard battle, those who are sacrificing greatly in order to win a victory, appreciate victories and are more enthusiastic when victories are won. We have rejoiced wholeheartedly in your victories. We feel that those victories have been easier perhaps because of the hard times that we were having, because out of our militant movement in the storm centre of the suffrage movement have gone waves that have helped to rouse women all over the world. You could only explain the strange phenomena in that way. Ten years ago there was hardly any woman suffrage movement at all. Now even in China and Japan, in India, in Turkey, everywhere women are rising up and asking for these larger opportunities, which modern conditions demand that women should have: and we women think that we have helped. Well, if we have helped at all, if, as has been said from the chair tonight, we have even helped to rouse suffrage enthusiasm in Connecticut, can you blame me very much if I come and tell you of the desperate struggle we are having, of how the government is trying to break us down in every possible way, even by involving us in lawsuits, and trying to frighten our subscribers by threatening to prosecute even people who help us by subscribing money? Can you wonder I come over to America? Have you read about American dollars that have been given the Irish law-breaking? "Cat and Mouse Act", probably going back to be rearrested as soon as I set my foot on British soil. I come to ask you to help to win this fight. If we win it, this hardest of all fights, then, to be sure, in the future it is going to be made easier for women all over the world to win their fight when their time comes. So I make no apologies for coming, and I make no
apologies, Mrs. Hepburn, for asking this audience if any of them feel inclined to help me to take back some money from America and put it with the money that I know our women are raising by desperate personal sacrifice at home, so that when we begin our next year's campaign, facing a general election, as probably we shall face next year, our anxieties on the money side will not be so heavy as they would have been if I had not found strength and health enough to come and carry out this somewhat arduous tour in the United States of America.

*Speech taken from* [http://www.emersonkent.com/speeches/freedom_or_death.htm](http://www.emersonkent.com/speeches/freedom_or_death.htm).