**With reference to Britain in the years 1798- 1918, to what extent was the improved social and political status achieved by the actions of individual women?**

The question of who was responsible for the improved social and political status of women through the years 1798-1918 is one that can be answered by reference to a network of mutually dependent, interwoven factors. There is no doubt that the actions of individual women – especially in the period from 1798- laid the foundation for a greater social and political awareness amongst women. Fuelled by the industrial revolution, the period saw ideas of social liberation, changes in urbanisation and increasing opportunities in education which resulted in better organisation and exchange of ideas which led to many more women speaking up for different causes. Indeed, the work of individual women in the early years left behind a legacy which was passed down to the likes of Emmeline Pankhurst and Millicent Fawcett. Despite this, historians do differ on which factors had the greatest impact- some such as Constance Rover argue that World War 1 was a central factor behind the partial enfranchisement of 1918. However, despite the economic benefits the war gave women, most of these were short term- the jobs undertaken by women during the war were “returned” to men post -war. It can even be said that the war hindered negotiations on behalf of women’s suffrage, thus not benefiting women politically at all. Martin Pugh suggests that ‘whether the war influenced the debate about votes for women is rather doubtful.’[[1]](#footnote-1) Pugh, a revisionist historian, focuses on the political situation as a whole and the changes that occurred over time. Contrastingly, the importance of the suffrage movement has been the focus of feminist historians such as June Purvis, who argue it paved the way for the enfranchisement and determined the nature of the suffrage legislation in 1918. While this may be true to some extent, there is a strong consensus amongst revisionist historians that the WSPU harmed the enfranchisement process by legitimising the rise of anti- suffrage groups. Therefore, the evidence strongly suggests that it was the changing political climate, combined with the drive for legislation by organised groups from the 1850s, that bought about significant change for women. In addition, it must be made clear that without individual men and women working within organisations, legislation would not have been possible.

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft's polemic, “A Vindication of the Rights of Women”, was published, in which Wollstonecraft attacked marriage as "legal prostitution" and justified her radical views by claiming: " I do not wish them (women) to have power over men; but over themselves". [[2]](#footnote-2) The ideas in Wollstonecraft's book were truly revolutionary and, perhaps inevitably, it sparked an unprecedented debate about women’s social and political status. However, progress towards changing the status of women was initially very gradual, as evident in the lack of activity in the first decade of the 19th century. The 1832 Reform Act continued to exclude women from the vote, despite the number of people now eligible to vote increasing from 435,000 to 650,000. Nevertheless, there was progress however small –Elizabeth Fry, for example, raised the social profile of women by campaigning for prison reform and presented her evidence to the House of Commons Committee in 1818 showing that a woman could exert some political influence. The first petition from an individual woman for the vote was presented to Parliament in 1832, with Henry Hunt MP presenting it on behalf of Mary Smith. She argued that she paid taxes and was subject to the law and should therefore be able to vote (echoing the American slogan of the previous century of ‘no taxation without representation’). Despite being unsuccessful, it provides evidence that women were beginning to speak about suffrage and had some backing from sympathetic parliamentarians like Hunt. Another example of progress is in the influence of the Chartist movement –The East London Female Patriotic Association published its objectives in 1839 and made it clear that they wanted to “use [their] best endeavours to assist our brethren in obtaining universal suffrage".[[3]](#footnote-3) Women were beginning to join together in large numbers - the Birmingham Charter Association for example, had over 3,000 female members[[4]](#footnote-4) highlighting the development of organised groups, which would be a template for later women’s suffrage groups.

Other crucial early movements included the movement for the abolition of slavery. In 1824, Elizabeth Heyrick published her pamphlet “Immediate not Gradual Abolition”, in which she argued passionately for the immediate emancipation of the slaves in the British colonies. She claimed:

*“The West Indian planters have occupied much too prominent a place in the discussion of this great question…Why petition Parliament at all, to do that for us, which we can do more speedily and effectually for ourselves?”[[5]](#footnote-5)*

Heyrick’s pamphlet was written with the purpose of persuading people to join the movement which is why it has some limitations as it will, inevitably, be biased towards her cause. The pamphlet was discussed at meetings all over the country and it can be assumed that the target audience was small and radical. Heyrick’s extreme views would have been highly criticised in 1824 - especially since her role as a woman was expected to be limited to the domestic sphere. As a result, it could be argued that Heyrick published this pamphlet with the aim of attracting controversy which devalues the source as it is being used to bring widespread attention to the movement. In the same year (1824), trade unions were legalised in response to increases in union militancy, showing that government was susceptible to pressure to execute change. This confidence is reflected in the pamphlet where Heyrick opposes the official policy of gradual abolition and the radical tone of the speech highlights how women in this period were already willing to speak out against received wisdom, therefore laying the foundations for future political agendas. The strong willingness to be independent and the uncompromising tone of the source is shown as Heyrick questions authorities and their efficiency claiming abolitionists can work more “speedily” and “effectually”. The Anti-Slavery society realised the importance of Elizabeth Heyrick as a propagandist whose writing had the ability to arouse public opinion and the Abolition of Slavery Act was passed in 1833 highlighting the effectiveness of early single-issue campaigns in which women’s groups played a significant part. It seems that especially in the early 19th century, individual women played a key role in fuelling the drive for legislation, but they were only able to this by being a part of a larger organised groups where sometimes they met with hostility from misogynists - like Wilberforce in the abolitionist movement[[6]](#footnote-6).

Women's pressure later in the century continued to reflect a number of earlier developments which had established the role and relevance of women in campaigning often for moral causes – against the slave trade (1820’s), in the Chartist movement (1830’s), and for temperance reform (1820’s). From these movements emerged a generation of middle-class women dedicated to their causes such as Barbara Bodichon, Annie Besant and Josephine Butler. It is widely agreed that the vote only emerged as a significant goal in the aftermath of John Stuart Mill’s election (1865). However, women’s suffrage was not at the forefront of the minds of campaigners or politicians until the late 19th century. However, from the 1850s onwards there was an organised women's movement up and running which campaigned on university education, married women's property rights, the abolition of the Contagious Diseases Acts, equal employment opportunities and birth control which built the way for the improved **social** status of women, eventually earning them the **political** status of partial enfranchisement. What is even more significant is that these women scored a number of successes despite not having the parliamentary vote- the Marriage and Divorce Act in 1857 being a major success, suggesting that some men at least were inclined to support their case and that women who had entered the public sphere had gained validation from sympathetic men.

In 1857, Barbara Bodichon wrote “*Women and Work”* where she argued that a married women's dependence on her husband was degrading.[[7]](#footnote-7) This can be said to have been a long-term philosophical basis for the passing of the 1882 Married Women's Property Act, suggesting that campaigns in the 1850s greatly influenced later changes which allowed women to be financially independent, while undermining the ideological assumption that women were the property of their husbands. In 1869, Josephine Butler began her campaign against the [Contagious Diseases Act](http://spartacus-educational.com/Wcontagious.htm)s, as she objected to laws that only applied to the sexual conduct of women and, in the application of this double standard, consistently humiliated prostitute women. She led the campaign against this legislation by forming the Ladies' Association Against the Contagious Diseases Act and, as an outstanding orator, she attracted large audiences to hear her explain why these laws needed to be repealed. Many people were shocked by the idea of a woman speaking in public about sexual matters and George Butler was severely criticised for allowing his wife to become involved in this campaign but continued to support her work. The success of the campaign was reflected in the repeal of The Contagious Diseases Act of 1886, showing that an individual woman was able to make legislative change with the help and support from other women but also of an individual man.

In 1865, the leaders of the women only Kensington Society produced a petition for female suffrage with 1,521 signatures, which John Stuart Mill MP agreed to present to Parliament, laying it before the House of Commons on 7th June 1866: the petition marked the start of organised campaigning by women for the vote. Subsequently, more than 16,000 petitions for votes for women were received by the House of Commons/Lords between 1866 and 1918. In support of the cause, Mill claimed : “I am far from pretending that wives are in general no better treated than slaves.[[8]](#footnote-8)” Therefore, it is once again important to identify that it was not simply the individual women involved in these movements, but the extent to which they were often campaigning in partnership with men that improved women’s political status through the century.

A highly detrimental factor in women’s gaining economic freedom (a prerequisite for social and political status) had always been the difficulty in obtaining a university education. The mid-19th century saw progress in this area: Bedford College was founded in London in 1849, as the first higher education college for women, inspiring other women to open more colleges. Women such as Frances Buss, Dorothea Beale and Emily Davies campaigned to improve education for women and their influence led to the passing of the 1870 Education Act which gained working class girls access to education, demonstrating that social change was not limited to one class. Higher education achievements were also made by Elizabeth Garrett as the first woman to qualify as a doctor in Britain, breaking the stereotype of gendered jobs and showing that women could enter the public sphere of the professions. McDermind states that ‘it was believed that too much education could result in infertility through overstraining the delicate female constitution’[[9]](#footnote-9), therefore these education advances made by individual women worked to undermine such superstitions and to reinforce the forward momentum towards equality for women. Evidently, there were just over a thousand women students at Oxford and Cambridge in 1910, which indicated great progress, albeit limited progress, as they had to obtain permission to attend lectures and were not allowed to take degrees.

Controversial issues that were once dismissed by a narrow-minded society were brought to public attention by women such as Annie Besant and men such as Charles Bradlaugh. A new edition of a small pamphlet, “The Fruits of Philosophy” containing a summary of methods to treat infertility and three methods of birth control, was published in 1876 by Henry Cook who was arrested and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for “publishing pornography”. Annie Besant and Charles Bradlaugh, disagreeing with this conviction, published a sixpenny edition of the pamphlet in 1877. Besant wrote a preface which explained why she thought the pamphlet should be published:

 “*We think it more moral to prevent the conception of children than, after they are born, to murder them by want of food, air, and clothing. We advocate scientific checks to population, because, so long as poor men have large families, pauperism is a necessity, and from pauperism grow crime and disease”.[[10]](#footnote-10)*

This source is highly valuable from a historical perspective because, as a woman living in a patriarchal and religious society, Besant was not expected to present such as logical, science-based argument, with the elegantly structured causal chain: large families of poor men> pauperism>crime and disease. Women of the middle classes, like Besant, were expected to be compassionate and maternal, as their primary role in life was motherhood, not cool-headed logicians. The fact that Besant is speaking up about an unpopular topic shows that individual women played a key role in gradually changing the nature of public discourse which would lead to change in legislation. Furthermore, Bradlaugh’s cooperation in establishing the publishing company again indicate that individual men also contributed to improving women’s social rights. The pair were arrested, and they were prosecuted by the Conservative Solicitor-General, Hardinge Giffard, for publishing "a certain indecent, lewd, filthy, bawdy, and obscene book". The credibility of the source can be questioned due to its propagandist purpose. Besant uses emotive and controversial language such as “murder” in order to draw a reaction from her largely radical audience. If the source itself is not effective, then its popularity certainly was: in 1876 only 700 copies had been purchased in Britain; however, in the three months before the trial, 125,000 had been sold, resulting in a decline in birth rate, showing the idea of a woman advocating birth-control not only elevated that individual woman’s status but, in this instance, impacted on the lives of women who were freed from unwanted pregnancy.

As a middle- class socialist, Besant later became a prominent figure in the new trade union movement, leading the 1888 Match girls’ strikes where unskilled workers succeeded for the first time. In fact, Besant’s close association with the movement means that she is often given much of the credit for its successes. This hagiographical approach to her is reflected in the work of the orthodox historian, Ray Strachey, who strongly advocated that it was the legacy of a “few outstanding women” such as Barbra Bodichon and Josephine Butler that contributed to the main changes being made in society from 1850. Strachey believes it was the “philanthropists” who “quickened the women’s movement to life”,[[11]](#footnote-11) a whiggish view, which disregards working class contributions that is not surprising in an upper-class woman like Strachey. In contrast, events such as the Matchgirls’ Strike or Clementina Black securing the first successful equal pay resolution at Trades Union Congress (1888) show that working class women were beginning to have a widespread impact too.

Historical debate about the suffrage movement is often associated with the relative contributions of Suffragettes and Suffragists; valid arguments can be made on both sides of the debate: both were successful in bringing attention to the cause but whether the Suffragettes encouraged reform is more doubtful. June Purvis- a feminist and a revisionist historian- is renowned for placing the Suffragettes at the forefront of this debate, stating unequivocally: “They aroused a passionate discussion about women's status and inequality in society …Without their struggle the 1918 franchise act would not have been passed.’[[12]](#footnote-12) Purvis specialises in the Suffragette movement in Edwardian Britain making her research very detailed and, therefore, reliable. However, not covering the whole-time period could lead to her covering a relatively narrow range of factors which devalues her debate. Furthermore, as the Emeritus Professor of Women's and Gender History at the University of Portsmouth, Purvis is more likely to focus on social aspects of history, unlike Martin Pugh who puts emphasis on ‘the vote’ rather than a movement which attempted to redefine the position of women in society. As a feminist, Purvis is also more likely to be empathetic to the sufferings of women- notably, she has published the biography of Emmeline Pankhurst where it can be said that Purvis’ identification with her subject allows her to avoid detached examination of some of the less pleasant aspects of the Pankhursts, with the slogan- “It is time to reclaim Emmeline Pankhurst”[[13]](#footnote-13).

Contrastingly, Pugh believes women were unlikely to make an advance unless parliament became more representative and he argues it was the changing attitude of the Conservative Party which played a key role in eventual enfranchisement[[14]](#footnote-14). Pugh focused his doctoral thesis on the background to the 1918 Representation of the People Act and has been a professor of Modern British History at the University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. The clear theme in his historical debate focuses on modern British history especially the last two centuries suggesting that he is capable of putting forward a scholarly argument on the issue’ whilst exploring all areas of the debate and contributing a valuable conclusion in the field. As a male historian focusing on the political aspects of history, perhaps a lack of empathy towards the Suffragettes is to be expected in his writings. Referring to Pugh’s book *“The Pankhursts”*, Purvis claims that “the range of sources he has consulted is limited and seem biased towards the "official" voices of men such as the police and politicians. “[[15]](#footnote-15) which perhaps highlights some of the limitations of his androcentric approach. Moreover, as both historians are writing after the events have happened, they can reflect upon the long-term influences of the enfranchisement of women. However, "revisionist" interpretations restrict Pugh’s assessment of the women’s movement of this period to a very limited realm, that of formal politics.

When it comes to discussing the structure of politics, both historians agree. Two Conciliation Bills, in 1911/12, failed to bring in votes for women and Purvis suggests that given the organisation of party politics, the Conciliation Bills were doomed from the start.[[16]](#footnote-16) Similarly, Pugh claims that “Asquith achieved the removal of the ultimate obstacle to the women’s vote, the veto powers of the House of Lords” and, although it may not have been an intended consequence, nevertheless it meant that enfranchisement legislation was slowly progressing: Dickinson’s bill of 1913 would have enfranchised 6 million women and embodied the solution which was to be adopted in the successful measure of 1917. In fact, a number of changes in Parliament altered the balance in favour of votes for women- In May 1915, the Liberal government became a Coalition government and the old fears that one party might benefit from women’s suffrage were dismissed. Also, Lloyd George, who was sympathetic to women’s suffrage, replaced Asquith as Prime Minister in December 1916. (His predecessor had claimed women were, ‘a dim lot, for the most part hopelessly ignorant of politics.’) This evidence strongly suggests that the change of leader was beneficial for women in their campaign. Paula Bartley also speaks of how this eradicated any party-political advantage or disadvantage that was to be had through the granting of female suffrage[[17]](#footnote-17).

Purvis gives much credit to individual women, particularly the militants in the WSPU such as Emily Davison- “The 1913 death of Emily Davison was a key moment in the struggle for votes for women in the UK.” [[18]](#footnote-18) Indeed, her death was not only reported in all the main British newspapers of the day but captured on Pathe news and relayed around the world. On the other hand, Pugh believes “it is important to identify not simply the individual women involved but the extent to which they were often campaigning in partnership with men - Millicent and Henry Fawcett, Josephine and George Butler, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor for example.”[[19]](#footnote-19) Pugh goes further and criticises the suffrage groups- particularly the WSPU- as to him, the cause suffered from operational flaws such as excluding married women from the franchise[[20]](#footnote-20). Furthermore, Pugh highlights the idea that “suffragette militancy helped revive earlier claims about the female temperament which encouraged the Antis.” This view is, perhaps undermined by the ‘female temperament’ traditionally being viewed as weak and hysterical, hardly a description of hunger strikers that defied the Cat and Mouse Act.

Better documented negative effects of the Suffragettes can be deduced from a letter written by David Lloyd George to Millicent Garrett Fawcett on November 10th, 1911. In the letter, he expresses fear that the militants are “alienating” supporters for the suffrage cause, including amongst Members of Parliament and his hopes for a clause in the next year's Bill will dissipate if something is not done:

*“If these tactics are persisted in our hopes of being able to secure the insertion of a Women’s suffrage amendment in next year’s Bill will be of the slightest.”[[21]](#footnote-21)*

Lloyd George was a prominent supporter of the women’s cause, but he was also in a Liberal cabinet with Asquith who was opposed to giving the vote to ‘a dim lot’ of political ignoramuses. Consequently, the 1910 Conciliation Bill, which was devised to give property-owning women the vote, was rejected by the Liberal government who felt that it would only benefit wealthy Conservative supporters. As this source was written in 1911, Lloyd-George may well be trying to defend his party and justify himself; therefore, he may purposefully be putting the blame on militants which devalues the source significantly, especially as he uses the animalistic verb “howled”, making the suffragettes seem uncivilised and out of control. Furthermore, a correspondence between Fawcett and Lloyd George would be biased as, despite supporting female suffrage, both are against radical means of achieving it- Fawcett having publicly withdrawn support from the WSPU. The credibility of the source is also put into question as Lloyd-George had risen from humble origins to a privileged position and perhaps wished to protect his respectable position in the bourgeoisie, by distancing himself from the tactics of the WSPU. However, as this letter was written in private, it can be assumed that it has not been manipulated to attract attention, making it more credible. This letter portrays the suffragettes’ violence to be counter- productive which contrasts to the argument of June Purvis who suggests violent actions such as the hunger strikes “held a cultural resonance since she [the suffragette] appropriated a form of protest that had been adopted by dissidents in the past and made it her own[[22]](#footnote-22)”.

Indeed, the NUWSS was having talks with Lloyd George and like-minded Liberals who argued that if they were returned in the next general election, they would introduce a new reform bill. Sandra Holton argues the case that Suffragists were highly successful, saying: ‘the political alliances the democratic suffragists had formed ensured women would have to be included in any future reform bill.’[[23]](#footnote-23) To say that the democratic Suffragists played a major role in securing the 1918 Act since they successfully negotiated with political parties may be a little simplistic. However, it has been noted that, whilst women in France also played an important role in campaigning, they were not given the vote until 1945. It would therefore suggest the nature of the suffrage movement, as well as other factors in Britain, was vital in capturing the attention of the nation, ultimately leading to the Bill of 1918.

During the Great War of 1914-1918, there was a sharp increase in female employment within the public world of work. Domestic service diminished by 400,000, as women took to non-combatant military roles, the transport industry, agricultural activities and civil service positions. Of course, the biggest increase in female employment was within the munitions industry, which rose from 82,859 in July 1914 to 947,000 by November 1918. Many argue that it was due to this massive increase in female employment, which was vital to Britain winning the war, that women were rewarded in 1918 with the vote. It is useful to look at what Constance Rover writes on the relationship between war and the vote: ‘The obvious effect was that women’s contribution to the war effort was appreciated…public opinion became overwhelmingly favourable towards women. The war transformed the political situation’[[24]](#footnote-24) Rover’s argument here is based on the idea that admiration felt towards women for their contributions to war work changed the public opinion to pro female-suffrage. However, the 1918 Act only applied to certain property-owning women over 30, which meant the majority of those who had worked in wartime jobs and contributed to the victory, were not actually given the ‘reward’ of the vote.

In conclusion, a number of factors influenced the increasingly improved social and political status of women, but the prominent factors were political change combined with the drive for legislation by individuals and organised groups. Short term factors included the new coalition government that was set up in 1915 meaning there were no tactical gains or losses to be made through the granting of female suffrage. Lloyd George replaced a misogynistic prime minister who acted as a barrier to the campaign, and Britain, the ‘mother of democracy’, seemed to be falling behind other countries, including former colonies on the democratic scale. Perhaps more importantly, the political change was a long-term factor and, therefore, the ultimate enfranchisement of women was something that organically grew from every minor gain that was made- in 1867 when Mill introduced an amendment, 91 percent Conservatives voted against but in the 1897 Bill, 55 percent backed it, showing the changing attitudes of the Conservative Party towards women’s suffrage.[[25]](#footnote-25) The war was instrumental in changing masculine perceptions of women, as many took dutifully to war work, consequently nullifying any argument that women could not manage responsibility. However, since the 1918 Act only benefited women over 30, the majority of those who actually contributed to the war effort were neglected. Secondly, the suffrage movement prior to the war was highly successful in bringing the necessary attention to the campaign and increasing the rate at which the enfranchisement occurred, yet, there is the argument that the militant campaign actually harmed the cause and delayed any immediate victories that were to be had through peaceful negotiations. Finally, the campaigns of individual women in the early parts of the 19th century (supported by men sympathetic to the course) were essential to bringing women to the forefront of society and politics and allowing them to gain a stronger ‘market position’, with increased self-confidence and more social freedoms.

Appendix

Source 1:

*“In the great question of emancipation, the interests of two parties are said to be involved, the interest of the slave and that of the planter. But it cannot for a moment be imagined that these two interests have an equal right to be consulted, without confounding all moral distinctions, all difference between real and pretended, between substantial and assumed claims. With the interest of the planters, the question of emancipation has (properly speaking) nothing to do. The right of the slave, and the interest of the planter, are distinct questions; they belong to separate departments, to different provinces of consideration. If the liberty of the slave can be secured not only without injury, but with advantage to the planter, so much the better, certainly; but still the liberation of the slave ought ever to be regarded as an independent object; and if it be deferred till the planter is sufficiently alive to his own interest to co-operate in the measure, we may for ever despair of its accomplishment. The cause of emancipation has been long and ably advocated. Reason and eloquence, persuasion and argument have been powerfully exerted; experiments have been fairly made, facts broadly stated in proof of the impolicy as well as iniquity of slavery, to little purpose; even the hope of its extinction, with the concurrence of the planter, or by any enactment of the colonial, or British legislature, is still seen in very remote perspective, so remote that the heart sickens at the cheerless prospect. All that zeal and talent could display in the way of argument, has been exerted in vain. All that an accumulated mass of indubitable evidence could affect in the way of conviction, has been brought to no effect.*

*It is high time, then, to resort to other measures, to ways and means more summary and effectual. Too much time has already been lost in declamation and argument, in petitions and remonstrance’s against British slavery. The cause of emancipation calls for something more decisive, more efficient than words. It calls upon the real friends of the poor degraded and oppressed African to bind themselves by a solemn engagement, an irrevocable vow, to participate no longer in the crime of keeping him in bondage...*

*The perpetuation of slavery in our West India colonies is not an abstract question, to be settled between the government and the planters; it is one in which we are all implicated, we are all guilty of supporting and perpetuating slavery. The West Indian planter and the people of this country stand in the same moral relation to each other as the thief and receiver of stolen goods.*

*The West Indian planters have occupied much too prominent a place in the discussion of this great question....The abolitionists have shown a great deal too much politeness and accommodation towards these gentlemen.... Why petition Parliament at all, to do that for us, which... we can do more speedily and effectually for ourselves?”*

*Source 2:*

We believe, with the Rev Dr Malthus, that population has a tendency to increase faster than the means of existence, and that some checks must therefore exercise contra-overpopulation; the checks now exercised are semi-starvation and preventable disease; the enormous mortality among infants of the poor is one of the checks which now keeps down the population. The checks that ought to control population are scientific, and it is these which we advocate. We think it more moral to prevent the conception of children than, after they are born, to murder them by want of food, air, and clothing. We advocate scientific checks to population, because, so long as poor men have large families, pauperism is a necessity, and from pauperism grow crime and disease. The wage which would support the parents and two or three children in comfort and decency is utterly insufficient to maintain a family of twelve or fourteen, and we consider it a crime to bring into the world human beings doomed to misery or to premature death. It is not only the hard-working classes which are concerned in this question. The poor curate, the struggling man of business, the young professional man, are often made wretched for life by their inordinately large families, and their years are passed in one long battle to live; meanwhile the woman's health is sacrificed and her life embittered from the same cause. To all of these, we point the way of relief and of happiness; for the sake of these we publish what others fear to issue, and we do it, confident that if we fail the first time, we shall succeed at last, and that the English public will not permit the authorities to stifle a discussion of the most important social question which can influence a nation's welfare.[[26]](#footnote-26)

*Source 3:*

*30th November, 1911*

*I thank you for your appreciative note, which I value very much coming from you. I have been very unhappy about the prospects during the last few days. The action of the militants is alienating sympathy from the women’s cause in every quarter: I felt the depressing influence even at the meeting at Bath. Tuesday’s violence and last night’s indecent exhibition, when the Prime Minister supporting a charitable institution was howled down in a place of worship, have between them created a very grave situation. If next year’s, chances of carrying either a women amendment or a Bill are not to be totally ruined some sympathetic action must be taken at once. You can hardly understand what the feeling is even amongst Members of Parliament who have hitherto been steadiest in their support of Women’s suffrage. I feel confident that if these tactics are persisted in our hopes of being able to secure the {confirmation} insertion of a Women’s suffrage amendment in next year’s Bill will be of the slightest. I have consulted Sir Edward Grey and other friends of the movement and they take an equally serious view of the situation. What do you suggest? Anti-suffragists are of course exultant. I feel confident that the effect of our agitation will be neutralised by the antics of the Militants.*

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