

# Women as Dictators

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**T**WENTY-FOUR hours after the dedication of the Woman's Parliament in Washington a representative of THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL asked me what I really meant when I said that henceforth women are to be dictators. She was the fortieth or fiftieth person who had put the same question to me in that very limited space of time.

I meant then and mean now exactly what I said.

The end of the dictatorship of the world by men alone is in sight. We women have lived long enough in the cramped confines of a misfit social structure. We have been forced to sit still too long. We have been powerless for such an endless time that we have accumulated enough stored-up energy to shape any structure to our will.

We know we can manage the house. We can reconstruct it. We can put on a left wing and a right wing. We can add a sun porch to let in the light. We could even tear the house down if we liked—and I think men know that too.

The time has come to take this world muddle that men have created and strive to turn it into an ordered, peaceful, happy abiding place for humanity. In its present condition the world is its own worst indictment against the sole dictatorship of men. Men have always obstructed and suppressed the intellect of one-half of the human race. They have always worked for themselves. That is not sufficient. The error lies here.

By excluding women men have interfered for too long with the development, interests and intelligence of humanity. Men have always kept women in subjection. To acknowledge them as equals would have destroyed their own pedestals. They have opposed an even partially woman-governed world, fearing a limitation of their own undisputed freedom. Men have insisted not only that we live in a man-governed world but that we worship in a man-dominated church; and we can no longer accept this.

We are going to make the necessary changes, but not for the sake of women alone. I have no nearsighted idea that what is done for women and children is not to the advantage of men also. In short, we are not working against men, for women, when we speak of women as dictators; we are working for the human race.

The day is not far off when the Woman's Party, of which I am president, will be strong enough to impose any measure it may choose.

Our first task is an educational one. We mean to plant the idea of independence in the mind of every woman. Our party will be a woman's party, and a woman's party only. It will have no mem-



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MRS. OLIVER H. P. BELMONT

bers, no officers, no employees who are not women. I have no intention of repeating the experience of the American Red Cross, which, in spite of the fact that it was founded by a woman, is run entirely by men. Every big, high-salaried position in the organization is now filled by some man. It will never be possible for that to happen in the Woman's Party. There is a clause in the deed of gift of the property in Washington—the property on which the new parliament building will be erected—which provides that it reverts to my estate the moment any man is given official position, employment or salary. We will never get a balance of power except through rigid rules like these. The world makes its readjustments by swinging to extremes.

**B**Y the way our membership is increasing it is evident that our organization will be a colossal thing in a very short time. We know the gigantic proportions of our task, and we are not afraid of it. We mean to free women from the indignity of hanging on to the old political parties.

Women have got to stop being followers. They will never get anywhere unless they begin to initiate. Perhaps there is something very glorious about being a helpmate, but if so it's time some man shared that glory. And if there is something very glorious about being a starter, an initiator, a



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leader, it's time women shared that too.

The strength of man has always been in the union of men, and the weakness of woman in her lack of union. It is necessary to make women realize that until they have achieved some sort of solidarity they will never be able to impose their will upon the state.

Men have always tried to isolate women, to keep them as creatures apart. Men have always put women in houses, shut them away behind walls, kept them for themselves, detained them apart from the community.

Men used to put women in a harem; now they put them in a home. But the home, like the harem, has considered its own interests rather than the interests of the community, and in so doing it has jeopardized its well-being instead of fostering it. The home, like the individual, is insufficient when it stands alone.

If a man commits an indiscretion all other men protect him. If a woman is at fault, other women, instead of protecting her, are often the first to condemn. Women in the past have been afraid to lose the respect or the admiration or the love of men by opposing their wishes. In the last few years the suffragists have demonstrated that women do not lose the admiration of the worthwhile men by expressing their own individualities. On the contrary, it has been my experience that the modern man finds the intelligent, socially conscious, individualistic woman a more companionable person than her frightened sister who fears to speak or move lest she offend him. Women gain far more than they lose by an attitude of independence.

In my own experience I have seen a tremendous evolution in a very short time. Take the question of divorce. It is not long since no woman dared to openly criticize a man's behavior by demanding a divorce from him. Men have learned that they have to accept our criticism of them.

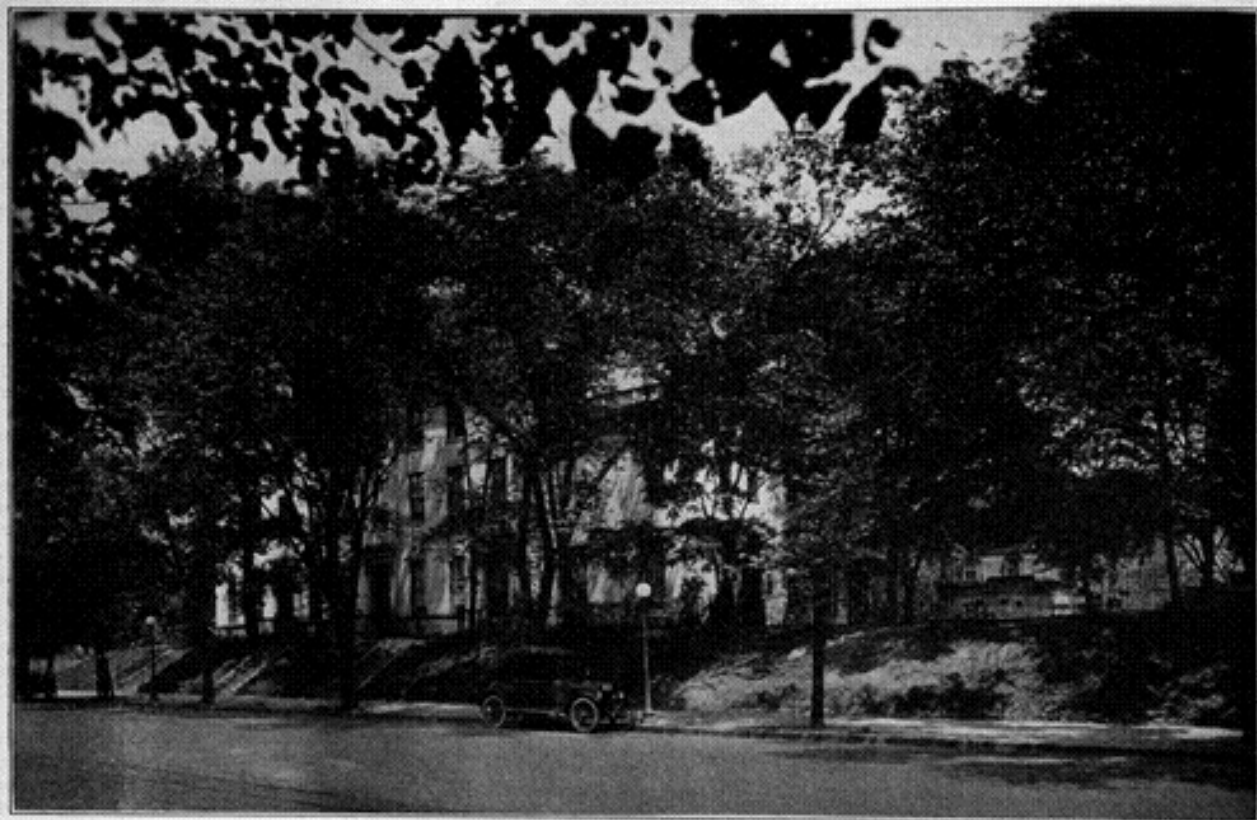
I was one of the first women in America to dare to get a divorce from an influential man. Up to that time divorce had been the prerogative solely of actresses. Rich men could marry women, treat them in any way they chose, and ignore them. That is no longer possible. I have gone down the aisle of the church when women I had known since childhood drew back in their pews and refused to speak to me. I have been the guest at parties where the hostess was the only woman in

the room who talked to me. Why? Because I had dared to criticize openly an influential man's behavior. That is all changed. There is hardly an influential family in most of the states whose women have not deemed it wise to divorce their husbands.

We have said to men: "You can't take us and

to me to make much difference if a woman is President or not. But if the right woman came forward—someone better fitted to head the government than any available man—I should say: "Make her President regardless of sex." I certainly think we have in this country, even now, women more fit to fill the Presidency of the

men hardly able to totter being helped to their seats in the Senate. Such men are not fit to make laws for normal people. We do not require that the men who go to the Senate be great mathematicians, scientists, or even college graduates, but we do expect them to have normal, healthy brains and sound bodies. When a man has reached the



National Headquarters of the Woman's Party, Washington, D. C. These Headquarters, which are directly opposite the National Capitol, were purchased and given to the Woman's Party by Mrs. Belmont for the permanent home of the organization.

use us as you choose, throw us aside and expect us to submit without a protest. We have a right to live, a right to be respected." Someone must pay the price in criticism, even in ostracism, for every advance which the world makes. The blazing of the trail by the pioneer is never an easy task. I have been put out of the fold so many times and taken back so many times that I have ceased to attach any importance to it. Today the world holds up its hands in horror over something which tomorrow it will have to accept as an established fact. Divorce was the cause of my first ostracism, then suffrage. When suffrage became respectable I was received back into the fold again. When suffrage divided itself into militant and non-militant groups, I, as a militant, was again in disfavor. These things don't matter. They are part of the development of the individual woman and, through her, of the development of woman-kind as a whole, and ultimately of the human race.

Men must cease to dictate everywhere: in the judiciary, in the Senate, and even in the White House. I do not urge now that a woman be made President of the United States. It does not seem

United States than the last few men who have filled it. But that is all a question for the future. At the moment it is unimportant. The important thing is to break down the barriers which prevent women from utilizing, for the good of the human race, all their energies, capabilities and talents.

If we are going to repeat the experience of men in politics we would do better to stay out. If we are going to scramble for jobs, instead of fighting for principles, I think it would be much better if we did not have a vote.

EUROPE has suffered no more under the reign of queens than it has under the reign of kings. Surely anyone who has listened to the debates of the United States Senate could not fail to admit that there are many women who would fill the chairs better than some of the men who occupy them at present. It is a crime for this country to be represented by some of the men who are there. I hope that one of the first acts that women will try to pass will be an act providing that the people who govern them shall be normal. I have seen

stage of palsy it might seem well to retire him in favor of a man with, say, fifty or sixty-year old arteries. I do not mean that age has anything to do with it. In fact, I believe that we must have more respect for age than we have. But fitness is not determined by years. Man has taken the position that he never grows old. When women grow old they are neglected. Health, not age, should determine usefulness.

Today you say to an intelligent American, "Why don't you go into politics?" He replies that it is so corrupt and vile he wouldn't think of it. Who has made it corrupt? Who is going to rescue it from its corruption? Someone must. If men do not choose to work for the common good, surely they have no right to bar us from working. We choose to work, we choose to give our time, to give our all to the human race, and the day has come when no man shall stop us. Men have demanded and held control everywhere. If they had controlled things in the right way we might have had no complaint. They have not done so, and we women are full of indignation and resentment.



In the past we had to sit still. There was nothing else to do. We have sat still long enough. We didn't have a stepping stone from which to go on. Now we have it. The vote is only the beginning of what we need. It is only our tool, our new broom, our pick, our shovel, our ax. But we have no intention of seeing these excellent utensils put in a museum. We mean to use them. Carrie Nation with a hatchet—almost any woman with a broom—gives, to my mind, a better picture of action than any man with a musket.

Today is no time to be bored. This is the time for women to want what they want and get it. And it is high time that men were looking around to see what women want. It is a great age in which to be alive. Without the vote we could do nothing. Now that we have it we shall do much.

I say to the men: "We are tired of your monopoly of government. We are going to govern too." I am not working to put a woman in this place or that. I am only working to put women in a position where they can make of themselves whatever they choose to be and can be. I want to give women justice, and in giving it to them I do not want to take it away from men. They have never given us justice, but we will give it to them. They have interfered long enough with the development of the human race. We have been patient too long.

A MAN'S brain is only half a brain, and we are the other half, and the half of anything is not worth the whole. A woman has a power that a man has not, and a man has a power that a woman has not. We know where they have been weak, and we will give them our strength; and where, perhaps, we have been weak they will give us their

strength. The blending of the two will make a better whole.

Men have begun to fear women because they are surpassing them in so many lines of endeavor.

Recently men have even considered barring women out of coeducational colleges. Why? Because women are carrying away the scholarship records, and men cannot stand to have their inferiority proclaimed. In education women have made tremendous strides. It is not so long since women freed themselves from their man-made belief that it was unwomanly for a woman to have an idea of her own.

Once a woman has obtained her independence and come to value her self-respect, she will demand the recognition of her complete equality—politically, socially and in the laboring world.

The church has been very, very hard on women. It has done its best to keep us in subjection and to restrict us mentally. Women are beginning to feel very bitter toward the church or the men who control it. They haven't driven us away from the Christian religion. They can't do that. But by their dictatorial discrimination they are driving us out of the churches as they are organized—out of the edifices.

Women have given their time, their energy and their money to support the church. We are allowed to sit in the pews, but not to stand in the pulpit. The men of the church accept our support, but are not willing to share their exalted position with us. We are required to acknowledge man as our spiritual superior. We do not acknowledge him as such, and we know that Christ did not so acknowledge him.

If man wants to make a little god of himself he

will have to do it by himself and for himself. He may stand in the pulpit and sit in the pew, but we also must stand as well as sit.

SEX discrimination must be done away with in the church as well as in politics, in the professions and in the business and laboring worlds. Men say all priests must be men. We might retort that all priests shall be women. But we do not. We say the priesthood shall be filled by those best fitted to occupy the pulpit, whether men or women. I say: If you are worthy to be a priest be a priest, but if I am worthy to be a priest I shall be a priest too. We will both be priests. This is not working against man, but merely standing shoulder to shoulder with him.

Unless the men of the church realize definitely our claims we shall have to have our own priesthood.

Only the other day I read the decision of a convention of churches to exclude women from all positions of power and authority. They were not even to be allowed as members of vestry. That is rather astonishing in the twentieth century.

We live in a man-made world and worship in a man-dominated church, and we can no longer be expected to endure it. When you think of the beauty of the Christian faith, which means so tremendously much to people who understand it, and see that even with it as an inspiration men have found no better way of settling questions than simply to invent the worst possible type of machinery to destroy property, to kill each other and to uproot everything settled, peaceful and intelligent, you realize how colossal has been their failure. What claim can any man who has so failed make to an understanding of the spirit of Christ?

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