

CHAPTER IX

CHERCHEZ LA FEMME

THE eternal woman's question must be faced, whatever the state of our nerves happens to be, and it is made more difficult by the sharp conflict between logic and sentiment which surrounds it at the present time. No one can deny that in all justice the female population who are carrying out the full obligations, social and pecuniary, of citizenship, and are often intellectually qualified in the highest degree to use it, should have the vote; and the argument was neatly summed up by one of my tenants, who, as a widow, was successfully carrying on a farm. "Here am I," said she, "paying you my rent, and I am debarred from the political privilege granted to my grieve, who is practically my manager, receives my wages." You can't get over this argument, and it is largely a matter of prejudice, which is so often wrong, when we come to consider whether they are really fit to use the vote when they get it. It is, I believe, the fact that they are by no means keen to exercise the franchise, which they already have, for school boards and parish and county councils, nor are they apparently consumed with desire to sit on those bodies, where they could do really useful work. There may be reasons for that, and now comes the really serious part of the matter—the damage done to their cause, as