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PAMPHLET
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

*Copy of Letter from the Right Hon. JACOB BRIGHT
to the Treasurer of the Manchester Liberal Union.
EDWYN HOLT, Esq.*

DEAR SIR,

Your letter of the 24th has just reached me.

You ask me to contribute, as I have hitherto done, £50 to the funds of the "Manchester Liberal Union."

It has always been a pleasure to me to assist to the extent of my power the Liberal cause, especially in the district of Manchester, with which I have been so long and so intimately connected. This year it is not my intention to renew my subscription. I give you frankly my reasons.

Ever since I entered political life I have advocated the claim of women to Parliamentary representation.

For the last 30 years my wife, my sisters, my neices, and, almost without exception, the women connected with my family have given much labour to the cause of the enfranchisement of their sex.

I have never been satisfied with the attitude of the Liberal Party towards this question. I think it has been, and is a cowardly and an ungenerous attitude.

I see that the hesitation, not to say hostility, with which certain leading Liberals treat a claim so moderate and reasonable is seriously undermining the very foundations of the Liberal creed.

Considering the length of time which has elapsed since the principle that Taxation and Representation should go hand in hand was established, it is only just that women should be at once admitted to their share in the government of the country they contribute to maintain.

For these reasons I have reluctantly decided that until Women's Suffrage is seriously adopted and pressed forward as a measure of immediate Liberal policy any means at my disposal must be given to those who, at great personal cost and labour, are advocating a Reform which I hold to be essential.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

JACOB BRIGHT.

CHALET DES EGLANTICRS,
AIX-LES-BAINS.

May 30th, 1898.

TO EDWYN HOLT, ESQ.

IS THE EXERCISE OF THE SUFFRAGE
UNFEMININE ?

BY

MRS. WILLIAM GREY.

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IS THE EXERCISE OF THE SUFFRAGE UNFEMININE ?

TO the question at the head of this pamphlet, methinks I hear a chorus of mingled men and women's voices returning an affirmative answer in every tone of disgust, indignation, ridicule, and calm contempt.

'A woman exercising the suffrage!' cries one—a man, of course. 'Horrible! A female politician is the next worst thing to the "female atheist," who "talks you dead;" and if she is not only to talk but to act politics, men of sense will be driven mad.'

'A woman going to the hustings!' exclaims another—a lady this time—'marching up to the polling booth with a rabble of men to give her vote in public. What can be more shockingly unfeminine? I hope every woman who tries it will be pelted by the men for intruding herself where she has no business.'

'Delicious spectacle!' laughs a third, a frequenter of clubs, and mostly acquainted with the women of the *demi monde*. 'Anonyma, who is undoubtedly a householder, driving up to the poll in her exquisite equipage to elect a legislator for Church and State, as a representative of her interests, of course; for if all

interests are to be represented, why not hers? Somebody said the other day that the House of Commons was growing too solemn: this device of female suffrage must have been invented to secure a wholesome infusion of buffoonery.'

'Let them alone,' superciliously pronounces a fourth. 'The best policy with fools is always to give them rope enough. They are sure to use it in hanging themselves. Women want the suffrage. If they wanted the championship of all England, I would let them try for it. The first round would be the last, and there would be an end of their clamour for equality. The logic of facts translated into hard blows is the most irresistible logic in the world, and would convince even a female understanding.'" And so on, *ad infinitum*, the burden of each speaker being still the same, that the exercise of the suffrage is unfeminine.

The assertion is broadly and boldly made; dinned into our ears with an insistence of repetition, as if the speakers believed that there were an accumulative force of argument in mere iteration. We should like, for a change, to hear some reasons as well as assertions—some proofs that the many reasons given on the other side are invalid. Once upon a time, a monk, discoursing with Erasmus on the heresies of Luther and his adherents, averred that the Church had triumphantly answered them. 'No,' said Erasmus; 'I have heard that you burnt their books. I never heard that you had answered them.' Burning books is gone out of fashion now, as well as burning people, which is, perhaps, fortunate for Mr. Stewart Mill, Mr. Kingsley, Miss Cobbe, and other prominent supporters of Female

Suffrage; but though burning was more effectual and more satisfactory, inasmuch as it silenced an opponent, not for once, but for ever, still the modern fashion of not reading a book or listening to an argument, and then pronouncing it refuted or not worth refutation, has its advantages. The cause that has martyrs excites interest; the cause that is shelved is simply forgotten. The cause of women's political rights will scarcely be suppressed by this method now; but as there is a tendency among a still formidable majority to consider the matter settled the moment they have pronounced the exercise of the suffrage to be unfeminine, I humbly beg to know the reasons why, and listen for the answers.

'Women have nothing to do with politics,' is the first and the most general. 'Their sphere, their kingdom is home; they should leave the interests of the nation to men.'

Are there, then, no political questions which touch home and family and women's special action within them? The laws which deal with marriage, with the guardianship of children, with education, with taxation, have they no concern with home life? Do they not rather touch it at every point; and if that life be woman's special sphere, is it not the more just and needful that she should exercise direct influence over the legislation which so vitally affects it? As to the wider national interests she is desired to leave exclusively to man, is she, then, no part of the nation? Is patriotism an exclusively masculine virtue? Alas, for the patriotism of men in that land where their mothers, wives, and sisters hold the love of country to be unfeminine. If we are told that public spirit in women

always takes the form of partizanship, that they are incapable of looking beyond questions of party to questions of principle, we answer that the best cure for narrowness of views is to change your stand-point from the house, or street, or parish which shuts you in, to one whence a wider horizon becomes visible. A tea caddy in a window-sill will hide Mont Blanc from the woman by the chimney corner; bring her to the open window, the tea caddy disappears and the mountain is revealed in its true proportions.

But now I hear answer No. 2 issuing from drawing-room and boudoir in every tone of lady-like remonstrance: 'How can a lady exercise the suffrage? How can she appear at a public polling-booth, or mix with men in the arena of politics without losing her greatest charm, her truest grace—the charm of modesty, the grace of dignified reserve?'

Softly, ladies. Surely we are in England, not in Turkey. It is of Englishwomen we are speaking, not of the secluded inhabitants of an Oriental zenana, and it seems strange to hear that Englishwomen are afraid of mingling in crowds in public places, when there is not a show to be seen in Europe, from a Papal procession at Rome to a royal pageant in England, to which they do not flock. It has even been said that no portion of the crowd is so rude, so recklessly pushing as that composed of English ladies, and that the rudeness is very often in proportion to their rank. Is it unfeminine for an Englishwoman to enter a crowd only when she goes to perform a duty, but not in the pursuit of a pleasure? Is it so much greater an abandonment of womanly delicacy to appear among men

at a polling-booth,* than on a hunting field, or so much less modest than acting in private theatricals with men neither their husbands nor brothers? Some years ago, several great ladies in London even acted on a stage which might be called public, since admission was obtained by payment (it was for the benefit of a charity), and not only acted, but danced a ballet, I presume in that dress which may best be described in Talleyrand's two objections to some lady's toilette: '*qu'elle commence trop tard et finit trop tôt.*' Some strictures were made on the dancing, but they applied only to the undue thickness of the patrician legs and ancles thereby exhibited. We heard no man call the dancers unfeminine, or tax them with unsexing themselves by this public appearance. Is it that men are indulgent to the foibles which minister to their amusement, and care not how women lower their dignity by a freak or a folly, but care very much lest they raise it by the serious exercise of a serious privilege?

* We may, however, allay the fears, or, it may be, dash the hopes of those who consider that a woman's appearance at the hustings would be a work of danger, by quoting Mrs. P. A. Taylor's statement made at the meeting of the London National Society for Women's Suffrage, July 17, 1869:—"As far as I can ascertain, at the places where women voted (at the general election, Nov. 1868), not only was there no disturbance, but order and quietude prevailed. At Finsbury, where 15 women went to record their votes, the lady who accompanied them said that not only was there no disturbance, but she did not hear a remark made upon the fact that they were there to give their votes; and the women expressed great surprise that it was so very easy a thing to vote; that it occupied so short a time, and did not interfere with their domestic duties. I took one woman to the poll at Leicester, whose vote was rejected; but no disturbance took place, and no comment was made." It may be added, that probably before women obtain the suffrage, the practice of voting by polling-papers will be sanctioned by Parliament, and will remove every objection to women exercising the suffrage on the score of the publicity of a polling-booth.

‘But’—here breaks in another chorus, the chorus of mothers of families, of maiden aunts, of the good women *par excellence*—‘we are not speaking of the fashionable world, of the fine or fast ladies of the upper ten thousand. We speak of women in general, and maintain that they should do women’s work, and leave that of men alone.’

Agreed, with all my heart; but let us define our terms: What is women’s work? Looking at the world as it is, at the two millions and a-half of women in this England of ours who are supporting themselves without masculine help, though not in many cases without masculine burthens, it would appear that woman’s work,—exclusive of her functions as wife and mother, which are indeed hers alone, but which she cannot assume at will,—means whatever work is too humble, too distasteful, too frivolous, or too ill-paid to be grudged to her by men. Miss Cobbe somewhere says that if a woman is sweeping a crossing, no man takes the broom out of her hand and says the occupation is unfeminine. I have seen twenty women harnessed to a barge on the Rhine and towing it against the stream. Was that women’s work? No doubt the man who sat lazily smoking on the barge thought so, and took good care not to harness his own strong shoulders to the rope. Women and girls in the midland counties do field work in gangs;—the gangs till last year being composed indiscriminately of both sexes,—with what result on their character and habits let the evidence given before the Government Commissioners tell. But the farmers said they could not do without the gangs, and Parliament contented itself

with regulating and reforming the worst evils of the system, which is still allowed to go on as women’s work. Within half a century, it was women’s work to crawl half-naked through the galleries of a coal mine. It is woman’s work to be a nurse in the male wards of a hospital or workhouse; but it is held shockingly unfeminine to practise as a physician in the wards of the women and children. I should like to analyse the idea expressed in that word of awful sound in feminine ears,—unfeminine,—and examine whether its terrors are always real, or are not sometimes mere bugbears used to frighten us off ground where our presence would be inconvenient.

We may observe, in the first place, that it is seldom or never applied to those employments which custom or social arrangements have allotted to women, let their nature be what they may,—coarse or refined, hard or light,—from which we may infer that it is applied without any reference to the essential qualities of women, but to some arbitrary standard adopted by the particular time and country or class in which it is used. Thus, as we have seen above, to be a nurse is feminine, to be a physician is masculine, though the work of the former is harder, coarser, brings a woman into contact with men in ways more offensive to delicacy than the latter. This leads us to the further observation, that ‘unfeminine,’ in the mouths of most of those who use it, means ‘unladylike,’ and indicates, not what is unbecoming a woman, but what is, in their view, unbecoming a lady; and if we enquire further what is their view of what a lady should do, we find it very often resolve itself into this:—that she should do

nothing, and do it gracefully. It is beside our present purpose to enquire what is the effect of that ideal of a lady imported into the large class whose highest ambition is to be genteel, and who, not having inherited the aptitude from a long line of patrician ancestors, learn easily enough how to do nothing, but not how to do it gracefully. They are as useless as the butterfly, without its airy elegance. We may remark, however, by the way, that it is this fear of losing caste as ladies which deters both parents and daughters among the poorer gentry and the middle classes from looking to professional employments as a means of support. The tradition of genteel helplessness and dependence keeps hundreds helpless and dependent who might be trained to earn an honourable provision. It will be well for all parties when the ideal of ladyhood changes, and the true lady is recognized, not by what she does, but by the spirit in which she does it.

The question of the suffrage, however, is not a ladies', but a woman's question. It matters little whether its exercise is unfeminine, in the ladylike sense of the word, if it be not unwomanly. Let us try if we can make out what are the essential characteristics of womanhood apart from all conventional ideas; and as we enumerate them, let us enquire if they are incompatible with the safe and useful exercise of the rights of citizenship.

First, then, woman is physically weaker than man. This would be a reason for giving her the suffrage, which is in politics what fire-arms are in war, a weapon as powerful in a weak hand as a strong one, levelling the inequalities of individual strength, and giving an

even chance to the weakest. Woman might use it to claim justice, the only sure defence of the weak, not for herself only but for all who are oppressed and down-trodden in the struggle of life; to strengthen the right which ought to be might, against the might which asserts itself right. Is this not woman's work?

Secondly. She has the larger inheritance of grace and beauty, a quicker and more delicate perception of both in outward things, a natural aptitude for refinement. She may use the suffrage to make her influence felt in elevating and refining public taste, in teaching the high utility of beauty, in lessening the hardness and coarseness, the ugliness and vulgarity with which our national life has been reproached. This, too, will surely be woman's work.

Thirdly. She is tender-hearted and pitiful. If political power be given to her she may use it on behalf of those who suffer; her sympathies will widen with her wider sphere of action from house and parish to country and race, and her influence be felt in politics by bringing into them a larger and tenderer humanity. Is this not woman's work?

Fourthly. She has a strong sense of duty. Political rights will bring with them the sense of political duties, and she may carry into political action the moral earnestness, the sense of moral responsibility which are so often weak or deficient in masculine politicians. This also may be classed as woman's work.

Lastly. She is religious. Faith, hope, and love, the three vital principles of religion, are as natural to her as they are hard of attainment to man. Give her the suffrage, and she will bring this element with her

into the national councils, and rescue them from the 'thinly disguised Paganism' which, as has been truly said, 'always seems to emerge into distinctness or transform itself into something unreal on every occasion when religion is in question.' We may then live to see England a state without a church, but never a state without a God. Shall this not be counted woman's work?

Yes, it may be answered, but not work for the women of to-day; they are not educated to do it. Then, in God's name, give them the suffrage quickly, for not till then will men see the necessity of educating them. What has brought Whig, Tory, and Radical to join in the demand for national education? What is inducing the denominationalists to accept the strict conscience clause so bitter to their dogmatic instincts, and the secularists to yield some measure of religious teaching in national schools, in spite of their hatred of clerical influence? What but the Reform Bill, which gave political power to the uneducated. Let another reform bill give it to women, and men will at length feel compelled to educate them, not as graceful playthings or useful drudges, but as the possessors of a power which society must, at its peril, teach them to use for its benefit.

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**PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISE FOR WOMEN,
1904.**

To the Editor of "The Times."

Sir,—Amidst the various questions of more or less urgency which at the present moment beset the public mind, the division on March 16th on Sir Charles McLaren's resolution, "That the disabilities of women in respect of the Parliamentary franchise ought to be removed by legislation," has hardly received the attention which from its importance it would seem to demand. On this, the first opportunity of bringing the question of women's suffrage before the present Parliament, the gratifying result was obtained that the resolution was carried by a majority of 114, the votes being 182 to 68. That the total of members present was comparatively small was no doubt partly due to the fact that the resolution could have no immediate practical consequences; but may it not have been also that it reflected a general attitude towards the question, a willingness to consider it, an unwillingness to pronounce decidedly on either side?

Those who have long watched the movement for the enfranchisement of women notice that within the last 20 years a marked change has taken place in public opinion in regard to it. The tone of mingled disapproval and derision, once so common, has to a great extent disappeared, and a disposition is shown to give the question a fair hearing, with an undertone of prophecy that "it will come." The change is no doubt due to various causes. Elections have ceased to be the scenes of disorder and riot of which we read in earlier days, and the shrinking naturally felt by persons of refinement from the idea of women's participation in such orgies has passed away with the occasion for it. For many years women have been in the habit of voting for School Boards, Poor Law guardians, &c. Their voting power has been exercised with insight and discrimination, and they have not been unpleasantly transformed into something different from what they were before. Women who vote are, in fact, no more distinguishable in manners and appearance from those who do not than men who vote are distinguishable in outward demeanour from those who do not. And while the experiment of municipal voting has

been successfully carried out at home, the further step of the extension of the Parliamentary franchise has been taken in many of our Colonies with none of the evil consequences which had been feared. In New Zealand the suffrage was granted in 1893. The example was followed by South Australia in 1894, by Western Australia in 1900, by New South Wales in 1902. Tasmania has recently followed, and as including the several States of the Commonwealth, the suffrage for the Federal Parliament was granted in 1902. These facts are surely of great significance, claiming the serious consideration of thoughtful persons. In the contiguous States there must have been opportunity for closely observing the working of the experiment, and the result has proved an incitement to imitation. We are told that in New Zealand the addition of women to the electorate made no difference in the balance of political parties. As regards Australia, the evidence is conflicting. It was stated in the Parliamentary debate that "women had voted there with the result not only that men of good standing and character had been returned, but the cause of Labour had been everywhere supported"; while, on the other hand, the Sydney correspondent of the "Globe" writes that "the recent Federal elections have shown that the Australian woman-voter is opposed to Socialist principles and takes a more practical and common sense view of public matters than do many of the sterner sex. The Labour party clamoured for the female franchise, and now that it has become conceded they find it against them." Probably the explanation of these contradictory statements is to be found in the fact that "the women's vote" is not, as is sometimes assumed, a solid substance to be deposited whole in one quarter or another, but that, like the men's vote, it is composed of varied elements, which may preponderate in different proportions in different localities.

The impossibility of ascertaining where "the women's vote" would go, has no doubt been a hindrance to the adoption of women's suffrage as a Government measure by either of our political parties. Liberals are convinced that women would vote Conservative and are unwilling to do anything which might strengthen their opponents. Conservatives, as such, are not predisposed to favour a considerable constitutional change, and they are by no means so certain that it would be to their advantage as to be prepared to risk the fortune of their party on the chance. All sides are, however,

glad to secure the help of women in party warfare; and among the causes contributing to the change which has been noted in public opinion, perhaps none has been more potent than the eagerness everywhere shown to summon women into the political arena. In the words of the late Lord Iddesleigh:—

"You may have women taking part in public meetings, making speeches, and canvassing, as any man would do, throughout an election; but when it comes to going into the polling-booth to give a vote in a peaceable manner, protected by the ballot, then you say you demoralize and lower her character. Is that common sense"?

Can the politicians who have achieved success largely by calling to their aid the zeal and energy of women turn round upon them and declare that though they are quite competent to advise and influence men in the use of their votes they are not fit to vote themselves, that they are out of place in the field of politics and should confine themselves to their proper sphere—the home?

As we all know, there are many people who do not much care about being consistent; but there are signs that the services of women will no longer for the most part be at the disposal of candidates for election who, while seeking their help, refuse to support their claim to the vote, and the untenableness of the position may be brought home to such candidates in a way which they cannot afford to disregard. At a meeting held at Bristol in May, 1903, a resolution, moved by so gentle and moderate a social reformer as Miss F. Davenport Hill, "That, in the opinion of this meeting, women should work only for those candidates for Parliament who pledge themselves to support the Parliamentary enfranchisement of women," was carried unanimously. Similar resolutions are being adopted, either at public meetings or silently by individual women, in all parts of the country. That women should arrive at the conclusion that they will no longer take part in the indefinite postponement of this question would surely not be unreasonable, even if the reform were regarded as affecting only one-half of the community; but the advocates of women's suffrage do not so regard it. They believe that measures tending to make women stronger, more independent, less heavily-weighted in the battle of life, will increase the vigour—physical, intellectual and moral—of our race, and that while women would most directly and consciously gain by enfranchisement men would share the

benefits. The well-known Labour leader, Mr. Keir Hardie, declaring that this is "as much a man's question as it is a woman's question" refers to the way in which women are used to keep down wages, and says:—

"By treating women—I am speaking now from the working class point of view—as equals, by conceding to them every concession which men claim for themselves, the women will play the part of the equal, not only in regard to wages, but in all other matters appertaining to industrial life. . . . The possession of the franchise itself would give women a new standing, a new increase of power, and would enable them to win for themselves concessions which are to-day withheld."

How strongly this has been felt by working women has been shown by petitions from 29,300 textile workers in Lancashire, 33,184 in Yorkshire, 4,300 in Cheshire, 8,600 tailoresses in the West Riding of York, and by recent petitions and deputations from many thousands of working women in the Potteries, Leicester, Hinckley, and other places; but it is still more striking and significant that working men are beginning to recognize their interest in the matter, as is shown by a petition presented by Mr. Shackleton from 71 trade and labour councils and 62 trade unions, representing over 100,000 workmen, and one presented by Mr. Keir Hardie from the Independent Labour party.

Those who have worked in the face of much discouragement for the enfranchisement of women are now animated by a fresh stimulus, that of a nearer and more confident hope. The movement is supported by a constantly increasing body of adherents, new societies or committees springing up all over the country. We look to the Press for its powerful aid in bringing into view new facts, throwing fresh light on the situation; and we trust that a calm and unprejudiced consideration of the case as it now stands will ere long bring about a reform which, while beneficial to all classes of the community, can be injurious to none.

EMILY DAVIES

6, Montagu Mansions, London, W., March 31st.

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LETTER TO THE LADIES
OF THE
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
MOVEMENT.

Craigie

1883

A LETTER TO THE LADIES

OF THE

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT.

LADIES,—

A TIME has come in which it is needful that we should ask ourselves—What principle holds us together? Why are we associated? What is it we are trying to do? We are of many shades of political and religious opinions, of widely separated stations in life, but we are bound together by our work, by labours towards a common end. What is that end? It is to uplift one half of the human race from political and social serfdom; to save thereby the other half from the sins of injustice, and both together from the demoralisation that injustice always brings; to make women more worthy of respect, and men more capable of feeling it for them; to bring the united action of men and women working harmoniously together to bear upon the sufferings of humanity, and to open to the whole human race the healing fountains of equal justice.

The immediate practical thing, by gaining which we think we shall take a long step towards that end, and to obtain which is the immediate and declared object of our Association, is to give women their fair share of power over the law which moulds the civic, and therefore largely, the social life of the people of this country; to procure the recognition of women as the equals of men in electoral power—(that is, to place them as voters for Members of Parliament on the same footing with men)—thereby securing the representation of womanhood in the Government of the country, and giving women the power of practical protest against oppression in the manner found to be most effective at the present day.

The vital principle of the Society having this object is, the principle that human beings of both sexes are possessed of all the faculties and powers of humanity, and as being equal before God, by the very fact of possessing human faculties and powers in common, therefore men and women should be equal before the law.

As an associated body we do not touch on the basis of the Franchise; we could not work together if we did, for we hold widely differing views upon this point.

We simply accept the existing basis of the Franchise, be it what it may, only insisting that all women who possess the legal qualification which entitles men to vote, shall vote equally with men. For many years we have worked for this, *knowing*, while we worked, that none but single women and widows could be *immediately* enfranchised by our success, simply because the legal basis of the vote is a property qualification, and there was a bad law in force which forbade a married woman to hold property. But we knew that efforts were being made to alter that bad law. We felt sure those efforts must at some time succeed, and that *THEN*, the married women who possessed property qualifications would be, as a matter of course, admitted with all others who held them.

Also some of us cared little for the temporary exclusion of married women—*MERELY* and *only because they could not hold property*. For the simple reason that we look upon *all* property qualifications as doomed very quickly to pass away. The barbarous idea that political power should go along with money-bags and rate-books, and bricks and mortar, is already growing obsolete. So surely as the sun will rise to-morrow from dawn to noon—so surely are we face to face with the rising powers of the people, a power which must be grounded on the only just and permanent basis of the Franchise—the intelligent human mind—and in looking forward to universal suffrage, it seemed to us a thing of little consequence, how many, or how few women were immediately enfranchised as mere holders of property. *THE GREAT THING* was to get the principle of *the perfect EQUALITY of men and women as voters* firmly

established on the *Statute Book*. In order that, as the barriers of class rule gave way one after another before the rising tide of liberty, women might come naturally, and without effort, into the pale of the constitution and find themselves in the day of the emancipation of the people, *citizens*, and not *slaves*.

For this object the claim for the equal admission of all legally qualified women to the powers of voting seemed the one important thing. The Bill that was before the country appeared to make that claim in a clear and definite way.

I hear *now*, that for a long time there has been discussion amongst the leaders of the movement, and that some thought this claim was not fully made, while others shrank from making the claim, except for unmarried women only. But *I never* knew this *until now*. I knew there *was* division, but I thought it arose from mere personal quarrel. I was not a leader, nor ever in familiar intercourse with those who led the cause. I was for many years a very hard but very humble worker, labouring apart from all others, in far away country places, by myself, in isolation, and in ignorance of all that was not made public in the papers; and for the two or three years that I have been connected with others in this movement, it has never happened to me to hear that there was any difference of opinion on this point. It never occurred to me that there *could* be any. I was not on any committee, I have given much of my time and thought to other questions, and only occasionally been at suffrage meetings. I believe there has been a good deal of talk of this matter, but I have never heard of it till now, and there are many more who never knew it any more than I did.

At last the Married Women's Property Bill was passed in August last; since then I have known little or nothing of the suffrage movement, ill health and very heavy work kept me even from reading about it. I was told that all was going on well, and I rejoiced at it, and when, some weeks back, I was invited to speak at a meeting in support of Mr. Mason's

resolution, I consented very gladly. But some days before that meeting, a woman, to whom every woman in England and Scotland owes a debt of gratitude that *cannot* be overpaid, told me with deep sorrow that the claim now being made was *not* a claim for equality; that the speakers at the meetings professed not to ask for, or desire, the Franchise for married women possessing a property qualification; that justice required that a protest should be made; and she appealed to me to make that protest. I was overwhelmed with astonishment, and finding that the terms of the resolution remained the same as ever, I asked how it *could* be that the admission of legally qualified married women under it *could* be a matter of *doubt*. Then I found to my surprise and indignation that married women, *as such*, are held to be incapable of voting, and that no Bill and no resolution you can frame will enfranchise them, unless they are specifically mentioned in it. For they are disqualified, *not* because they cannot hold the property qualification (for *that* the Married Women's Property Act enables them to do), *not* simply because they are *women* (for Mr. Mason's resolution, if made law, would remove the disability of sex), but they are disqualified simply because they are *married*. Marriage, it seems, places the woman in a condition of coverture, in which her personality is lost in that of her husband. The Married Women's Property Act destroys coverture in matters affecting the possession of property, but *not* in relation to any political rights that that possession of property might carry with it. She can buy a farm and till it, and sell it again, but she cannot vote in respect of it. When I asked in amazement, "Is this certainly the law?" the reply was—"Nothing in law is certain till it is tested by the decision of a court, but it is the strongest probability that the decision will be given on these lines." When I heard this, that the mere fact of marriage stamped the mothers of our people with a barbarous brand of inferiority before the law, that no acquisition of property can remove, and no enfranchisement of sex can obliterate, that the chains of political degradation are so

riveted on to the feet of every wife, that, open the high road of noble citizenship as widely as you will, she cannot stir one step in it till you strike these fetters off by express law; when I heard this, my blood boiled with indignation. And even if upon trial in court, this is *not* found to be the case, even if by some happy chance the improbability should turn out to be the fact, and women possessed of property in their own right under the new law, *should*, contrary to present opinion, be able to vote under Mr. Mason's resolution, when made law, yet it is certain that in trusting to such a chance, we are betraying the vital principle of the women's suffrage movement. We are *not* making a clear and definite claim for equality before the law, for *this* is not equality, unless we ask at the same time that all married *men* shall be disfranchised as well as all married women. It seems that all this has been known to some of us for a long time, but *I never* knew it. As soon as I *did* know it, I threw every personal consideration on one side, and accepted the duty of moving the amendment.

The claim of married women to the Municipal Franchise will be tested next November; meantime we have to decide on the question whether we mean to ask for the vote for married women or not. Mr. Mason has greatly simplified matters by emphatically declaring in the debate, that *he* did *not* intend to do so. I hear it said, "Oh let us keep quiet, so that we may get the Franchise for women householders, as such, without raising the question of the married women's right. And then, if we find they are excluded, further legislation can be worked for to admit them. Only let us get this Bill through without calling attention to the question." This policy is weak, for does anyone suppose that the House of Commons will ever pass a Women's Suffrage Bill *without* raising the question—aye, and threshing it out to the very last grain? Those who think this possible have not reflected on the speeches in the past debates. It is absolutely certain that in the present state of public opinion, no House of Commons would pass such a Bill without taking care to have

it well understood that married women were excluded. So far as getting the claims of married women allowed is in question, we lose nothing by publicity. There is no possibility of their slipping into the Constitution by a back door, with an evasion in their mouths. The House of Commons will be sure to bolt the door before they pass the Bill. We gain nothing by trying to deceive our legislators, for we are certain not to succeed. But by the attempt to do so we give them a very powerful weapon against us; for whenever the subject is introduced, our adversaries say: "Oh, but this Bill will admit married women, it is the thin end of the wedge. If you give the Franchise to single women you must give it to married ones," &c.

And then the gentlemen of the House of Commons get frightened and vote against us. And so we have all the disadvantage of the claim, while we lose the advantage that a clear whole-souled appeal to principle would give us. The right way to meet the opposition of those who are afraid to admit the married women's claim is, not to go down on our knees and protest that we *do not* mean what we *do mean* all the time. But to take hold of the question by the handle of simple justice, and to ask boldly for the vote for all legally qualified women, married or single. By so asking we shall rouse the public opinion of the masses, and waken an agitation that will carry our claim into the House of Commons with the country at its back. So that when they say in that House—"Married women will vote under this Bill," the constituencies shall reply—"Yes; we require that women should be citizens before the law; why should they not vote?"

One of the speakers at the meeting touched beautifully on the hardship that might be inflicted by a law that would drag a sick baby out of its mother's arms. She might have spoken of the law of compulsory vaccination which comes to the baby and poisons its blood often with loathsome disease even while it hangs on her bosom, and she said, "ought not women to have power

over the men who make these laws?" Yes, truly they should; but what women have so much right to that power as the *mothers* of these babies? To *them* the power of the vote would mean, perhaps, the power to save their little children from being legally murdered. This claim to the Franchise is the most sacred that was ever made in the whole history of the world's political struggles. Also, it is to be remembered, that many of the grievances that need to be remedied by law are those of married women; notably, the cruel wrong inflicted on the married mother by the legal doctrine that she has no claim on, nor relationship to, her own child. It is true that all women will surely use their votes against a law like this. But married women holding the legal qualification may surely plead that their claim to the Franchise, as the instrument by which this law may be amended, is too strong to be set aside.

But it is said, "let us keep quiet, let us take what we can get, we cannot get the Franchise for married women but we may get it for spinsters and widows, and they will work then for the married women; but if we make a noise about them now we shall never get it at all."

This simply means that we should throw over the claim for equality before the law and urge the claim for single women only, because it is thought that it will be easier to carry, and the married women's claim must take its chance afterwards.

To this there are several objections; one is, that it is very doubtful whether the votes for married women would follow so easily, or so readily as is supposed by those who take this view. If the married women's right is so difficult to urge *now*, when we are working for all women together, and grounding our agitation on a great principle, will it be easier to press it when principle has been abandoned, and when the claims of married women have been practically severed from those of other women by the separate enfranchisement of widows and spinsters? Will it be as easy then to keep up

an association, to gather funds, &c., for the enfranchisement of married women alone, as it is now, when the claim is for all women, and for equality before the law? Certainly not. But it is said the spinsters and widows will use their votes to press the enfranchisement of married women. Many of them, no doubt, would do this; but the pressure has to be long and constant to affect the Legislature. Many questions of interest to women—both as women and as political partizans—will appeal to their consciences, and divert them from the question of the extension of the suffrage to their less fortunate sisters. And it is to be remembered that you will then have an obstacle to contend with that you have not now, namely, that the disqualification of *wives* to possess the Franchise which other women possess, will then be *sanctioned* by the distinct acquiescence of the Women's Suffrage party, and familiarized to the minds of men by established law and usage. That is not so *now*. *Now*, no woman can vote in a Parliamentary election. We ask that *all* qualified women may be allowed to vote—and the request carries with it the conviction of its justice; but if you demand the Franchise for unmarried women only, you *stamp* into the public mind and *ratify* by your own consent the distinction between the qualified married woman and her single sister; and if you succeed in getting what you ask for, you will make this arbitrary distinction part and parcel of practical political life. Remember, that for many years, the Municipal Franchise has been given to widows and single women, but during all these years married women have come no nearer to obtaining it than they were at first: therefore, to throw over the married women in our present demand, will probably mean throwing them over—for many years, perhaps for ever—by stamping in on the Statute Book, and on the minds of the masses of working men, the subtle distinction between the wedded and unwedded woman's claim to political right, which is now confined to the theorizing brains of lawyers. Also it would be a desertion of our vital principle, it would leave our movement a body without a soul. It is by

justice only that we can conquer, we could not, (and would not if we could,) make any appeal to physical force, but in these days whoever repudiates the sword, must be prepared to use the tongue and pen with absolute fearlessness of consequences in the cause of justice. By *moral* force we mean to win our battle, but there *is* no moral force in injustice and cowardly equivocation. If we say to married women "your claim is just, but it is not expedient to urge it," men will say to us "your claim is just, but it is not expedient to grant it," and what answer can we in that case make to them?

Let me point out also, that by this modified claim you would introduce an element of class discord, by dragging into the movement a discussion as to the basis of the Franchise which we have hitherto avoided; for on what ground do we ask for the vote? To this question we have hitherto replied with unanswerable logic: "We possess the qualification to which the law attaches it, and therefore we claim it." But now we shall be answered with another question: "How about qualified married women?" I attended a meeting, which was addressed by some of our principal speakers, in order to assure myself of what was actually said on this point. I heard speaker after speaker openly declare that the resolution did not ask the vote for married women. But "Why," it will be said to us, "do you ask for single and not for married women?"

To this, two replies only can be made. The first is: "That we accept marriage as a disqualification in women, while it is not so in men; that is, we declare ourselves content to accept and consent to our own dishonour; we say that we are willing to be branded with a badge of serfdom before the law, because we follow the instincts of our holiest affections in becoming wives and mothers. I for one repudiate such a position, it is one which, even by the tacit acquiescence of silence, I can never sanction; it is against my conscience. Women are happier, happily married than they are unmarried, but they are *not* less holy, and should not be less honoured.

When this question has been raised in bygone times we have simply said, married women, as the law now stands, *cannot* possess the property qualification; we will discuss their claims when it arises. I have often added, speaking for myself at public meetings, "When married women can be legally qualified I shall consider that they ought to vote; but the matter need not be argued about till that time comes." Perhaps this was not the best way of meeting the question. I begin now to think it was wrong even to defer the consideration of the matter to the future. But the *future* of which we then spoke, is now the present, the day to which we put off this discussion is *now* come. And *now* we *must* decide between expediency and principle. It is one thing to postpone the consideration of a matter which we did not think ripe for argument, and it is another and a very different thing to deny our principles, or prevaricate about them when circumstances force us to take sides for right or wrong. It is one thing to say (as we DID say) the hour is not come in which this claim should be urged; and it is another thing, now that the claim is before us, to say that we are afraid to make it. The first *may* have been wisdom, the second *must* be cowardice, and cowardice is *never* wise.

The Married Women's Property Bill has forced upon us some utterance, clear and distinct, upon the married women's claim to political rights. To shrink from making it well understood that we mean *all* qualified women, married as well as single, is simply to betray our cause by denying its first principle, and to abandon for the sake of the uncertain hope of an immediate advantage the ground of justice, on which we have found ourselves so strong.

But, if we do *not* say that we accept marriage as a disqualification, then to the question "why we press the rights of single women and widows only," there is only one other reply, and that is this: "That we do not ask the Franchise for married women, because their property is already represented by their husbands" (I have already heard this said).

But see what follows. You are no longer claiming representation for womanhood, but for a certain amount of property, which is in so unfortunate and deplorable a state as to have no man belonging to it to represent it, and therefore you beg for the admission of some 600,000 spinsters and widows to the Franchise, because their property will otherwise not get represented. Your movement then becomes no longer a movement for the representation of *women*, as beings of the same intelligence and the like passions with men, but a movement to get representation for certain property which has no man to represent it. You practically *dissolve* the Women's Suffrage movement, and substitute for it another movement which many of your followers could not support, because they do *not* believe in the representation of property at all. They have accepted it simply because it exists. They have been willing to lay aside all difference of opinion on a question which was a side issue, and ask for equality of citizenship for women, on the ground of actually existing institutions. But they cannot *sanction* a property qualification by making it the ground of a claim, made (as this claim must be made), on the ground of *property* only, and from which the associating principle, of equality of sex before the law, which bound us all together, has been eliminated. It is the representation of womanhood they desire, and not the representation merely of a rate-book, or an acre of mud, or a pile of bricks and mortar.

The next objection I notice, is one on which I have already touched, namely, that the claim for single women *only* will create a dangerous precedent, and if granted, will establish that precedent upon the Statute Book, namely, that of the principle that single women have rights of citizenship, which married women have *not*; that marriage is a political disqualification in women. This may seem a small thing *now*, for comparatively few married women *now* hold the qualification. If women were *all* enfranchised tomorrow on the present basis of the Franchise, the mass of the female voters would be widows and single women. But

small as this thing seems now, and few in number as the qualified married women are, by throwing them over you establish a precedent, and admit a false principle of exclusion. When universal suffrage comes (as *come it will*), that precedent will in all likelihood be still adhered to, and you will have a handful of women (widows and spinsters) voting, while *every man in the country votes*, and the great mass of women, being married, will be *dumb* before the law. What will the political power of womanhood be worth under such conditions? Almost nothing. It will be a mere feeble inarticulate cry, scarcely heard amidst the passionate voices of the millions of men, who will swamp at the ballot-box the small minority of women who alone will be voters. Are you prepared so to sacrifice the future to the present? Are you willing even to risk the possibility of doing so? If not, resist the evil *now*, while there is time to do so, by refusing to compromise the vital principle of equality of sex before the law. The womanhood of the future in this country may be noble or degraded, according as you *now* decide for the noble claim which will uplift all womanhood in unity, or the timid policy of expediency, by which with your own hands you may very probably bar the doors of liberty against the women of generations yet unborn.

I beseech you, my sisters, to be equal to the occasion. I know that many of you think as I do upon this matter. Be of good courage and do not be afraid to say that which you think. Believe me, we have nothing to be afraid of but our *own timidity*. Like children passing through a churchyard at night, we whisper, only because we are startled at the echoes of our own voices. The more freely and nobly we speak out the truth we know and feel, the more respectfully and readily we shall be heard by men.

As I stood on the platform of St. James's Hall the other night alone, except for the brave woman who went with me as my helper, and for one other woman who, only out of all my friends, was not ashamed to sit beside me and testify that she believed in my sincerity and honour, I felt unspeak-

able sadness, for, after all, what was it that I was going to do?

Only to propose that we should *say*, what most of us believe, that we should ask for that which most of us in our hearts know to be just; that we should meet the altered circumstances of to-day with a change of words that would lift us above the possibility of treachery to the most helpless women, and cowardice before the most unjust men. And for simply proposing that the opinion of the meeting be taken on this change of words, my friends turned away from me in bitter anger, and the very women, in whose cause I stood up an advocate, looked at me as though I had been a pariah. I could hardly restrain my tears, not so much for myself as for them; for the only reason they could have given for rejecting my amendment was, that though they knew it to be just, they were *afraid* to say so. Afraid to ask for justice; afraid to defend the oppressed, and plead the cause of weakness against strength, to repel with the dignity of womanhood the insulting ignominy of serfdom before the law; afraid that if they asked for too much, their masters might give them nothing. And, as I looked in their faces, I saw, as I never saw it before, how deeply the iron of slavery has entered into the very soul of woman.

With what yearning tenderness my soul longed to say to each and all of them, "Be of good cheer, we are strong enough to ask for justice." For many of those who sat round me have been long the objects of my affectionate respect; I have so honoured them for their unselfish devotion to the cause of women, for their ardent zeal, their unstinted labour, their self-sacrifice; I have looked up to them for years, trying with respectful tenderness to follow in their footsteps. But I feel that in this crisis, their very anxiety to do the best and most that *can* be done, makes them too fearful for the times they live in, and the task to which they have set their hands. To each of my sisters, over whom my poor and humble words can have any sort of influence, I

would say, "Do *not* be afraid to *ask* for justice." When fear is stifling thought, the first free spirits who dare to *say* what many think, fling living fire into the stronghold of oppression, and its walls go down like flax before the blaze. If we ask for justice God will hear us and will open the ears and hearts of men. Nay, they *are* opening already; we are supported by some of the best and noblest men. Our first and greatest advocate was the greatest leader of political thought that England has known for many years. I read the tender words in which he has enshrined the memory of the woman who for *him* filled life with happiness and beauty, and I ask, "would he have sanctioned a claim which tacitly accepted a barbarous insult to *her*, the woman so beloved, so honoured?" You know he would not. If he had been alive to-day, my insignificance would be sheltered by his greatness. His strong voice would be the support of my amendment. But he has passed away, and left behind him none so great as he to plead our cause. But can we not find the courage to be as noble, in our faithfulness to one another, as he was in his faithfulness to all of us?

Let us remember that there is one thing which is of more importance even than to gain the Franchise, and that is, to *deserve* it; to turn away from the policy of treachery; to hold the right of the weakest amongst us sacred as the right of the strongest; and to show that women will bring to the coming epoch of their political power, the advent of which none can hinder but themselves, the dignity of justice and the nobility of truth.

I am,

Yours with deep respect,

JESSIE CRAIGEN.

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WOMEN'S
NEED OF REPRESENTATION :

A Lecture

UPON

THE NECESSITY OF GIVING WOMEN THE
PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISE.

BY

MISS A. I. ROBERTSON,

PRESIDENT OF THE IRISH NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE;
AUTHOR OF "MYSELF AND MY RELATIVES," ETC.

*[Printed for the Irish National Society for Women's Suffrage, upon the motion of
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1872

WOMEN'S NEED OF REPRESENTATION.

At a General Meeting of the Members of the Irish National Society for Women's Suffrage, and others, held at St. James's Place, Blackrock, Dublin, on 21st February, 1872, the RIGHT HON. LORD TALBOT DE MALAHIDE in the chair, MISS ANNE ISABELLA ROBERTSON, President of the Society, delivered the following Lecture. She said :

All who are acquainted with the history of any new and important political movement must be aware of how long it often takes before the public mind can grasp the subject, so as to comprehend it fully in all its bearings ; but the rapid progress made by the agitation to procure the suffrage for women-ratepayers has surprised even its warmest and most sanguine promoters. The National Society for Women's Suffrage has now branches in every part of the kingdom. From the first it was set on foot and supported by some of the deepest thinkers and most intellectual men and women of the day, and now a brilliant array of names adorns the lists of the Women's Suffrage societies. Clergymen of different creeds warmly support the cause ; practical men of business, heads of great commercial houses, are to be found standing in the ranks of adherents, beside professors and fellows of colleges of every university of note in the United Kingdom ; while upwards of two hundred members of parliament of different political parties, including Mr. Disraeli and Sir John Coleridge, have voted in favour of Women's Suffrage. These facts are in themselves sufficient to make men and women give some reflection to the subject ; yet still we find many persons, both men and women, who know very little about the matter, and who consequently feel indifferent as to whether women receive the benefit of representation or not. It is a fact that where the subject is best known, it is most approved of. There are numbers of people who see at once the injustice of excluding women who pay rates and taxes from the suffrage ; but still they cannot perceive that the injustice extends a great deal beyond the mere insult and indignity of that exclusion. There are few who think of tracing any of the wrongs that they know women suffer from, to their being denied the power of representation ; but eminent political writers have proved clearly, that without the political franchise, no class of people will receive justice or consideration for their interests. Whatever good is to be gained by the British Constitution, would be derived by women from their admission to the franchise, and we cannot dispute this without disputing the advantage of Parliamentary government and the representation of property — in fact, the British system of government altogether.

Viewing the subject in a clearly constitutional light, we must admit that if the representation in Parliament of those who are interested in property, is a national benefit conducive to the maintenance of all property interests, and to the increase of our national prosperity, then the disfranchisement of any class of holders of property must have an injurious effect. Women are considered intelligent enough to be allowed to hold property, great or small, and it is a fact that the numbers of independent women are increasing in Great Britain which renders their admission to the franchise a matter of much practical importance. Women are also considered intelligent enough to understand that they must pay the tax-collector their rates and taxes when he comes knocking at their doors, or, in default of payment, that their furniture may be seized for the amount. There is not the slightest indulgence shown to women by the law in any particular. When they commit offences they are punished quite as heavily as men are, and although denied the privilege and protection of representation, are obliged to obey to the letter all the laws made in a parliament whose members they have no voice in electing. Public opinion is fast coming round to the belief that this state of things, which originated in a false idea of the mental and moral qualities of women, should no longer exist.

One reason, perhaps, why the movement for obtaining the suffrage for women may be in any degree retarded, can be traced to a very simple cause. Many English writers have expatiated upon the great respect which women receive in England, and contrast this so-called respect with the bad treatment of women in other lands. Thus, many persons are under the impression that women in this country have no wrongs to complain of, and therefore, of course, they do not see any necessity to support a movement which is set on foot to redress the wrongs which its advocates believe women labour under, owing to the want of political representation. Men who imagine that England is a free country, and who boast of its liberty, can hardly bring themselves to believe that the women of England are not included within the pale of that constitution which is supposed to be so great a blessing to the nation. If we declare that the representative system of English government is really a blessing to those who enjoy its privileges and protection, then we must acknowledge that women who are denied representation are denied this great blessing. If there are any who imagine that women are excluded from rights and privileges, and the power of political representation, in order to preserve their dignity, and to keep them from rough contact with a rough world, I would recommend them to read something of law, and something of the history of those ancient times when the laws oppressing women were chiefly originated. It is a matter worthy of note that among our warmest supporters in this movement, are many eminent professors of law and of history—men whose large amount of information respecting the political condition of different nations in different ages, has taught them that in the early ages, when many of the laws respecting women were made, the general treatment of women was often cruel and barbarous, and devoid of reason. They were occasionally persecuted, tortured, and calumni-

ated; they were declared to be so innately mean and wicked as to be wholly unfit for any amount of freedom; they were oppressed in hundreds of ways; and when they committed offences, they were often given far more severe punishments than men were awarded for the same crimes. In the writings of Michelet will be found many allusions to the cruel and unjust treatment of women in mediæval times, and the literature of the middle ages speaks itself of the want of reason that characterized the opinions of men respecting women. It is difficult, perhaps, at this time of day to determine whether our ancestors were really as absurd as they seem to us now when reviewing their bygone opinions; whether they really believed that women were mentally and morally inferior to men, or whether they merely said so from policy, to excuse themselves for their oppression of women, and to induce women to despise themselves and each other. But, however it may have been, no one with any large amount of reflection or information could for a moment imagine that the laws respecting women were framed in a spirit of tenderness or indulgence towards them. They bear too strong a resemblance to the laws relating to serfs, to slaves, and to the people of conquered nations, to admit of any such delusion in the minds of the well-informed. No doubt they bear traces of that spirit of oppression that characterized the ages when they were chiefly framed. We may excuse the early framers of those laws because they were narrow-minded and ignorant—believers in witchcraft and other superstitions; but still that does not make their laws any more tolerable to the women of the present day, nor less disgraceful to the age we live in, and which calls itself civilized.

A good deal has been said about the position that Providence has designed for women; but we must acknowledge that their positions are many and various. We see them as reigning queens and as charwomen; we see them as peeresses of the realm in their own right, and as servants of all work; we find them earning their bread in shops, in factories, in public and in private occupations; we find them staying quietly at home, scarcely stirring outside the walls of those homes; and we find them, especially in this country, as emigrants, leaving home and parents and friends, to seek a living in a strange land among strangers thousands of miles away. Millions of women are engaged in the hard struggle of life at present under every possible disadvantage; but many thoughtful people are at work trying to ameliorate their hardships, and to procure for them some redress. Those persons who are earnestly labouring to procure the franchise for women, are not doing so merely to enable a few rate-paying women to vote for Mr. Brown or Mr. Jones but to procure for them the protection of representation. The franchise is the best means that has as yet been devised for the protection and representation of the people, and until a better method is discovered women will be glad to have the benefit of it. It is not merely those women who are self-dependent and self-supporting that suffer from unjust laws, and whose difficulties require to be represented. In that very department of life called the sphere of woman—the family and the home—the deep sufferings of women have often struck those who are

obliged to administer the law which bears so cruelly upon mothers with regard to the education, the guardianship, and the custody of their children. Women are frequently told to leave politics alone, and to think only of devoting their whole time and attention to their children. You would naturally suppose, then, that at least they enjoyed some rights and privileges here; but they have no more legal rights as to their own children than the hired nurse who helps to take charge of them. A child may be taken from its mother and educated in direct opposition to her wishes, and even if her husband, at his death, leaves the guardianship of it to her—which he does not always do—she cannot appoint a guardian for it at her own death. The law has determined that she has no rights whatever as a mother; and yet she is taught to believe that all her hopes, all her affections, all her ambition, should be centred in the rearing of her children—thus rendering her misery the greater when those children may be removed from her care by the caprice or malice of a cruel husband. It has been well said that, as regards their children, women in this country are treated legally exactly like the slaves of the United States before the war of emancipation. Fortunately, it is not often that women's feelings are harrowed in this way by a separation from their children; but that is no reason that they should be left altogether to the mercy of chance. If women in any department of life seem to be treated in this age and in this country any better than they were treated in former times, or are now treated in other lands, it is because men are better educated and more reasoning than they were formerly, and more civilized here than they are in barbarous regions. But our laws have not been altered to suit the advance of the times, as far as women are concerned; and until women receive the franchise they will probably remain on unchanged and utterly inconsistent with public opinion, yet giving free scope occasionally for the most cruel wrongs to be inflicted on the sex which is the weaker.

The idea that women have nothing to do with politics and ought to have nothing to do with them is, happily, fast giving way, and will soon have departed from the minds of all but those who do not really understand what politics mean. Considering that politics so frequently affect the minutest particulars of household life and economy—all that is acknowledged even now to be within the range of what is called "woman's sphere"—it cannot be denied that women should take an interest in such affairs. The multitude for which a nation legislates is composed of individuals, and each individual, small or great, may be concerned in, or affected by, such legislation. Each subject discussed in parliament, from the debate upon a war in a foreign land to the tax upon the cheapest article of food, may have its effect equally upon the men and women of the country for good or for evil. Politics, which simply mean the government of the country, concern common-place men and women and the common affairs of life; and those persons who say that women have nothing to do with such matters, prove either their want of sincerity or their want of reflection.

I am occasionally informed by persons opposed to women's enfranchisement, that the ladies of their acquaintance, intelligent

women too, do not care to have votes; and I am even told that some ladies are not merely indifferent, but are actually hostile to the movement for gaining the suffrage for their sex. Now it is precisely to meet cases of this kind that our Society has been organized. If every body of intelligence understood the question, or had comprehended it from the first, we would be spared the trouble and expense of having any Society of the kind. Our object is to bring before the notice of people some knowledge of the benefit which would accrue to women from the franchise being conferred upon some members of their sex. The first step, then, to be taken in this movement when seeking for adherents, is to ascertain if the persons spoken to on the subject understand the meaning of the franchise. Do they comprehend the advantages which men gain by possessing it, do they know why men engaged in a life and death struggle rather than lose their constitutional privileges, and the liberty of electing their law makers? If they do not understand that, their opinions cannot have that weight which would attach to the opinions of persons who know exactly what they are talking about. Sometimes I have heard ladies expressing disapproval of women gaining the power of voting; but when I have asked them if they knew what the good of votes was to men, they frankly confessed they did not know. It is no wonder, therefore, that they did not prize the franchise, since they did not understand what it meant. There are several men also who really do not comprehend the matter any better, and who speak against the suffrage for women, not knowing, at the same time, the signification or value of the suffrage to any one, man or woman. These persons evidently do not appreciate the advantages of representative government.

An important point, then, is to impress on persons ignorant of the matter the benefit of the franchise. Men in this country possess the franchise, and they are thereby enabled to watch over their own interests, and to guard them as far as relates to the laws of this country. No woman in this kingdom has got the franchise, and I shall now point out some of the evil consequences which result to women, and some of the hardships with regard to the law, which they suffer from by their not being able to watch over their own interests in parliament, where the laws are made. I shall proceed, for instance, to illustrate the position, according to law, of a mother with regard to the religion of her children—taking real cases that have actually occurred at quite a late date. I choose these cases because they are so intimately connected with the sphere which is said to belong especially to woman—the sphere of home, where by a popular fallacy she is supposed to reign. We have all, no doubt, heard of the woman's kingdom, and many of us have believed that there really existed such a realm. An opponent of women's claims to the suffrage has observed "that the mission of women in life is different from that of men—women having reserved for them a higher position, in which the delicacy, the refinement, and grace, which form the charm of the female mind are more important than the pursuits of science. And this mission is the training of a family, which is, after all, the most important education that can be imparted to mankind."

These are very fine words, and some mothers might be greatly pleased to think they were of so much consequence, and that their mission was so extremely exalted. But how vague and misleading are the words when we come to look at plain facts. Does the law recognize that mothers have this higher mission? Does the law treat the mother as if she had delicacy or refinement, or tenderness of feeling, or indeed any feeling at all? Quite the contrary. Perhaps many persons here may not be aware that the law existing in this country at present pays no respect whatever to a mother's feelings, even with respect to so sacred a subject as her child's religion. In some countries, Austria for instance, a mother can by law decide upon the nature of a daughter's religious education—the law there authorizing the father to determine the religion of the sons. But in this country the mother is paid no such respect or consideration. The law never enquires what she thinks about her daughters, or her sons either. Her wishes go for nothing. Now, no one can consider that women, whether Catholic or Protestant, think one religion much the same as another, and do not care what religion their children profess. On the contrary, it is generally believed that women have much stronger religious convictions than men, and certainly the appearances of our places of worship on Sundays, and that of religious meetings on week days—to which women resort in so much greater numbers than men—would lead us to consider this popular belief was not unfounded. Nevertheless, the law of this land treats mothers, whether Catholic or Protestant, as if their children's religious education was nothing whatever to them. I shall here quote the words of the Vice-Chancellor of the Lancaster Court of Chancery, in deciding a question lately as to the creed in which a little girl named Catherine Hawksworth, of Liverpool, was to be brought up. The father was a Catholic and died when the child was only six months old. Her mother was a Protestant, and the child had lived with her, and been reared by her, and had been in the habit of attending the religious service of the Church of England. However, when the little girl was about eight or nine years old, some of the relations on the father's side desired that the child should be brought up a Catholic, as it had been the religion of the deceased father. The mother was, no doubt, astonished that relatives of her husband, long dead, could presume to have any authority over the child she had nursed, and cherished, and taught for so many years. She appealed to the law, but soon found that the law had no protection or sympathy for her. The Vice-Chancellor was obliged to decide according to the law which he was appointed to administer; but he declared, were he at liberty to follow his own opinion, he would have had no hesitation in yielding to the mother's appeal, and allowing her to retain the training and education of her own child. His words were these: "To direct that the child should be brought up in the Catholic faith, will be to create a barrier between a widowed mother and her only child—to annul the mother's influence over her daughter on the most important of all subjects on which it can be exercised, with the almost inevitable result of weakening it in all others; to introduce a disturbing element into a union which ought to be as close, as warm,

as absolute as any known to man; and lastly, to inflict the most severe pain on both mother and child. But it is clear that no argument which would recognize any right in the widowed mother to bring up her child in a religion different from its father's, can be allowed to weigh with me at all. According to the law of this court the mother has no such right. The duty of the widowed mother is, in general, to bring up the child according to the faith which its father professed, even though she utterly disapproved of it, and feels that to do so will diminish her influence over the child, and cloud the relation between them." For these reasons his Honor directed that the child should be educated in the Catholic faith. The mother, however, appealed once more to English law, anxious to try a last chance to keep her child, and the case was brought to the Court of Chancery before the Lords Justices of Appeal. The decision was again adverse to the mother. One of the Lords Justices, Lord Justice Mellish, had the grace to say that he could quite conceive a difference of opinion as to the propriety of the rule of law, but that court could not alter the rule of law, which was that unless there existed some strong reason in the interest of the child rendering it undesirable, a child ought to be brought up in the religion of its father. The other Lord Justice, Lord Justice James, gave his decision without any apparent qualms, concluding with these words: "The mother has had the charge of the child up to the time when her regular religious instruction ought to commence, and the court ought now to direct that she be brought up and educated as a member of the Catholic church." This decision was given on the 26th of April, 1871, the mother's appeal being *dismissed with costs*.

Here we perceive only too plainly that the interests and the feelings of a mother are taken into no account whatever by the law. The law recognises no claim on the mother's part. It appears to forget her existence. This is the result of women not being represented in parliament. If women had votes to elect members of parliament, the laws made in parliament would of necessity be careful to recognise women's claims to justice; their right to fair play and consideration could not be forgotten or be laid aside, if women were permitted to attend to what concerns their sex in the framing of laws.

I shall now mention the case of a Catholic lady married to a Protestant gentleman of the County Cork. This lady, Mrs. Purcell, was left a widow with two little children, a son and a daughter; and she was appointed the guardian of the children by the Court of Chancery, and was allowed five hundred pounds a-year for the children's maintenance. Six years after the father's death, a relative of the father caused Mrs. Purcell, the mother, to be communicated with touching the religious education of the children. The Catholic mother could not openly resent such interference between her and her children on the part of a relation of her deceased Protestant husband. She knew too well that the law was all against her, and that instead of giving her sympathy, it would decide directly in opposition to her wish, to educate her children in her own religion. She did not therefore appeal to the law at all. And what steps do

you think she took? In order that she might be enabled to bring up her son and daughter in the creed she thought best, she fled with them secretly, like a criminal, from her native land, well knowing that she was acting against the laws of her country. Does not this case remind us of the flight of the slave-mother depicted in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," when escaping from the United States to Canada, where her little boy was safe from the slave-dealer who wished to separate mother and child?

Mr. Beresford Hope, a Member of Parliament, who often gets up to oppose Women's Suffrage, says that women require sympathy and protection; and no doubt if he were convinced that the possession of the suffrage would afford some safeguard to women where their dearest interests are concerned, he would support the Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women, instead of opposing it. The case of Mrs. Purcell is a practical commentary on the amount of sympathy and protection given to women by the law as at present existing, when they wish to fulfil their high mission of training their children in the mode they think best. The Court of Chancery directed that the yearly allowance for the children's maintenance should not be paid to Mrs. Purcell until she obeyed the order directing her to rear her children in the Protestant faith, and to bring them back to Ireland forthwith. Mrs. Purcell, actuated by irresistible religious convictions, persisted in living in a foreign land, and in educating her children as members of the Catholic Church. And so this poor anxious mother struggled on for years, a stranger in a strange land, not receiving one shilling from the Court of Chancery of the sum allotted for the children's maintenance. But at the end of eight years Mrs. Purcell's daughter died; and then the mother ventured to return to her own country, as her only remaining child, her son, was then nearly fifteen years of age, and was too deeply imbued with the principles of the Catholic religion to have another faith forced upon him.

You see here that it is no question of which is the wiser, the father or mother, or no question of which is the better religion, the Protestant or the Catholic. If it were one particular religion only in which the law of the land required a widowed mother to educate her children, a state religion for instance, we might imagine that a narrow-minded bigotry actuated the framing of such laws on the part of the ruling powers, and we might entertain some kind of respect for sincere though mistaken views; but we see by the two cases I have just mentioned, of the trials severally of a Protestant mother and of a Catholic mother, that it is not a question of religious intolerance, but of an utter forgetfulness of woman's claims to justice or fair dealing, even in her so called sacred sphere of wife and mother. The question is, which is the religion of the father; and even where daughters are concerned, the religion of the mother is of no account. The law of Austria furnishes an example, as I have observed, of a rough and ready attempt at justice; for while it permits the mother to decide as to the religion of her daughters, it leaves the father to determine the creed of the sons.

But some people may say that in the cases I have mentioned

there was a difference of religion between husband and wife; and that a woman could easily prevent such trials as I have spoken of, by marrying only a person of her own religious creed. It must be remembered, however, that the rule of law which forgets that a mother is interested in her child's religion, must always place the mother merely at the mercy of chance. She has no security by law. Should her husband change his religion, then he can have his daughters as well as his sons educated in the creed he has just newly adopted, and in case of a dispute with his wife on the subject, the law would uphold his wishes, and would not listen for one moment to the wife's appeal to be allowed to direct even the religious training of her daughters.

Permit me to state a case where the husband, a reputed Protestant, changed his religion on his death-bed, making a will about a week before his decease, directing that all his children, three girls and two boys who had all been baptized in the Protestant Church, should be handed over to certain guardians, in order that they might be brought up in a religion different from that professed by their mother. In the newspaper report of the case, it is stated that the dying man in question, Thomas Marson of Belfast, said that his wife was a Protestant, and that he wished to make arrangements to have his children brought up in the Catholic faith; and he expressed the great unhappiness he felt that they had been baptized Protestants. The reverend gentleman who administered the last sacraments to him said the proper course would be to appoint legal guardians to carry out his wishes. Such indeed is the law! The dying man might take a pen and make a will, without warning to his wife, separating from her every one of her children, boys and girls alike, and the law would support him in this exercise of power.

I may observe that it only serves the more to show the want of thought and feeling which characterises the present law, for persons to tell women to leave politics alone, and that their truest happiness consists in cultivating their domestic affections. It would be better, considering the state of the law, that women had no affections at all, and then they could not have their feelings wounded so cruelly with express legal sanction. It may be said that such cases of hardship occur very seldom. The same can be said of murder; it fortunately occurs very seldom, but we would not feel very safe or comfortable in a country where a murderer was not legally punishable for his crimes, and where we had, for our safety and protection, merely to depend upon people being too good-natured, or too well principled to kill us. When women really understand the law, they may feel somewhat uneasy that it does not surround them with more safeguards, for the protection of their dearest interests. Not long ago a report appeared in the newspapers of a case where the mother, Mrs. Garnett, was said to have tampered with her child's religion, because, having changed her creed from that of her deceased husband, she taught her child the religion she thought best. Thus, if you see a child saying its prayers at its mother's knee, you cannot know whether she is bringing it up piously and properly, or whether she is unlawfully "tampering" with its faith, until you know what creed the

father professed, even if he be dead for several years. For, according to law, the mother's faith, as I have before said, is of no account; but the father, whether he be Protestant or Catholic, is always of the right religion. Those ladies and gentlemen who write romantically about the "woman's kingdom," and woman's powerful influence in the sphere of home, evidently do not know much of the law, which gives to a woman no more rights with reference to her children than with reference to politics. It must be acknowledged that however men have disregarded the feelings of women in making the laws, they have taken pretty good care of themselves, settling everything in a manner highly conducive to their own peace of mind, to the exercise of their own ambition, and to their special interests at home, abroad, and everywhere. A woman must not be allowed to think of entering a profession and earning a good income (especially if she be in the rank of those who determine our social customs and make the laws) because she has to look after her children, and give up her whole time to them; and then she must not expect to have any rights or legal power over these children, because she does not earn anything for their support.

I have drawn especial attention to the religious education of children; but in every other branch of education the mother is equally powerless by law. She may have a good deal of influence, and probably some real power in the family; but this is in accordance with the law of nature and in spite of the law of the land, and the ladies and gentlemen here assembled are aware that it is the law of the land we wish to improve, as far as concerns the interests of women. Some women think themselves very generous and self-sacrificing in saying that they do not wish for any rights, and are quite willing to give up all privileges in favour of their husbands; but evidently our law-makers did not expect any such generosity on the part of women, for they determined not to leave it in the power of any married woman—gentle or simple—to retain rights or privileges. Without allowing any choice in the matter, the law deprives a woman, as soon as she marries, of almost her legal existence—except in the case of serious crimes, for she can be executed as a separate individual when she commits a murder. It would be too much to expect that the "husband and wife are one, and that one the husband," when the scaffold and the hangman are in question; but if a good property falls to the wife, then it is convenient and proper that the husband and wife should be one, and that one the husband.

People sometimes say that to give women the suffrage would take them from their domestic duties. This argument would lead us to infer that the women of this country were very hard-worked indeed: that they were more constantly occupied with domestic drudgery than the busiest lawyers, the busiest doctors, the busiest grocers, the busiest blacksmiths, were occupied with their various callings: for all these last-named individuals are supposed to find time to vote. Other opponents of women's suffrage declare that women ought not to be allowed votes because they do not work at all, and are entirely provided for and protected by men who save them all trouble.

In answer to those romantic people who imagine that women are

shielded from the necessity of working for their own support, I may mention that nearly three millions of unmarried women in England alone are gaining their livelihood by their own exertions, and managing their own affairs; while eight hundred thousand married women, with their husbands alive, are engaged in occupations by which they earn money. In the manufacturing parts of the country especially, from whence springs so much of our national wealth, women are employed in large numbers, always, however, receiving less wages than men, even for doing the same amount of work as men. Again, it has been said that women are not sufficiently educated to vote; while, at the same time, we know that men who can neither read nor write may now possess the privilege of voting. A highly educated lady, possessing thousands a-year and paying a large amount in taxes, besides, perhaps, contributing to the support of many charitable public institutions of the country, is not considered intelligent or worthy enough to be permitted a vote, while the blacksmith who shoes her horses may be endowed with the privilege.

Many years ago there were three prizes offered for the three best essays on a particular political subject. The competition was open to the entire kingdom: and when the time came for declaring the names of the winners, it was found that the three prize political essays were all written by one and the same person, and that person a lady about twenty-four years old. To think that women could find any difficulty in comprehending political questions is simply ridiculous. The facilities for studying politics are far greater than those for studying any other branch of knowledge. What is so cheap as a daily newspaper? Books upon botany or painting, Berlin wool for executing square featured men and women and angularly-formed animals, as ornamental covers for ottomans, etc., cost a great deal of money; but our newspapers are a cheap luxury, and there are few households, whether consisting of men or women, where the daily paper is not received as almost a necessary of existence every morning.

It is often said that no one could object to the franchise being given to women of what are called "the better classes" of society; but any one who has a knowledge of the industry, the integrity, and good sense so generally displayed by those hard-working women who as heads of families, or as single women, are earning their bread honestly and independently, must acknowledge that the women of each separate class are quite as capable of voting conscientiously as the men of the same class. The franchise is spoken of as a privilege and protection for men, and why not the same for women? Some people profess to think that women would lose rather than gain in dignity by exercising the franchise: but let us take a glance at the male persons who rank politically with women. The law books state that some persons are disqualified for ever from being voters—such as "women and idiots."

To some ladies and gentlemen this may, perhaps, appear an extremely dignified and graceful position for women, but I confess I cannot agree with them.

I will briefly allude to another argument occasionally made use of

by opponents of women's suffrage, who seem to have arrived at their wits' ends in trying to discover something to say in opposition—namely, the argument that as women are not called upon to defend the country as soldiers, they should not expect to be politically represented. One answer to this argument is, that British soldiers themselves cannot exercise the franchise, because they are not rate-payers or householders; while clergymen, who certainly are not expected to undertake military duty, and men utterly incapacitated by age or infirmity from entering warlike service, are, nevertheless, permitted to exercise the privilege of electors, when they pay the requisite amount of rates as householders. Women are strictly keeping within the bounds of the British constitution when they ask for the suffrage as householders and ratepayers.

To point out the many hardships suffered by women from not being represented in the councils of the nation, would take up far more time than can now be spared; but I shall mention one or two cases more. Mr. Mill, in his memorable speech made in favour of women's suffrage in the House of Commons in May, 1867, mentioned that Christ's Hospital in London, generally called the Bluecoat School, and which had been founded originally for boys and girls alike, was then supporting and educating eleven hundred boys, destined for gentlemanly professions and callings, and only twenty-six girls, who were being trained for domestic servants. That was the just way the girls were treated; nearly all the money of the endowment was monopolized for the advantage of the boys. With regard to education generally, the interests of women have been almost entirely neglected by the State. There was formerly a vague idea prevalent, no doubt, that if women were educated highly they might not be contented to be such constant drudges as it was wished they should be, or would not believe so implicitly all that was imposed upon them to keep them contented with holding an inferior position. The scientific institutions of the country have displayed great injustice to women. The Royal Astronomical Society refused to give its gold medal to Miss Caroline Herschel, for her discovery of five comets, because she was a woman—frankly declaring that if the discoverer had been a man he should have been awarded it. Mrs. Somerville, whose scientific works are so well known, and who is now upwards of eighty years old, only received about a year ago a tardy recognition of some work she accomplished twenty or thirty years before, by being given a medal for it: and this was owing to the representation of some of those persons engaged in the present movement for obtaining justice and fair play for women.

While thus discouraging women in every pursuit of high knowledge, by excluding them from scientific societies, and by refusing them marks of distinction and honours, when, in spite of obstacles, they happen to make important scientific discoveries; opponents say that women have no taste, and in fact, no brains for science, or for any pursuit that requires deep thought. They first deny them the means of cultivating their intellect, and then they declare they have no intellect to cultivate.

It has been said that Members of Parliament chosen altogether by

male voters might remedy all the legal injustices under which women labour; but what guarantee would they possess that succeeding law-makers might not bring back the old state of oppression? Until women gain the suffrage themselves, they never can be thoroughly protected against the caprice of the ruling powers. In the history of the world it will be found that privileges have been sometimes granted to women, and have been sometimes taken from them again, and have oftener been withheld from them altogether for no palpable reason. In some countries women can reign, whether as despotic rulers or as constitutional sovereigns, and in others they are excluded from the throne. But no one has ever proved that the nations where only male monarchs were permitted were uniformly better governed or more prosperous than where women as well as men were allowed to reign. Hanover would not permit Queen Victoria to ascend the throne of that kingdom. Her Majesty might do well enough to be the sovereign of the British Empire, but she was not thought good enough for Hanover. Now, however, Hanover has lost its king, and the conqueror reigns in his stead. In France no woman could ascend the throne, yet royalty there is in no higher favour for all that; and according to the present law there, every man in that country, however uneducated, possesses the privilege of the franchise; while no woman in France, however gifted, has any political rights whatever. These arrangements, whereby women are excluded from legitimately exercising political power, have not been productive of such beneficial effects as to make France serve as a brilliant example to other lands, of a method in which a country may provide stability and security, combined with liberty, progress, and happiness. Apparent caprice and inconsistency towards women may also be pointed out as instanced by France, which would not have a female sovereign, granting now medical degrees to women; whereas in England, where a lady at present sits upon the throne, no woman, notwithstanding, can attain at present the dignity of doctor of medicine. To point out further inconsistency in the treatment of women, it may be observed that in the matter of public distinction women may enjoy it in some particulars, consistently with receiving the highest possible respect; while, nevertheless, there is a vague idea that it is feminine and graceful to like retirement, and to shrink from public notice. For instance, some people think it would be unfeminine for a young lady to have her name published as having won a prize in any solid branch of learning; but they do not think it unfeminine for her to have her dress minutely described in the public papers when she attends either the Drawing-room or state balls, in London, or the Viceregal court in Dublin. When they read in their morning papers that Miss Angelina Blank, of 260 Fitzwilliam-square, wore a train of the richest *poult de soie*, trimmed with *bouffants of tulle*, and *jupe* of magnificent lace, and corsage ornamented tastefully, they think this publicity is quite right for Miss Angelina Blank; but they would not think it so nice to see her name in the papers as having won a prize in history or mathematics; though I think we must all agree that the young lady

who is thus tacitly taught to feel ashamed of intellectual attainments, and proud of wearing the richest lace, will naturally think attending to her dress more important than cultivating her mind. A lady may also make a speech to a regiment of soldiers, before an assembled multitude, on the occasion of presenting new colours to the corps; or she may give the name to a ship, likewise in presence of thousands; or lay the foundation stone of some public building before all eyes. But nobody thinks her unfeminine for doing these things. On the contrary, it is a proof of the respect in which she is held that she is asked to do them. She feels it as a compliment, and so do her whole family, that she has been selected for such distinction. Moreover, there are various public positions now filled by women in this country, and neither Government nor society in general object to them. For instance, a woman may sit all day at a street corner, winter and summer, selling fruit at a stall under the shelter of a dilapidated umbrella; she may be the stewardess of a vessel bound to weather all storms; she may let lodgings and be liable to the intrusion of any one who sees her bill on her window-pane; and no one will say that these employments are unfeminine. The Government has been careful to exclude women from all high, well-paid appointments; but it permits them to engage in almost any low occupation that poverty may drive them to, thus proving that it is quite a delusion to imagine women are debarred from political or other privileges, in order to preserve their refinement.

With reference to public notice, I may observe, that it is the most refined ladies in the country who have their movements chronicled in the newspapers for all the world to read in the "Fashionable Intelligence." It is precisely the ladies of greatest distinction that we know most about, whom we are expected to respect the most; and if women see, as they do, the photographs of princesses in shop windows, and can ascertain from the public press the hour at which the royal ladies attended divine service on Sunday, and where they drove on Monday, and whom they visited on Tuesday, and so on through all the days of the week, surely no one could expect women with any reasoning powers whatever to believe that public notice is in itself so objectionable, that women, sooner than run the risk of appearing before the public, had better give up all idea of voting at elections, and securing for their sex the advantage of being able to look after their own interests concerning the laws of the country.

At the same time, no compliment can be greater than that paid to women by many opponents of women's suffrage, who are so satisfied with ladies as they are at present that they do not think there is any room for improvement: who fear that if women become in any way different it must be alteration for the worse, as it would be impossible for them to imagine that women could be any better than they are now. In answer I may say that as political power does not make polished gentlemen unmannerly, nor make rough men rougher than they were before they attained such power, so I trust that refinement and courtesy may not disappear when other women in this country besides Her Majesty, the Queen, are admitted to political privileges.

The efforts to procure the suffrage for women ratepayers have already done much for the advancement of their whole sex. Wrongs have been pointed out that remained unnoticed, except by the silent sufferers, for centuries; and men in high places are awakening to a sense of the deep injustices endured so long by the women of the nation. I myself heard Mr. Gladstone say in the House of Commons that the laws had done much less than justice to women; but he was induced to consider the subject by the fact that Mr. Jacob Bright's bill for removing the electoral disabilities of women was then being discussed in the House. At the present time the difference between those who can guard their interests and those who are thrown defencelessly upon the mercy of others, is the political franchise. I would earnestly impress upon all those who are interested in the elevation of women—whether as regards their higher education, or their admission to any profitable employments now shut out from them—to do what they can to further the movement in favour of women's suffrage. When women are granted the franchise they can no longer be refused any just or reasonable privileges; but as long as they remain without it, their wishes and requirements will be liable to meet with slights and neglect from government. Those who are working in this great cause, giving time, and thought, and money for its promotion, and who have brought it to its present state of prosperity, believe that the wrongs of women—both social and political—arise from their exclusion from the franchise, and that all schemes for advancing their position will utterly fail unless built upon the solid foundation of constitutional rights.

Let none, therefore, who have women's welfare really at heart, refuse a helping hand in this movement, that a successful termination to it may not be delayed.

The Chairman, LORD TALBOT DE MALAHIDE, expressed his sympathy with the movement for obtaining the franchise for women ratepayers, and declared his belief that men and women both would be benefited by the extension of the suffrage to women. He said it was not to be supposed when women obtained the franchise, that men and women would be divided into opposite camps, but that both would render mutual assistance, and thus the general welfare of the community would be increased. He also alluded to the high position which women enjoyed among the Saxons of old.

The REV. JOHN NEWENHAM HOARE, Rector of Killeskey, County Wicklow, and Chaplain to the Lord Lieutenant, moved a vote of thanks to MISS ROBERTSON for her exhaustive and able address. He considered it most unjust to exclude women from the franchise when paying rates and taxes.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR ARTHUR PHAYRE, K. C. B., seconded the vote of thanks. He said he believed that the time was not far distant when the cause which was so clearly advocated by Miss Robertson would triumph, and that her name would then have a foremost place among its first and ablest supporters.

The CHAIRMAN moved that Miss Robertson's lecture be printed for circulation by the Society.

MRS. THOMPSON, Alderford, County Roscommon, seconded the motion.

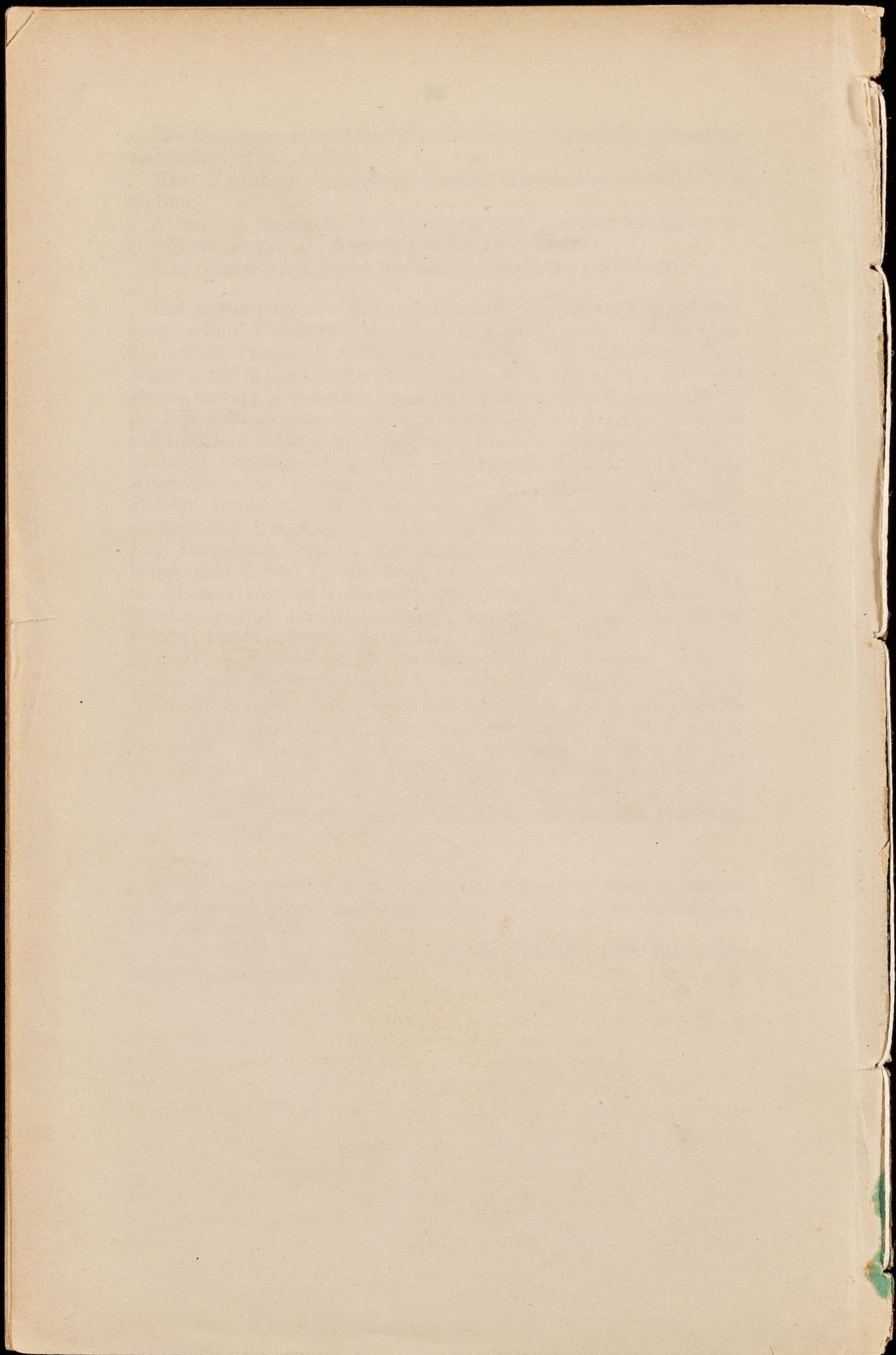
A vote of thanks to the Chairman was proposed by EMANUEL HUTCHINS, Esq., J.P., Ardnagashel, County Cork.

MRS. GELSTONE, County Antrim, seconded the resolution.

The meeting was crowded and successful, and among those present were:—Lord Talbot de Malahide; The Hon. G. Gough; Major-Gen. Sir Arthur Phayre, K.C.B.; Lady Wilde; The MacDermot Roe, High Sheriff of the County Roscommon; Mrs. Thompson, Alderford House, County Roscommon; General Galwey and the Misses Galwey; the Rev. J. Newenham Hoare, A.M. Rector of Killeskey, Co. Wicklow, and Chaplain to the Lord Lieutenant; the Rev. Thaddeus O'Malley; Emanuel Hutchins, Esq., J.P., Ardnagashel, Co. Cork, and Miss Alicia Hutchins; Lorenzo Nixon Nunn, Esq., and Mrs. Nunn, Middletown House, Co. Wexford; Mrs. Close, 82, Stephen's Green; Alexander S. Orr, Esq. and Mrs. Orr, Brooklawn, Blackrock; the Rev. Barrington Orr, and Miss Kate Orr; James McCullagh, Esq., Brookfield; Robert Tyrrell, Esq., Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin; the Misses Cheevers, Tobernea terrace, Seapoint; Miss McDermott, Monkstown-hill; the Misses Frazer, Annagh, Co. Sligo; the Misses Bolton, Idrone-terrace, Blackrock; Chatterton White, Esq.; the Rev. W. G. Carroll, A.M., Incumbent of St. Bride's, Dublin; James Creed Meredith, Esq., LL.B. and Mrs. Meredith, 17, Lower Fitzwilliam-street; Mrs. Gelstone, the Mansion House, Ballymoney, Co. Antrim; E. J. Hardy, Esq. and Miss Hardy, Moylary Glebe, Co. Louth; the Misses Hogan; Mrs. and Miss Catterson Smith; Mrs. Blacker; C. Edward Tuthill, Esq., Sloperton, Monkstown; Miss E. Haughton and Miss Mackintosh; Mrs. Urlin; J. Corbet, Esq.; the Misses Stock, Eagle Lodge, Blackrock; Samuel Hutchins, Esq.; Mrs. Carter; etc.

NOTE.—The above Lecture was also delivered by Miss Robertson at Blackrock, Dublin, September 2nd, 1871, Sir John Barrington, D.L., in the chair:

And at Portrush, Co. Antrim, October 2nd, 1871, the Rev. Alexander Alcock, A.M., in the chair.



EXTRACT FROM A LETTER OF PROTEST

BY

MRS. JACOB BRIGHT.

THE correspondence with Mr. J. S. Mill which pledged the societies to the principle of giving a vote to every qualified woman, married or single, is at 28, Jackson's Row, Manchester, the office of the Manchester Branch. That pledge has never been rescinded by any vote of the Committee. Individual speakers here and there have advocated Spinster Suffrage on the ground that it was easier to pass a Bill so limited, but *the societies* have never so limited the definition of their aim, on the contrary, these are the facts :---When Mr. Forsyth took the Bill and inserted his proviso, the Central Committee met, passed a vote of condemnation, appointed a deputation to wait on him, and finally he consented to withdraw the proviso. The Committee split in two on the question whether he ought to be supported at all—four of the most important members withdrew, I think these were Madame Venturi, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold and the Hon. Mrs. Drummond. I remained, as did several others, who would rather have declined him altogether as a leader. Since then there has been no vote passed limiting our aim to Spinster Suffrage. The money, the friends, have all been collected on the wider basis. It is inconceivable that we should refuse to exclude married women from our claim in the days when they had no qualification, and exclude them *now* when their qualification is just as good as anyone else's.

MR. C. H. HOPWOOD, M.P.,

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

—○○—

No one has ventured to question the intellectual capacity of women to exercise this vote. Some have got a notion of what some foolish women may do. I am sure if you eliminate all the foolish men from the right of the franchise, who now possess it, and substitute the capable women, there would be more than room enough for a large proportion of the sex you are trying to keep out. You admit that they are capable for the School Board. The hon. member for Tamworth (Mr. Hanbury) tells us that it is a clear gain to the community that women should be on School Boards. Education is the power through which we all derive our pretended knowledge to judge of State affairs. What is any one of us stripped of his knowledge? We consider ourselves very superior, but we have admitted that women are not inferior to ourselves in that respect. Is there any reason why women should have the franchise? There are many things in which women remain at a disadvantage at law by laws which have been made by men. If woman is admitted to have great influence, why cannot she give her vote, feeling, and influence upon many questions of the day? Nobody pretends that there are not many questions upon which women might be heard with very great benefit. The right hon. member for Halifax (Mr. J. Stansfeld) singled out a woman who, to his honour be it said, did a large amount of service of a very valuable kind for one of the public departments.* Such instances should be quoted to members to show that it is not to be denied that women are perfectly capable of exercising the franchise. Will any man who knows anything of the question pretend that the state of the law in regard to women's property is right as it stands. I say that it is not. Are your laws of marriage such as recommend themselves entirely to the women of the three kingdoms. I trow not; but at all events, before you mend them you should get the reflections of the most capable among them.—*Speech in the House of Commons, June 6th, 1877.*

* Mrs. Nassau Senior, was appointed Assistant Inspector to the Poor Law Board in 1873, by the Right Hon. J. Stansfeld, then President of the Local Government Board.

Parr

NEWMAN

396.11A

WOMEN'S WRONGS.

READERS of History and Lawyers are aware that Women's Wrongs are an ancient and terribly persistent fact. American law disfranchised, in one sentence, negroes, criminals, women, idiots and minors.

Readers of Newspapers cannot be ignorant of the miseries endured by wives from brutal husbands.

In ordinary decorous families, *sons* at lavish expense are trained to self-support. The *daughters* in one class have nothing spent on their education; in another, are educated as elegant ornaments of a drawing-room, where they live in luxury for a parent's delight; yet, when he dies, and their youth is spent, they are often turned adrift into comparative poverty, incompetent for self-help.

When complaint is made of this, the ascendant sex graciously tells them, "they ought to marry;" and this in a country where women are counted by the hundred thousand more numerous than men; where also men do not universally accept the state of marriage.

Meanwhile, the law is made as if to dissuade the woman from such a remedy for narrow circumstances. If she dare to adopt it, it instantly strips her of all her property, great or little; and if she earn anything, authorizes her husband to seize it by force. In the Marriage Service, the husband, as if in mockery, says: "With all my worldly

goods I thee endow:" while the law allows him to gamble away her whole fortune the day after the marriage, or to live in riotous indulgence on *her* money and give to her the barest necessities of life. Nay, not even these, if he so insult and torment her, that she will not live with him. He may maliciously refuse her the sight of her own children, and put them under the care of a paramour, to be trained into hatred of their mother. And if, to gain one sight of them, she return to his house for two days, the law holds her to have "condoned" all his offences, however flagrant.

The richer classes guard in great measure against the unfairness of the law to the wife in money matters, by the expensive, cumbrous and often inconvenient system of Trustees. The poorer cannot afford it; nor is it at all applicable to a woman's earnings. From day to day we see that a wife may sink all at once into the depths of misery, if her husband be corrupted into drunkenness.

An extract from the proceedings of one of our police courts has been widely circulated in an Eastern newspaper, as illustrating (but not glorifying) English law. A man for beating his ass is sentenced to prison for a month, and the Magistrate expresses regret that he is not allowed to inflict a severer punishment. The culprit grumbles in reply that it is very hard upon him; for he had beaten his wife worse, and had only been sent to prison for eight days.

The law has of late been partially improved, and there is hope that it is about to be further improved, in regard to married women's property. But this cannot wisely set aside the inquiry—Why was such law ever made? what false principle in men's hearts or minds dictated it? does

that principle still live and thrive? Unless we tear up the root of bitterness, inveterate injustice never can be subdued. To wish for justice and shudder at novelty of principle, is but to wish for an end and dread the means,—a signal and common type of weakness. Enlightened despots have sometimes appointed official Protectors of aborigines, who cannot be incorporated into the common citizenship of colonists. If the male sex had, in the 800 years to which England looks back, appointed Protectors of the female sex, no one can say how many of the worst oppressions might have been mitigated, or removed. It has indeed been said by some, that free colonists have been more oppressive to aborigines than despotic sovereigns. Be this as it may, it is clear that every class is practically selfish, not through evil intent, but from not feeling how the law pinches other classes. When the power and duty of the Crown to protect the weaker classes is removed, it is found that they do not always gain through the constitutional liberty of the classes above them. Hence, when the principle of self-protection for classes is established in part of a nation, events press on and on to the representation of every class, as absolutely necessary for social justice. And this points to the only creditable reply to the question, Why has our law been so unjust to women?—Because woman never had a voice in the making of it, and men, as a class, have not realized the oppression of women as a class. Men have deep in their hearts the idea that women *ought* to be their legal inferiors; that neither the persons of women nor their property ought to remain their own; that marriage is not a free union on equal terms; and that the law ought to favour the stronger sex against the weaker. It is remarkable that our law is more unjust

to women than that of the great historically despotic nations, and in some important respects less favourable than that of the Turks. All these things point out that *equality of the sexes in respect to the Parliamentary Franchise* is essential to justice. The conscience of men is opening to the truth. The horrors attested in the newspapers, and the revelations of the Divorce Courts, forbid longer inaction. Societies for promoting women's power of self-protection by equal right of suffrage are arising. The reader, male or female, is exhorted to aid in this work, as circumstances permit.

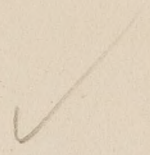
F. W. NEWMAN, *Secretary*.

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**MUST THE EXTENSION OF THE FRANCHISE TO
WOMEN BE FOLLOWED BY THE
DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT?**

It is often urged by opponents of Women's Suffrage as an objection to carrying this reform during the coming Session of Parliament, or at any time before the last session of any Parliament, that as soon as the Bill becomes law Parliament must be dissolved to let the new women voters exercise their rights, for that Parliament, having added so largely to the Electorate, would have no right to continue in existence. It is pointed out, in support of this argument, that Dissolutions followed each of the three Reform Bills of 1832, 1867-8, and 1884-5. The whole argument is, however, based on a misapprehension of the facts of the case. It is true that immediate Dissolutions followed these three Reform Bills, but they were not merely Franchise Bills. They were in each case "Redistribution of Seats" Bills, which made sweeping changes in the Constituencies, and in effect destroyed the Constituencies which had elected the House of Commons. Obviously, in such cases, the House of Commons could not continue after the Constituencies which had elected it had ceased to exist. But beyond this, the circumstances which led up to those Reform Bills involved a Dissolution in each case. They were carried after the three greatest political storms that had agitated the country since the Revolution of 1688. They were the sole subjects of public attention, and the country was divided into hostile camps, while rebellion against Authority was within measurable

distance. In 1884-5, as is well known, the Queen personally intervened to avert the consequences which would have followed the perverse action of the House of Lords. After such storms Parliament was exhausted, and the new electors would not have consented to wait a day longer than was necessary for the opportunity of recording their votes. But it was not the mere extension of the Franchise which necessitated the Dissolution; it was the circumstances under which the extension was carried, coupled with the Redistribution of Seats, which made the Dissolutions in each case a necessity.

The passing of a Women's Suffrage Bill is totally different. No civil convulsion will take place, and no Redistribution of Seats. The new electors will readily acquiesce in the delay of a Dissolution, if they can only see themselves safely on the Register, and they can get the benefit of such Bye-elections as may take place. If the women do not press for a Dissolution, and are willing to wait, the existing male electors may well be content to let Parliament run its course; they will not be injured by the delay. There is no constitutional principle involved, and there is no precedent in our history for the Dissolution of Parliament after the passing of a Franchise Act, unless that Act is also one for the Redistribution of Seats. The argument, therefore, that a Dissolution must at once follow the grant of Women's Suffrage is entirely worthless, and is without any constitutional basis.

WALTER S. B. McLAREN.

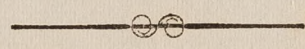
Reprinted from the Women's Political News.

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RT. HON. J. W. HENLEY, M.P.,

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

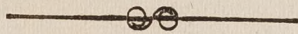


Right Hon. J. W. HENLEY said that, many years ago the Legislature entrusted the women of England with the municipal franchise. As far as he recollected, this was done almost *mero motu* by the Legislature, without any great amount of pressure from without. All the terrible results which the opponents of the present Bill anticipated had not occurred in consequence of the admission of women to the lower franchise. Not only did political feeling enter into all municipal contests as much as it did in Parliamentary elections, but with the former there were also mixed up local and personal considerations of the strongest kind. (Hear, hear.) No proof whatever had been given in support of the assertion that if women had the Parliamentary franchise they would be taken out of their proper sphere of action. A similar result must surely have been produced by giving them the municipal franchise, but no attempt had been made to prove that anything of the kind had occurred. As the Legislature had chosen to bring women into the turmoil of public life at municipal elections, which were annual, he saw no reason why they should not also be allowed to vote at elections for members of Parliament. For these reasons he should support the principle of the Bill. (Hear, hear.)—*Speech in the House of Commons, June 6th, 1877.*

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MR. W. FORSYTH, M.P.,

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.



Mr. FORSYTH said that women now had votes at municipal elections, and the hon. member for Tamworth admitted that even in sitting at the School Board they were in their proper sphere; but the questions at issue in those cases were, for the most part, of the same character, only on a smaller scale, as those involved in Parliamentary elections and discussions. He would illustrate the injustice of the present system by taking the case of two towns. In Bristol, one-quarter of the houses occupied by ratepayers and taxpayers were occupied by women, many of them living in the best part of the city, and yet not one of those women had a voice in choosing a member for Bristol. Then, at Bath, the great proportion of the occupiers of the houses in its splendid streets and terraces were not enfranchised, because they were women, many of them spinsters, and all of them heavily rated and taxed. Again, in England, one-seventh part of the whole of the land held by owners of more than one acre was held by women, not one of whom was entitled to a vote. He denied that that Bill, as asserted last year by the right hon. member for Birmingham, was based on an assumed hostility between the sexes; but what its advocates said was that there were certain questions which women had a peculiar right to have an opinion upon, and on which they ought to be heard, because they had, as to some of them, perhaps a more pressing interest than men themselves had.—*Speech in the House of Commons, June 6th, 1877.*

Ms letter 9/18/82.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE LEAFLETS (Anonymous)

WOMEN AND THE NEW REFORM BILL.

To _____

SIR,

We desire to call your attention to the claim of Women who are heads of households to be included in the operation of the Government Franchise Bill.

Women have continuously presented this claim before Parliament and the Country since the Reform Bill of 1867. The introduction of a measure declared by the Government to be intended to deal with the Franchise in an exhaustive manner, renders it especially necessary now to urge it upon the attention of Parliament.

We respectfully represent that the claim of duly qualified women for admission within the pale of the constitution is fully as pressing as that of the Agricultural Labourer, and that the body of electors who would thereby be added to the Constituencies, would be at least equal in general and political intelligence to the great body of agricultural and other labourers who are to be enfranchised by the Government Bill.

Among this body would be found women landowners, who form one-seventh of the land proprietors of the country; women of means and position living on their own property; schoolmistresses and other teachers; women engaged in professional, literary and artistic pursuits; women farmers, merchants, manufacturers and shopkeepers; besides large numbers of self-supporting women engaged in industrial occupations. The continued exclusion of so large a proportion of the property, industry and intelligence of the country from all representation in the legislature is injurious to those excluded, and to the community at large.

Several Bills having special reference to the interests and *status* of women have been introduced in Parliament during the present Session. This affords a powerful reason for the immediate enfranchisement of women, in order that Members of Parliament may have the same sense of responsibility towards the class affected by them as in dealing with questions relating to men.

For these and other reasons we earnestly beg that you will give your support to the Amendment to be introduced by Mr. Woodall in Committee on the Representation of the People Bill for including women householders in its operation.

We are, Sir,
Yours faithfully,

EVELINE PORTSMOUTH (Countess of Portsmouth).
F. P. VERNEY (Lady Verney).
FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.
ANNE J. CLOUGH (Newnham College).
CLARA E. L. RAYLEIGH (Lady Rayleigh).
SELINA HOGG (Lady Hogg).
ANNA SWANWICK.
JULIA CAMPERDOWN (Countess of Camperdown).
MINA E. HOLLOND (Mrs. John Hollond).
(Lady) DOROTHY NEVILL.
MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT.
HELEN P. BRIGHT CLARK.
JANE E. COBDEN.
ELIZABETH ADELAIDE MANNING.
M. POWER (Lady Power).
LOUISA COLTHURST (Dowager Lady Colthurst).
FRANCES E. HOGGAN, M.D.
FLORENCE DAVENPORT HILL (Poor Law Guardian).
LOUISA TWINING (Poor Law Guardian).
MARYANNE DONKIN (Poor Law Guardian).
ROSAMOND DAVENPORT HILL (M.L.S.B.)
MARY HOWITT.
MARIA G. GREY.
EMILY A. E. SHIREFF.
DEBORAH BOWRING (Lady Bowring).
EMILY PFEIFFER.
BARBARA L. S. BODICHON.
AUGUSTA WEBSTER.
CATHERINE M. BUCKTON.
FRANCES M. BUSS (North London Collegiate School).
SOPHIA BRYANT, B. Sc.
MALVINA BORCHARDT (Head Mistress of Devonport High School).
LOUISA BOUCHERETT.
JESSIE BOUCHERETT.
MARGARET BYERS (Ladies' Collegiate School, Belfast).

MARGARET GILLIES.
AGNES D. BEAVINGTON ATKINSON.
H. W. A. WARD (Mrs. E. M. Ward).
ROSE MARY CRAWSHAY.
CLARA MONTALBA.
ELLEN MONTALBA.
MARGARET HUNT (Mrs. A. W. Hunt).
LOUISA S. GOLDSMID (Lady Goldsmid).
MADGE KENDAL GRIMSTON (Mrs. Kendal).
EMILIA F. S. PATTISON (Mrs. Mark Pattison).
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MABEL SHARMAN CRAWFORD.
ELEANOR MILDRED SIDGWICK (Mrs. Henry Sidgwick).
JULIA WEDGWOOD.
ADELINE PAULINA IRBY.
EDITH SHOVE, M.B.
ISABEL THORNE (*Secretary*, London School of Medicine for Women).
H. M. JONES (Head Mistress, Notting Hill High School).
ELEANOR GROVE (Principal, Student's Home, Gordon Square).
ELIZABETH PEASE NICHOL.
FRANCES POWER COBBE.
AMELIA B. EDWARDS.
CHARLOTTE ANGAS SCOTT (Girton Coll.)
(The Hon.) EMMELINE CANNING.

James H. ...
M. W. ...
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OBJECTIONS
TO
WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

A SPEECH

BY

CAPTAIN MAXSE, R.N.

AT THE

ELECTORAL REFORM CONFERENCE,

HELD AT THE

FREEMASONS' TAVERN,

17TH NOVEMBER, 1874.

London:

W. RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY,—W.

1874.

Price One Penny.

The following Speech is published at the request of several gentlemen who heard it. It was made in opposition to an amendment moved by Miss LYDIA BECKER to admit all householders to vote, including women.

F. A. M.

—•••••—

I desire to oppose the amendment which has been moved. In doing so, I will first consider it as a proposal in favour of genuine Woman Suffrage—as the first step towards the fulfilment of this—and I will then consider it in its true character as a proposal for the extension of property representation, and as a class measure.

Let me say that I am not a prejudiced opponent of Woman Suffrage: it has taken me some years of hesitation to arrive at my present position. I was never in favour of Mr. JACOB BRIGHT'S Bill, which would only have enfranchised single women of property, but I have been in favour of a *bonâ fide* Woman Suffrage measure. I have, however, gradually formed the opinion that if women exercised direct political power, the effect would be most injurious to society.

I am anxious the Conference should not mistake the ground of my opposition. I entirely repudiate the

ordinary arguments which are used against Woman Suffrage. Whatever tends to increase the mental independence and brain power of woman tends to benefit man. His greatest chance of happiness lies in her sympathy and co-operation. Their interest is identical. But having said this, I am bound to consider whether to give them by artificial means the power of governing men is likely to increase their union. I say by artificial means, because it will be admitted that they have not naturally the power of governing men, for natural government rests on force. I do not presume to justify the ways of nature, but it is clear that she has made women comparatively weak and obviously dependent upon men. Artificial circumstances should not blind us to a natural law. The physical dependence of women on men, combined with their difference of organization, is the justification of government by men. I hold it to be the duty of men to protect women, and to represent their interests in Parliament. We shall commit a fatal error if we set women up in political hostility to men. I am quite aware of the ready retort: it will be said, "This is the invariable argument of those who oppress the weak;" but that an argument has been wrongly used in many cases, is no reason why it may not have a wise and pertinent use. Of course the popular appeal in this case is to abstract right. "If you may govern

me why may I not govern you?" The question of the right of governing is entirely one of expediency. Women who advocate Woman Suffrage would not probably concede the right of voting to minors; yet, following their own argument, I might urge that I know one or two young men of nineteen who have far more brains and wisdom than many of their seniors—I defy women to base their refusal of the franchise to minors upon any other ground than that of expediency.

It is said, however, that men have not represented the interests of women in the legislature. But if women have been badly represented in Parliament hitherto—so have men! The highest interests of neither have yet been represented in the legislature: we have all suffered alike from a selfish class rule. The object of our present movement is to represent all classes and the women in them.

Sir, my concern in this question is the benefit of the entire community. What is likely to be the effect of Woman Suffrage? Now we have not to consider whether clever women are superior to stupid men—that triumphant platform appeal which is constantly made. It matters little whether the majority of voters do not equal the genius either of Mary Somerville, George Eliot, or Harriet Martineau. We have to consider what is the standard of collective thought among women. It

is my opinion that the collective thought of women—that is the opinion of the majority of women—will be adverse to enlightenment and progress. I must decline to regard the ladies who demand Woman Suffrage as the mental representatives of their sex. They are entirely exceptional women. Their independence of thought and rare public spirit elevate them above their sex. It is not unnatural that, comparing themselves with many men, they should claim a share of government. I need hardly say I have no prejudice against women who think for themselves, and who are therefore strong-minded. I welcome the presence of mental strength in women, all the more because it is so rare; and so far am I from sharing popular objections to Woman Suffrage that, while I would not give women the vote, I would most willingly remove their disability to sit in Parliament, and assuredly remove all disabilities which now prevent their serving in many professions and trades—holding that Nature may be very well left to mark the limits of their work; but I appeal to these ladies not to compare themselves with men, but rather to compare their aspirations and ideas with those of the majority of their own sex.

They will find that the tendency of most women is favourable to arbitrary government and clerical supremacy. They seem to be incapable of sympathizing with

great causes—they have a strong predilection for personal institutions. As a rule they are completely without interest in great national questions. Theirs is essentially the private life point of view. If I thought that their natural apathy concerning politics would lead them to abstain from voting, I should not so much dread their political power: but unfortunately they have a vivid sense of the value of all property, and the vote would be regarded as property intended for use; and subject as they are to religious appeals it would be frequently used—as the woman vote is now frequently used in School Board elections—under the influence of the Clergy. Of course I am familiar with Mr. MILL's argument, that if women do not interest themselves in great questions it is because we have never encouraged them to do so—and that political responsibility will educate them. I for my part doubt this. The conscience of women towards the public is feeble, and when the conscience is feeble responsibility is no educator. I observe, certainly, a number of male voters whom it appears impossible to arouse to a sense of their public duty. Then what a risk we are called upon to encounter in order to test the assertion! The process of education must occupy time: it may take two or three generations to awaken public spirit in the majority of women, and to educate them out of their instinctive submission to

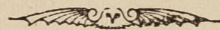
whatever is and their dread of ideas which have not the sanction of custom ; and in the mean time what is to be our fate? The hands of the clock are to be put back that women may pass through men's accomplished experiences, and we are to be delivered over for a long period of uninterrupted Tory rule! The School Board elections, I am of opinion, afford no test of the fitness of women to govern, for they have merely represented a conflict of religious sects, and there are probably as many women voters in one sect as in another, and it is quite possible that the invariable defeat of Secularist candidates, who have had no priests to back them, has been partly due to the opposition of women.

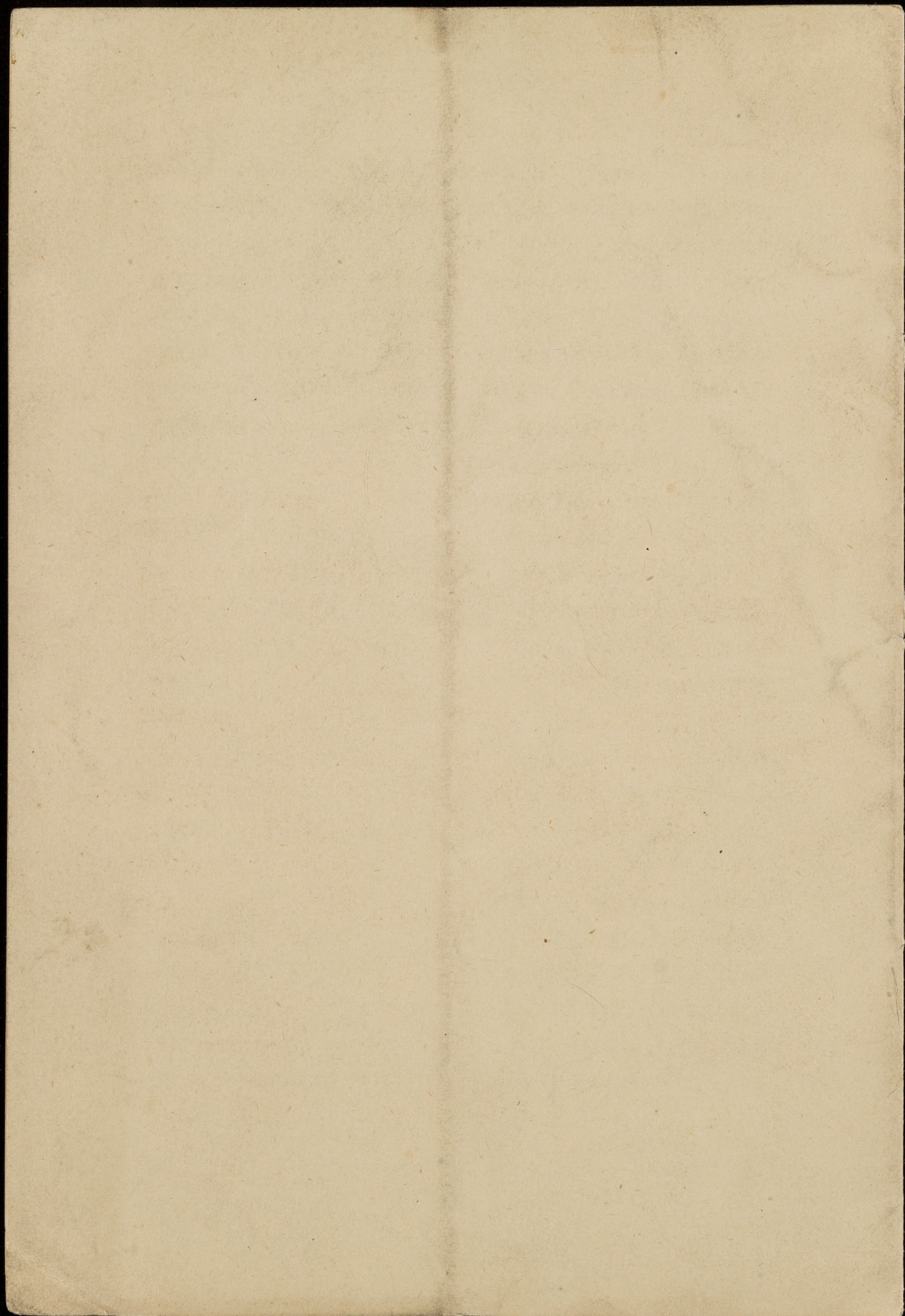
But whatever views we may hold about Woman Suffrage, the proposal before us deserves rejection upon different grounds. It is a proposal not so much in favour of Woman Suffrage as it is in favour of the extension of property representation. The effect of embodying it in legislation will be that propertied widows and spinsters will possess the franchise not on account of their sex, but on account of their property, while marriage will stand out as a political disqualification. The ladies say that they take the franchise as they find it ; but they are bound to recognize that the present electoral law was constructed solely with a view to male suffrage, and that it cannot be made, without

some special wife qualification which they do not propose, to include woman suffrage. It will on the contrary preclude the possibility of a genuine woman suffrage being obtained, for when the constitutional argument based upon property qualification has been satisfied, it is probable that all agitation will cease, and if the lady leaders imagine that those they enfranchise will follow them further, I venture to think that they will find themselves singularly mistaken. A curious illustration of their indisposition to acknowledge their lead occurred not long since at Southampton. If there is one subject upon which the woman franchise leaders are agreed more than another, it is, I imagine, that the Contagious Diseases Act should be repealed. Well, a municipal contest was fought out at Southampton upon this very question, and a large majority of women burgesses supported the councillor against whom opposition had been started, on the ground that he was a supporter of the obnoxious Act.

But the most objectionable feature of this proposal is that—under a delusive plea, it represents a class measure, for the propertied single women exists mostly in the upper and middle classes: it will therefore operate unfairly towards the working class and afford additional means of class oppression. It is not surprising that the Conservatives have taken charge of

the measure proposed: they are always anxious to increase property representation and would enfranchise boys if boys held title deeds. But we consider that property is already over represented. Upon these grounds I oppose the amendment and earnestly entreat working class politicians, in the interest of the working class especially, to offer it their uncompromising opposition.





PROFESSOR NEWMAN ON WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

(From the *Western Morning News* of January 31st.)

A large audience assembled in the Guildhall, Bath, on Friday evening, to hear Professor F. W. Newman give an address upon the Parliamentary suffrage for women. The MAYOR was in the chair, and several influential ladies and gentlemen of the city were upon the platform.

Professor Newman observed that the claim for political enfranchisement for women was a new one, and the English nation was always slow to accept new ideas. But this was not a suggestion of something expedient, but a claim for something just, and although politicians were too apt to shut their ears to the voice of abstract justice, it was not the case with the people at large, more especially when the claims were those of half the nation—the weaker half. Since Mr. Mill first introduced the subject into the House of Commons, it had grown rapidly in public interest. Mr. Disraeli had supported it warmly; Mr. Gladstone had assented to it in more cautious words. The question, in fact, had nothing to do with party politics, but was connected with the moral welfare of society at large. They were claiming for women no privilege, but simply that the constitutional maxim, that representation and taxation ought to be coequal, should be extended to women, and that a woman who had the property which gave a vote to a man should not be deprived of that vote simply because she was a woman. It was no argument to say that many women would not value the franchise, for the same thing might be said of men, yet the law did not deprive of their votes the electors who did not use them, still less did it disfranchise all men because a few did not value their votes. The most intellectual part of the community were just those who were most anxious for the political claims of women to be allowed. The fellows of the Trinity College, Cambridge, were enthusiastically in favour of the enfranchisement of women. It was a monstrosity that a worthless and vicious man should be allowed that share in the government of his country which was denied to an intelligent and virtuous woman. But collectively women may claim to be compared with men. Women do not injure the State by wasteful vices—by gambling, betting, and drinking—in the way that men do. As a rule they are a far more prudent, thrifty, self-sacrificing class. Crime, too, is far rarer amongst them; and yet a revising barrister declared that women have no more right to be upon the Parliamentary register than dogs or horses, and a judge laid down the law that the word “man” included women where taxation was meant, but that it did not include them where representation was meant. What would be said if a woman judge thus expounded the law as applied to men? Mr. Jacob Bright and Sir C. W. Dilke are about to bring in a bill to amend this anomaly in the law. At the last municipal elections a large number of

woman householders throughout the country recorded their votes. What harm resulted? Did the women riot or make the men more riotous? On the contrary, he believed they had had a salutary orderly influence over the elections. The men who argued against admitting women to the Parliamentary franchise, never opposed the question on political or constitutional grounds, but they said sometimes that women were too pure to deal with politics, sometimes that they were too silly. But he believed that the moral influence of women in political questions would be an inestimable gain to the country. We should have far less of workhouse horrors, drunkenness, cruelty to animals, and the social evil, if women had their fair share in the making and administering of the laws. Men living under a despotism, who are denied any part in the government of their country, invariably become frivolous and vicious, so when women are shut out from any healthy interest in public questions, and are brought up to view marriage as their sole end in life, the natural result is the “girl of the period.” The two great reasons why women should have votes are—the better protection of their sex, and for the general softening and elevation of public morals. It is the natural tendency of privileged classes to tyrannise, and men, who alone make the laws, have made them unjust to women. He pointed out especially the want of protection to the property of married women as against their husband's. By the common law a woman forfeits everything by the act of marriage. He quoted an actual case where a man bequeathed all his wife's earnings to his mistress, and the will held good in law. Such injustice would not be tolerated if women had political power. Men are apt to say that women have no grievances, but in many ways the professor pointed out the injustice of old and recent laws which affect them. In particular he mentioned the Contagious Diseases Act, which had just been stealthily passed through Parliament, and which in the districts in which it is in force absolutely deprives every woman of the most sacred rights of English men—trial by jury and Habeas Corpus—and shews a contempt for the rights of women heretofore unprecedented. What would be said if women thus legislated for men? We are accustomed to moralize upon the fall of States by luxury, but it is in reality impurity fostered by luxury. We are threatened by a State patronage of vice. England will soon enter upon a downward course of sensuality if the influence of women does not save the State. The professor concluded by an eloquent appeal to those women who are wealthy, happy, and comfortable to remember those of their sisters who are starving, enslaved, outcast, and to urge them to receive protection, and justice from the Legislature.—A vote of thanks was warmly applauded.

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WHY ARE WOMEN DISFRANCHISED? ✓

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From the "Fifeshire Advertiser."

“ONE of the strangest anomalies of political life within the last few years has been the timid and hesitating manner in which many Liberals have approached the question of Female Suffrage. They seem to be afraid of the question, and are inclined to avoid it, or, if possible, shelve it. Why should this be so? The fear is expressed that the votes of women would go to Tory candidates. Though that is away from the point, as justice should be done whatever its results, we would ask the question, Why should they? If the Liberal party thwart and oppose the Women's Suffrage party, if they decline to guide and encourage those women who desire to take an intelligent interest in the nation's affairs, then, assuredly, they will only meet with their deserts if the women turn round upon them and support the Tories.

It seems to us that the Liberal party do not sufficiently realise the vast importance of this question. By every creed of Liberalism they are bound in common fairness to support this franchise. "Taxation and representation go together," they cry, "one man one vote." How then, in the name of common justice or common sense, can a man, who believes in such phrases, refuse a woman who pays taxes the right to a voice in the regulation of these taxes, and if every man should have a vote, why not every woman? Take a case of which there are hundreds in the country. A lady keeps up a large establishment. She has footmen, grooms, and gardeners innumerable, every one of whom has a vote, and yet she, who keeps them, whose money goes to pay their taxes, is disenfranchised on account of her sex! She is able to manage her large establishment, but is held to be unfitted—less fitted than her servants—to have any say in the management of the country. The thing seems preposterous—ridiculous, and yet it is the law of the land. Take another case of a poor woman who is left with a large family to bring up. She struggles hard, and in addition to maintaining that family, makes sufficient to pay her taxes. Though she has brains enough to be the bread earner and head of a family at the same time, the law says that because she is a woman she is unfitted to have any say as to the Acts which will govern her and her children. These are no fancy cases, but can be met with every day.

Let us take the great old-fashioned, ever-young watchword of the Liberal party, "Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform." Is there

a man alive who does not believe that had the women the power they would use it in favour of peace, against extravagance, and in support of reform? One of the greatest leaders of the Liberal party—Richard Cobden—uttered the prophetic words that the Temperance Question lay at the root of *all* reform. Can any one even imagine such a thing as the women of our country voting in support of the drink traffic, and opposing this great fundamental reform. Comparatively little advance has been made in this direction since Cobden's time, but we are satisfied that if the women had the vote a solution would very quickly be found, and the way cleared for other reforms. We are firmly convinced that woman has been endowed with a finer instinct and more subtle discrimination than man in judging between right and wrong, and in every great social reform of the day woman has as great, if not even a greater, personal interest than man can have. The probability is that woman will judge political problems on the same lines, and with the same keen instinct, which she now applies to domestic problems. Possibly she may, from a sentimental point of view, strongly support the monarchy and similar institutions; but, on the other hand, the same sentimentalism will compel her to be a power on the side of humanity, and to stretch out a helping hand to all the downtrodden and distressed. And after all it is domestic legislation we stand most in need of—legislation which will raise the fallen, strengthen the weak, and alleviate the sufferings of the poorer classes of the community.

What then is the duty of the Liberal Party as a whole, and every member of it as a unit? Not to be led away by side issues, but to face the question boldly and honestly—to educate the women on political problems—give them chapter and verse—show them the wrongs and tell them how we propose to set them right. When this has been accomplished, we make bold to prophesy that the great mass of the women of our country will be prepared to rally round the party which is ready to do justice to all, and improve and elevate the social condition of the people.

A woman sits on the throne of the foremost race and greatest empire of the world, and yet the electors of that empire hesitate to grant to her sister women the simple rights of citizenship.

This state of matters cannot last. Female suffrage will be—*must* be—and it is for the Liberal party to carve its own destiny—to do justice and earn its reward, or to oppose justice and suffer the shame and humiliation of being defeated, fighting in a bad cause.”

PAMPHLET

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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

BY

ARTHUR ARNOLD.

*(A Paper read at a Meeting of the Social Science Association, on Monday,
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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

I AM inclined to envy the insensibility of those who can stand up before educated and accomplished women—their acknowledged superiors in mental attainments, in moral worth and judgment—and refuse the claim even of such to political enfranchisement. For my own part, I find an apology rising to my lips together with the advocacy of women's suffrage. It seemed abasement enough when working men, the humblest, but the most numerous class of householders, most of them orderly, law-abiding citizens, had to sue the same tribunal to which our plea is addressed, with prayers for the initial right of citizenship. But it is surely shameful that in a country which, for longer than the average period of one generation, has been ruled by a woman—in a country in which, against every obstacle, women have won such high place in every path to which their endeavours could be directed—where they are the responsible owners of vast wealth, and where of course they are exposed to all the rigours of the law—where, though under serious disabilities in regard to earning money, they are yet liable equally with men to the demands of the imperial and local tax-gatherer—it is surely, I say, not without some sense of shame, that a man, who is not the mere slave of precedent, can find himself engaged in advocating the political enfranchisement of women.

Yet I am not disposed to think harshly of men who oppose their impotent resistance to this demand, because I doubt their consciousness of wrong-doing. Half the errors of the world would be cured in an instant if we could inoculate mankind with the idea of progress. The friends of progress must not deceive themselves. There is actually in the mind of a large section of mankind a notion that humanity has from the beginning always wandered far and farther from perfection, though how they reconcile this inverted belief with any trust in the providence of God I never could make out. But if the review of progress affords no indictment of the honesty of apathetic objectors to this demand, they can hardly escape the reproach of stupidity if they do not now observe how rotten has become the anchorage of their objections. If any

one were to say of the ablest of the many distinguished ladies whom I have the honour of addressing to-night, "Madam, you and your sex are born in acknowledged inferiority to men; you are only fit to be classed with reference to political enfranchisement among lunatics, criminals, idiots, and minors"—if he escaped the conviction of more than brutal rudeness it could only be upon the ground of his folly. In those good old times, long even before the Queen of Sheba, when there was no law but that of the strongest, a man who feared no Jael in his tent could not illogically make use of such arguments. But how much more ridiculous than insulting would such an argument be in our day, when women exercise every suffrage but that of Parliament, and when a woman sits by right of a larger number of votes than ever were given for a man in the chief educational council of the kingdom. It is late, far too late, to bring forward the old rib theory; and though I will not believe that men who oppose the claims of women are directly animated by selfish and unworthy motives, yet sure I am that if they will fairly consider the matter, they will see nothing but the old and dying law of mere might is the foundation of their resistance. Feebly and unworthily as I shall handle a few of the arguments on the side of concession, I have yet so much confidence in the clearness and cogency of these arguments as to leave no doubt of the result upon the mind of one who is open to conviction.

Roughly speaking, we may divide those who withstand the claim of women's suffrage into four classes—those who say that women are unfit for the suffrage; those who contend that the suffrage is unfit for women; those who maintain that women do not want the suffrage; and lastly, those who assert that women have nothing to gain, no wrongs to redress, by means of the suffrage.

I shall not insult your ears by dealing at great length with the objection that women are unfit to be intrusted with the suffrage. Of course, no man in his senses would deny the eligibility of some women. Among the members of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, is a lady who is nothing less than the most distinguished astronomical mathematician; there are two others whose acts of philanthropy in Europe, Asia, and America, have made household words of their honoured names; there are few living writers who do not acknowledge inferiority in her own department of literature to George Eliot; I know of no man whose services are valued at so high a rate in hard money as those of Adelina Patti. Few would have liked to deny the claim of Miss Burdett

Coutts to the franchise. But do not these blind individuals who are about to fall into the ditch of defeat, do they not see that in admitting the claim of Mary Somerville they concede the whole matter? It is not to be expected that when by the operation of the law by the strongest, women have through all time been excluded from so many opportunities for intellectual improvement, that they should *all* thus shine before men; but if, owing to this rude law, which it is the mission of civilization to banish, they have been deprived, unjustly deprived, of many advantages which, rightly used, tend to make life higher and nobler, they have not had to contend to so great an extent with the vices which, together with learning and power, men have done their best to monopolize. Rather than assert that all men were fit for the franchise, I would contend that all women are as fit as all men for the privilege.

But that is not necessary. Here the right of voting is a question of property; and there are very few men who will venture to argue that if a woman is fit to be intrusted with the rights and duties of property, she is unfit to vote in respect of her possessions. If I buy a freehold for 100*l.*, it yields me a vote *plus* the enjoyment of the property, and any man should be ashamed to confess that such a possession of the suffrage is not a valuable consideration. Why then should the woman have less than I for her money? Is not this injustice? If not, I know not what is just? Is it because she is unfit to exercise a right which the most drunken and ignorant and sordid clown may hold as the appanage of his purchase? This objection that women are unfit for the franchise, I think, has fallen rotten to the ground.

Let us give our attention now, for a moment, to those gentler hinderances, who regard the suffrage as unfit for women. I must confess to you that from my earliest youth I have always suspected an argument of this sort. When I have heard people say: "This is unfit for children," I have often found they had no good reason why the limitation should be so restricted. The suffrage is not given to minors, because minors universally cannot hold property—cannot perform the duties of citizenship, and are not amenable to the full burdens of that condition. And only in the paternal theory of government have we a right to say of any privilege: "This is unfit for them; let us keep it all to ourselves." Such, indeed, is the standpoint of these objectors. They, in fact, assume a paternal authority over all women. But I never heard that this could be pleaded to bar the operation of a distress warrant issued against the furniture of a woman-householder; I never

heard that it would excuse her from the payment of her rates and taxes. Surely if the suffrage is unfit for women, they ought never to be troubled with the cost of sewers, the wages of policemen, the maintenance of lunatics, the provision for paving. "Ah! but that is not what I mean," protests the self-constituted protector of women. "I mean that women are unfit for scenes in which men are brought together in hot excitement." Well, I must say, that I think it is just then that their influence will be most beneficial. Whether it be so or not does not of course affect in the slightest degree the question of their right. They have in respect of their property a right to the suffrage, and a further right to consider for themselves, whether the circumstances under which they were called upon to exercise it are such as invite them to record their vote, or to repel them from the exercise of the suffrage. But I do maintain that the scandals of the polling booth will be ended most quickly by the adoption of women suffrage. I find no evidence of this stronger than in the very instances which the holders of the argument that the suffrage is unfit for women bring forward to refute my claim. They point to the presence of a few disorderly women at the poll in Manchester and at Preston. Yet the misconduct of these women has produced more solemn and abiding resolution for reform, than the far grosser misconduct of men for past ages. What a pity, I say, that we had not years and years ago these few ill-behaved women at the poll, that men, shocked at vice, to which their eyes were closed in their own case, should so resolve to make the conduct of elections orderly and reverent, as the most solemn act of worldly duty! Who indeed can fail to see that just in proportion as we have fewer places of which it can be said that they are unfit for women, so men become more self-respecting, more refined, more virtuous, in short, more fit for the performance of their own share of the duties of life. When I hear it said that something is unfit for women, experience has led me to associate more or less of drunkenness with the forbidden thing. There is riot and revelry, rude licence and improper conduct in the things from which fathers, and husbands, and brothers, desire to keep women. But do they lose sight of the fact that the admission of women to those functions, the performance of which is stained with such conduct, is the surest antidote, the most certain way of removing the gross accompaniments of these public assemblies? Why should they doubt this? Let them look to their own dinner-tables, and then ransack their memories for the records of the three-bottle men of their grandsires' day. If men

have gained this advance by "joining the ladies," with more sense left in their brains than their grandfathers thought necessary for the drawing-room, why should it be questioned that the same result would be produced at the poll? For my own part, I think a further improvement at dinner-tables would be the abolition of the separate system; the gain would be on the side of temperance and of *esprit*; for dreary as English dinners not unfrequently are, I confess I always look forward with positive dread to that most dreary period of the evening, when, in obedience to the nod of the presiding Juno, "one shall be taken and the other left." I think the argument that the possession of the suffrage would *unsex* women, is more profane and impious, even than it is silly and inconsequent. Men say that the possession of the franchise would be contrary to a woman's natural position. Am I to suppose, this indicates a belief that the Creator specially formed women with reference to their perpetual exclusion from voting—not at contested elections to boards of guardians, local boards, town councils, and school boards, but at parliamentary elections? Does the proposer of this objection presume to suppose that he or I can *unsex* women—that we can undo the work of creation? I do not think it necessary to continue the argument upon this part of the subject.

I am now prepared to meet the third class of objectors, those who assert that women do not want the franchise. I admit that all women do not demand the franchise; if they did, there would be little need of such poor efforts as I can make for their enfranchisement. But sure I am that every day and every hour an increasing number of women will join in this demand. Is it a new thing that the suffrage should not be demanded *en masse*? After all, the work of pulling down the park railings, and drawing a tear from the eyes of good Mr. Walpole, were not the achievements of a population. There is far more of real effort represented in the petitions from women which have again and again loaded the tables of the House of Commons. Now, the advocacy of the Women's Disabilities Bill is becoming quite fashionable, but it has been a different matter in years that are but lately passed, and even now for earnest, sincere women, who feel the injustice of their disabilities deeply in their hearts, it is often a far harder matter to brave the silly prejudices of tyrant custom in the mere signing of a petition than to bear a hand in the removal of any length of Hyde Park railings. When I hear it said that the majority of women do not demand the political suffrage, I am not surprised. Of any unenfranchised class the majority had always been found

apathetic. And think what special reason women have for apathy, or seeming apathy? Nine-tenths of them, and probably I might say more, are directly dependent upon men for the means of existence. They are more obedient to custom, more fearful of combatting the opinion of the world; they are much ruled by fashion, and the leaders of fashion—I mean the leaders of fashion in dress and apparel of all sorts—will be slow in demanding for women a life of greater dignity and more equal partnership. But I say this: that whether the woman with whom he talks be frivolous or ignorant, the gay butterfly who regards mere household work as a chrysalis state, or the poor drudge whose life is almost breathless in the performance of the vulgar duties of the most sordid home—no man, be he the bitterest opponent of this movement to be found within the walls of Parliament, can fail to arouse in her mind an active demand for justice, if he will honestly and truthfully set before his comprehension even those few of the disgraceful anomalies of our law with which I shall conclude my remarks. For now, lastly, I am going to do battle with those who assert that women have nothing to gain, no wrongs to redress, by the possession of the suffrage, which I take to imply a more active interest on the part of the sex in political affairs. I ought indeed to have put the question of women's wrongs before that of their rights. It may perhaps be alleged against me with some truth that, as a man, I naturally shrunk from exposing to the shame of my sex laws so hideous in their injustice, so monstrous in their cruelty, so unparalleled throughout the whole world for their rank injustice. Let us look at the life of a woman from her cradle as affected by these laws. We may say of this country that "all men and women are born free and equal;" but directly the educational process begins, then the injustice commences. The boy finds ample endowments, many of them bequeathed for the education of poor children, open exclusively to those of his sex, while in nineteen homes out of twenty every effort is made for his advancement as something upon which the whole well-being of the family depends, while the sister is often left as it were to feed upon the scanty herbage which she may find growing by the wayside of the remote bye-paths of her life. He is encouraged to be "manly," which with many people means skilful at fisticuffs; and rudeness to those weaker than himself is not regarded as a high crime and misdemeanour. When the lad is looking through the pleasant paths of a university career into that vague world in which he shall some day be an actor, free to try his strength against the strongest, and to win the highest honours in the

State, there is settling down upon the mind of the girl a haze of uncertainty. Her common refuge is romance. She is bound by every tie of affection and of interest to be conventional, and to assure herself and her friends that she is very happy! But is she so? Is human nature so very different that inactive life can be as it were suspended without emotion? Do not believe this. Even "girls of the period" set their little wits a thinking occasionally. And what do they see? Nothing so ennobling as a certain career of active duty inviting every man in a hundred forms. An aimless, idle life, ending in marriage or inferior comfort to that enjoyed in the paternal home—perhaps penury. They find consolation and hope in romance and frivolity, and men find the consequence in the extravagance and want of sympathy of their wives. We have seen to some extent what is their position if they inherit property and live unmarried. A million of women in these islands cannot marry, but as for those who do, they must at the outset of married life accept the imputation from the law of idiocy, or a mild and as it were semi-lunatic form of felony. They will not be allowed to retain possession of their property. Either they must commit its custody—with the possibility of utter ruin—to persons called trustees, who oftentimes cannot be trusted, or the husband, who has just vowed to endow them with all his worldly goods, receives by the mere act of marriage a transfer of all their property.

"Ye who believe in affection that hopes and endures and is patient,
Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of woman's devotion,"

do not make the fatal error of supposing that this lovely fruit grows out of injustice and cruel wrong! As you value these sweetest rewards of life, these clasps, more dear, as an eloquent friend of mine has said, than those of Alma and of Inkermann, as you are zealous for the dignity of true love and for the fidelity of married life, set yourselves to right the wrongs of women! The time is long past when it was in the power of the strong to force the physically weak to live a life of ignorance and subjection. All knowledge is open before women; a really learned woman has long ceased to be a curiosity. You cannot look for the most conscientious regard for duty and truth and honour from women who live under the thralldom of cruelly unjust laws; and for yourselves you must make your choice, whether in this matter you will so act as to receive the respect, the aversion, or the contempt of intelligent women. If you think I speak too strongly, bear me

company a few minutes while I pass but very superficially over some of the iniquities of the laws of this country as they affect women. Let us take the laws at their best. Two friends of mine were lately married; both the man and the woman were possessed of property, which each had managed most admirably and with great success. The man retains full command over his fortune, but the woman was obliged on entering the portal of marriage to pass her property either to her husband or to trustees: she chose the latter, and is now thwarted and harassed in regard to every disposition of her fortune. So much for the good husband. Now let us look at another everyday picture. May I repeat the published facts of the case of a woman who is now reduced to selling oranges in the streets of Liverpool? Her first husband died, leaving her a licensed house and 1000*l.* She married again. In the early days of their married life her second husband drew out the 1000*l.* from the bank, and took ship with his legalized plunder for Australia. Robbed with the approval of the laws of her country, she made no revolt, but laboured and succeeded in maintaining in comfort and respectability herself and the daughter she had borne to her first husband. In a few years the unpunishable rogue returned, miserable, ragged, and destitute. She fed, and fondled, and forgave him. Happy in relieving his distress and in ministering to his comfort, she felt a new pleasure in life. One day he proposed a drive in the country for the hard-working wife and daughter, and they took the unaccustomed luxury of a carriage. On returning they found a stranger in full possession of the bar and the business of the inn. He produced a bill of sale from the husband, of the house with its contents and goodwill. Imagine the feelings with which this woman found herself and her daughter homeless and penniless, turned out to live a pauper or to die a beggar in the streets of Liverpool! Ladies and gentlemen, I am overwhelmed with shame as I confess that such—in spite of that legislative abortion, the Married Women's Property Act—such is to-day possible under the laws of my country. Mark, too, while on the subject of property, that the law gives a woman no claim whatever to any definite portion of her husband's wealth. He finds her a girl, earning good wages in service, or salary in a shop, or the inmate of a happy home, and makes proposal to her for a life partnership. She accepts. Her part of the work is to economize his time for money-making employment, to be careful of the house, to nurse and educate the infant children, to sustain and improve his status in society by making their home

respectable and respected. But the wholesome doctrine that the labourer is worthy of his hire does not apply to her. The law, which is so much a respecter of persons, with regard to the man's right to possess himself of his wife's property, that it permits her to receive for her own no sum exceeding 200*l.* coming to her by bequest after marriage, is purely indifferent with regard to the maintenance of women. If a lady of the most delicate health and refined breeding—one whose very existence demanded that which would seem luxurious to women of rustic mould—if such a one were the victim of a secret marriage, of the validity of which she was assured but could not prove, thirtypence a week is all she could obtain for the maintenance of his child from the richest man in the State, and for herself she could not directly obtain even a share of such biscuit as he gave his sporting dogs. She, his wife, the deluded unhappy wretch who accepted his vows to love, honour, and cherish her, who was mocked with the endowment at the altar of all his worldly goods—she is the one human being who has no rights against him. But surely justice—? No! Though he may be spending her fortune with harlots, English justice will not listen to her prayer for a mandate compelling the husband to give her food. Somebody must feed her, if they please—for even her claims as a pauper are merely those of starving humanity, not of such rights as belong to the drunken prostitute—and then they may recover the cost of their bounty from the husband, whom, though she hunger into slow consumption, the law will hardly brand as a criminal, only regarding him as a trivial debtor. But in this condition there is one joy; the famished child she hugs to her poor breast is her own, because its possession is shameful; it is thought to be illegitimate. She may have heard the recent wrongs of Lady Helena Newenham, and while she loathes the coarse food the Poor Law gives her, she may bless the injustice which bastardizes her child. This daughter of the present Lord Mountcashell had two little girls. Separated from her husband—their father, the Rev. Henry Newenham, made application to the Court of Queen's Bench in Ireland, for their delivery to him. The younger was aged seven, the elder sixteen; the latter an age at which the law regards the wish of a girl. Both were earnest in their desire to remain with Lady Helena. The Court respected the wish of the elder girl, but decreed that the younger must be delivered to the father. Let me quote a bit from what the reporter called the "scene in court." "An officer came in, bearing a pretty little pet with long fair hair, and intelligent beyond her years."

Can we not fancy a St. Augustine looking on her, and saying of the sisters:—

“Non Angli, sed Angli—”

“If free!” But they were not free. The worst horrors of the slave market were about to be enacted under the sanction of the Queen’s Bench! “She screamed and struggled violently, exclaiming repeatedly, ‘Oh! must I, must I? Oh, dear! I won’t go to my father! O please, do let me do as I like! Don’t send me away! Will mamma ever see me again? Grandpa! Grandpa! where are you?’” Then following the wail in childish treble, was heard the sonorous voice of the humane Judge, evidently struggling against deep shame and emotion. “I shall take care of that, my dear. Your mamma will see you as often as she likes.” A ray of hope overspread the child’s face. “Will it be every day? Tell me—will it be every day?” To which entreaty the Judge replied, “Oh, yes, every day.” Mr. Justice Fitzgerald must have known this was false; but I dare hope with Sterne concerning another piece of falsehood, that the tear of the recording angel blotted out the sin. Then the “grandpa” himself, a Peer of Parliament, a member of that House which mutilated Mr. Russell Gurney’s Bill, then Lord Mountcashell, who, the reporter says, “was much moved,” put in his word:—“Knowing what I know,” he said of the Judge’s promise, “that is impossible; he (the father) is a ——.” Finally, the Judge expressed the “sorrow” with which he administered the law; the sobbing child, sent from mother and sister, was handed to the father, who carried her out. I have not time now to speak of the condition of wives and mothers in that high life which over all this kingdom apes royalty in regard to the custom of primogeniture, with this ungenerous exception, that our aristocracy, and even our squirearchy, ordain a strict Salic law. In England a Queen may reign; and it is noteworthy that the reigns of women have been the grandest periods of English history. For all time men will refer with pride to the Elizabethan and Victorian ages of our history. But an English countess reigns by right of her husband; life for her, and in his sense of the word, has only half the chance of ordinary mortals; for when he dies she will surely lose house and home, and the very jewels she has loved to wear are taken from her hand.

You who oppose this claim for the political enfranchisement of women; you who are touched to the heart—for are you not gentlemen and men of honour?—even by my halting and

imperfect recital of these wrongs—you ask me, what would I have? I tell you I would have laws not of the strongest, but of right. I would have no disabilities. If men are liable to be compelled to serve in defence of their country, women should be held liable also to work in their own way, after the example of Florence Nightingale and many others, in the same service. For every employment open to competitive examination women should be permitted to submit their claims. I think men are much better fitted for “up-country” service in India; while on the other hand the clerical work of many of the public offices, both at home and abroad, might be performed with far greater advantage to the State by the admission of women. As to property, the law I hold should give facilities for settlements, while it should also allow the retention by a married woman of her property just as though she were a *feme sole*. She might reasonably be entitled to a moderate share of her husband’s earnings while fulfilling to the best of her ability the duties of a wife; and as for the children in legal infancy—at the death of the father the mother should be their guardian of right; in the case of divorce I think they should pass from the care of the sinful parent, who, however, should be compelled to make due contribution for their education and maintenance; when there was a separation, the children of one sex should go to one parent, and those of the opposite sex to the other. Such and other needful reforms in the law relating to women we should strongly claim. We cannot trust to lawyers for justice. I mourn not more at the rudeness than at the ignorance of men like Mr. Justice Byles, who, scouting the claim of 1600 women ratepayers to the political franchise, exclaimed, indignantly, “I will not allow that woman can be man, except in a zoological treatise, or until she is reduced to the condition of fossil remains;” and proceeded from the seat of justice to liken the position of women to that of the brutes, who, by the way, are never “brutal.” Yet he was sitting on what may tomorrow be the King’s Bench; he had been a queen’s counsel, when the accident of a minute might have made him a king’s counsel; he spoke every day of mankind inclusive of the entire race, of the Church inclusive of all worshippers, and of a kingdom which he dares not say should not be ruled by a queen. We may hope, however, that when the English law is less slavish, its professors will share the elevation. And this we hope is based on no uncertain foundation. For he who runs may read the lessons of the ages. The Divine decree, stamped upon the face of every people, ordains

the progress of each generation to a fuller exercise of individual faculties for the greater happiness and responsibility of the individual, and the more complete advantage of all. And with this it is given to men and women, the children of all time, to regard with lasting honour, as highest and nearest to the Divine nature, those who labour most successfully to bring human law into harmony with justice, not those who make themselves the law and dispense justice to the weak as to the strong, but the truer servants of right, who in their law-making follow that Divine refusal to recognise disability of sex which is the foundation alike of the Decalogue and of Christianity—who in all their law-making have but one rule of duty, to deal with others as they themselves hope to be dealt with. I humbly advocate these reforms in the English law, not more for the interest of women, than with true and dutiful regard for those of my own sex—for to me nothing is more clear than that the perpetuation of injustice implies the degradation of mankind.

At the conclusion of the discussion on the Paper, the Chairman, E. B. EASTWICK, Esq., C.B., M.P., made the following observations—

The CHAIRMAN said that he had not an easy task to sum up the discussion, for it had been nearly all one-sided. There was only one opponent to the measure advocated, and he (the Chairman) thought that he was not a real adversary. It was Mr. Jencken's duty to defend the laws, and he had done so. If, as he (Mr. Jencken) said, a wife could go out and buy a number of pounds of cheese, for no other purpose than to spite her husband, he thought there was a sad want of morality and common-sense in the law, and it gave him no better opinion of its regard for the interests of woman. In the numberless systems of law existing in Germany, there was not one in which, upon marriage, a woman was denuded of all her property. The legal view of the question had had much notice; he thought it better to take a wider range. He would have been glad to have had a little more opposition in the discussion—to have heard the best arguments which could be brought against the proposed measure. He believed that what women did would be done in an admirable manner. The interests of females were not inferior to those of males, but they had no direct participation in their consideration. Some women who had attended to statesmanship had become most accomplished and intelligent politicians, as, for instance, Queen Elizabeth. This would prove that there was no lack of capacity in women, when the opportunity was present. He attached no importance to Mr. Jencken's assertion that women had no right to a

voice in the decision of whether there should be war or peace, since they could not fight. Rather, he would let their influence have weight on the question, for they would be always in favour of peace. Many women had already become eminent in spheres of labour formerly closed to them. He hoped that in this measure we should make a great stride in this Session of Parliament. It might be asked why, when on this particular question, America, to which country we generally looked for examples of progress, was quiescent, we should take the initiative in pressing for female suffrage? Without attempting to answer this question, having just returned from America, he might say that the social status of women there was higher than it was here. In the department of the Treasury at Washington there are seven hundred women employed, and they are in every way as efficient as men. The knowledge of their duties as citizens, which the possession of the franchise would confer on women, would, he thought, be a great benefit to men, who in the earlier stages of life received so much instruction from them. But after all, the greatest argument to his mind in favour of the measure was that no reasonable argument could be or had been brought against it. A great statesman, whose name he would not mention, had answered a question he (the Chairman) had put to him, as to what reasons could be urged against the proposal, by saying that there was really no argument against it. He was sorry that some of those who habitually spoke against the measure, and some of those ladies who languidly opposed it, had not been heard on that occasion. In conclusion, he would express his thanks, and he was sure he might say that of the meeting, for the valuable paper of Mr. Arnold, and he hoped that their presence there might contribute in some measure to the success of the object aimed at.

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WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION UNION.

TWO-SEXED VOTING.

“It was said that women generally did not want votes ; but the electoral statistics of the colony completely confuted that theory. The number of male voters at the last general election was 193,000. In the six weeks between the reform and that election 109,461 women placed their names on the electoral roll. Of the men 129,000 voted : of the women 90,000, so that the proportion of the latter was greater than that of the former. It had been proved, too, that there was not a particle of foundation for the allegation that women at elections would be subjected to annoyance. The New Zealand election to which he referred had been carried on in the most orderly manner possible, and nothing could surpass the cool, calm, and intelligent manner in which the women voted. Now nobody in New Zealand had a word to say against women's enfranchisement. Nobody dreamed of going back, and many wondered why the change was not made before.”

Sir John Hall, (ex-Premier of New Zealand),
at Queen's Hall, London, June 9th, 1894.

In Britain, on the contrary, may we not truly say, in face of the recent “ Cambridge Corporation Bill,”—

“ . . . meaner man incessant stands at gaze
To filch afresh the fruits we once have won. . . .
For no firm lasting tenure we achieve,
Failing our share assured of legal power ;
What just man yields us, false may take away ;
And this will be, till we, alike with man
In legislative function and decree,
Give to ourselves our gifts, as one with him ;
The which not single sex may commutate,
But only the perpended vote of all.
So blend we all our energy and thought
(E'en to the brief eclipse of other aims)
To win this crucial outpost of the field ;
For, lacking citizenship, all our words
And plaints to man meet with indifferent ear,
And all our efforts gain no deep effect ;
But when—girt with the sword of civic right
As fellow comrades in the social strife—
We can compel respect and claim our due,
The woman's work may be begun indeed.”

From “WOMAN THE MESSIAH” (“A Matron in Philosophy”),
by Ellis Ethelmer, in *The Modern Review*.

5 Copies of this leaflet (50 for 1/- *post free*.) may be had from Mrs. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY, Buxton House, CONGLETON.

[SEE OVER.]

WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION UNION.

ONE-SEXED SCHOOLING.

“I was a boy at Eton myself . . . I look, too, with fond interest to the collection of old Eton lists . . . I look sometimes for those who were not the geniuses, and it was with a sense of real zest the other day that I looked for him who was undeniably the greatest scapegrace of my generation—one who was always in scrapes, and who was always being interviewed by the Head Master—(Laughter),—and who never concluded this particular festival in a state resembling sobriety.’—(Laughter).” [!!!]

LORD ROSEBERY, at Eton, 4th of June, 1894 (as reported in the *Manchester Guardian*, of the following day).

It seems incredible, yet it is painfully true, that the House of Commons has recently passed through its several stages a measure, empowering the Cambridge police to seize and imprison any woman whom they may *suspect* of being an immoral person, *even though she be walking quietly in the streets, and molesting no one.* The “Cambridge Corporation Bill,” clause 6 of which inflicts this infamous injustice upon women, was read a third time on May 10th, 1894.

“Scarce past the needs of infancy our sons
Are ravished from us, trained and drilled apart
In place and thought, in maledom cold and sere ;
In atmosphere unsunned by mother’s love,
Uncheered by sound or sight of sister fair
To aid with deft copartnership of grace ;
Full soon his mind fouls with scholastic dross,
For books in class and fellows of his sport
An unconcealed disdain for woman teach ;
The effort of his learning or his play
Is but to make him ‘man’-ly, not humane ;
And thus their Etons, Harrows, Rugbys, all
Breed caste of sex, a priggish bigotry ;
There grow the budding tyrants in the blade,
The earing of the crop with college comes,
And the full harvest is the load of wrong—
Injustice, infamy—of woman’s fate,
Through all this weary land.”

From “WOMAN THE MESSIAH” (“*A Wife in Christendom*”),
by Ellis Ethelmer, in *The Modern Review*.

[SEE OVER.]

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SIXTEEN REASONS FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

1. Because it is a doctrine of the British Constitution that Taxation and Representation go together.

2. Because about one-sixth of those who hold the qualification to vote are women.

3. Because a widow or spinster who is a householder seldom has male relatives to press her political desires upon members of Parliament.

4. Because the grievances of women (which are very numerous) not being laid before Parliament through a constitutional representative, remain little known and unredressed.

5. Because, while the law gives to men, bad or good, wise or foolish, youthful or aged, the vote for Parliament, if only they have a property qualification, and refuses the same vote to every woman, even of matured age, virtuous, educated, and wealthy ; it teaches the whole nation to underrate the female sex.

6. Because also the law which thus depreciates her, has hindered advancing civilisation from giving to woman her rightful equality in pecuniary matters ; has depressed her in the family and in the bequests of kinsfolk ; has drawn after it a comparative neglect of her education both by parents and by the state ; and has stereotyped a public sentiment, which debars her from lucrative occupations suited to her ability.

7. Because this injustice of the law is the more distressing now that two and a half millions of women have to feed themselves without male assistance.

8. Because their exclusion from the suffrage leads to their exclusion from posts of administration admirably adapted to their talents, and thus damages the public service ; while it also destroys their greatest motive for solid cultivation, and tends to make them frivolous.

9. Because the admission of women into greater political influence would tend to soften our ferocities and purify our whole state. Female influence, if allowed due scope, would especially repress our two worst curses—drunkenness and prostitution.

10. Because it becomes plain that the denial of the parliamentary vote to women is an arbitrary and high-handed exercise of power, as soon as it is understood that her exercise of municipal suffrage,—with her liability to certain local duties,—has been handed down from distant times.

11. Because under our hereditary and unbroken tradition, whether Saxon, Anglo-Norman, or English, Queens have been accepted, not as an innovation, or as an anomaly needing special procedures of state, but as in constitutional routine; a fact which is in itself a memento and protest against the political depression of women.

12. Because a large number of our countrywomen, including many of those most prominent in intellect or beneficence, have petitioned Parliament for the franchise, and are expending labour and money to obtain it.

13. Because each new extension of the franchise to a class of men often ignorant as well as poor, makes the denial of it more galling to educated and taxpaying women.

14. Because in the State, as in the household, the co-operation of women with men is often of cardinal importance.

15. Because the exercise of the franchise tends to promote patriotism in mothers, and thereby in the whole rising generation.

16. Because, although in the long run (that is to say, in the course of ages,) all classes of a nation have but one interest, yet in the course of every lifetime men and women have interests diverse, or even contrary, just as agriculturists and manufacturers, or farmers and landlords; so that women cannot be fitly represented by legislators who are elected by men only.

For further information apply to MARIA COLBY,
11, Leigh Road, South, Clifton, Bristol.

HARRIS & OATEN, Printers, 34, Broad Street, Bristol.

Anon

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Leaflet 1.]

PAMPHLET

OPINIONS OF WOMEN ON
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

MISS FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

You ask me to give my reasons for wishing for the suffrage for women householders and women ratepayers. I have no reasons.

The Indian ryot should be represented so that the people may virtually rate themselves according to the surveys of what is wanted and spend the money locally under certain orders of an elected board.

If this is the case: That we wish to give to the Indian native, peasant and Zemindar alike, such local representation *as we can* in spending the taxes he pays,—is the educated English taxpayer, of *whichever* sex, to be excluded from a share in electing the Imperial representatives?

It seems a first principle, an axiom: that *every* householder or taxpayer should have a voice in electing those who spend the money we pay, including, as this does, interests the most vital to a human being—for instance, education. At the same time, I do not expect much from it, for I do not see that, for instance, in America, where suffrage is, I suppose, the most extended, there is more, but rather less, of what may truly be called freedom or progress than anywhere else.

But there can be no freedom or progress without representation. And we must give women the true education to deserve being represented. *Men* as well as women are not so well endowed with that preparation at present. And if the persons represented are not worth much, of course the representatives will not be worth much.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.—July, 1878.

MRS. GROTE.

By the Reform Act you have invested with a large measure of representative power the classes who do not represent property, or at least in very small proportions, but who live by their labour; that is to say, you have augmented the weight of the representation of numbers; then, is it not fair that at least the property side should be in possession of all its legitimate power? Why, when you have augmented one side of the representation, are you not to give the full measure of its power to the other? I think that is an additional reason for giving the franchise to women, that is to women who occupy the position of citizens, bearing the burdens to which their position is subject, contributing to the support of the State, and having the liabilities which attach to property.

HARRIET GROTE. (*Reprinted by permission.*)

MRS. WILLIAM GREY.

I give my entire and earnest support to the Bill to enable Women Ratepayers and Householders to vote for Members of Parliament, for two reasons: First, because I believe that artificial disabilities imposed on any section of society, which no energy or merit can overcome, and which partake, therefore, of the nature of caste, have a demoralising effect equally upon those who impose and those who are subject to them and, consequently, on society at large. Secondly, because having come originally to the consideration of the subject with the prejudice against it which belonged to my generation, I have become more and more convinced, the more I looked into it, that the fears of social disaster, of revolution in the relations of the sexes, of danger to home and family, always put forward by its opponents, are wholly groundless, and that we may rely in peace upon the action of natural laws, unaided by artificial regulations, to maintain the natural and healthy relations between men and women on which society rests.

MARIA G. GREY.—Sept., 1878.

MISS ORME.

I regard Mr. Courtney's proposed extension of the Parliamentary suffrage as a necessary reform in our representative system, and I look forward to its success as the safest, the most effectual, and, on the whole, the most direct means of obtaining for women those educational advantages and remunerative employments still withheld from them.

ELIZA ORME.—July, 1878.

MISS MERINGTON

(*Member of the Kensington Board of Poor Law Guardians.*)

I consider it would be most desirable that women having the same qualifications as men, and holding equal responsibilities in other respects, should have power to exercise this privilege and duty in like manner as men. Those who have hitherto exercised the right of voting at municipal elections are capable probably of voting with judgment and fairness at any other election. I think the time has come when the electoral vote should be extended to them; and that in thus raising the social status of women, Parliament would do an act of justice, and would make a great social reform.

MARTHA CRAWFORD MERINGTON.—Sept., 1878.

MISS IRBY.

In reply to your inquiry, I say that I am in favour of the admission of women to a share in the representation. Justice is ever the best policy. We have nothing to fear from freedom. With regard to the application of those principles to the particular question before us, I believe that the extension of the franchise to women is calculated to enable men and women alike to grow more worthy of its possession, and better able to fulfil their joint duties of citizenship.

A. PAULINA IRBY.—Sept. 4th, 1878.

MISS DAVENPORT HILL

(Author of "What we Saw in Australia," &c.).

One objection often raised against the demand by women for the suffrage is that they can at present exercise quite as much political power as is good for them. This may be quite true, but at the same time it must not be forgotten that the power they now exercise is unaccompanied by responsibility; and power without responsibility is a dangerous possession.

ROSAMOND DAVENPORT HILL.—Aug., 1878.

MISS FLORENCE DAVENPORT HILL

(Author of "Children of the State," &c.).

It is as reasonable to suppose that a family is as wisely governed and adequately cared for which has only a master and no mistress, as to believe that the country has all its wants understood and provided for in the absence of the feminine element from its legislation. The fact that women are different from men affords the strongest argument in favour of their joint exercise of the franchise. Were they identical, either sex could adequately represent the other; but being complementary, each is needed, whether in the management of the family or the nation.

FLORENCE DAVENPORT HILL.

MRS. E. M. WARD.

You are already aware of my strong opinion on the subject of women's suffrage, and I am quite sure to artists it would be of the greatest use. There are several reasons, which I withhold from want of space, which would make it *most desirable* for women in my own profession.

HENRIETTA WARD.—Oct., 1878.

MRS. ALLINGHAM.

It certainly seems to me that women paying taxes ought to be able to vote as men do.

HELEN ALLINGHAM.—July, 1878.

OPINIONS OF WOMEN ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

MISS ANNA SWANWICK

(Translator of Æschylus).

Recognising the vast importance of legislation, as an agency either for good or for evil, women desire, with such influence as they can wield, to aid in bringing our human laws into harmony with the everlasting law of God. They recognise that the eternal law of righteousness vindicates itself not only through the acts of individuals, but also through the acts of the Legislature, and that failure, involving wide-spread misery, waits upon every measure not in harmony with the requirements of that higher law. In the light of this solemn truth law making becomes a very serious matter, and women are naturally desirous to have a voice in selecting the men to whom this sacred duty is entrusted.

ANNA SWANWICK.—July, 1878.

MRS. WEBSTER

(Author of "Portraits," "Dramatic Studies," &c.).

Women will have ceased to be an unrepresented class when some women have a vote. And for so great a good to us all I would gladly be at some sacrifice individually, if, which I do not believe, it can be a sacrifice to a married woman that unmarried and widowed women should be allowed to exercise a right from which her position precludes her.

AUGUSTA WEBSTER.—July, 1878.

MRS. PFEIFFER

(Author of "Glán Alarch," "Gerard's Monument," &c.).

Although not a worker in the cause of women's suffrage, the efforts of those engaged in it have my deepest sympathy, convinced as I am that its success would let in a stream of now ineffective light upon questions of highest importance to the race. Thought is liable to become unsound when divorced from action, and the orderly evolution of the mental power of women,—now first emerging from the trammels of custom,—requires the wider field which they claim, not for themselves alone, but in the interests of human society.

Further, the open recognition of gifts on the part of women, which whether equal or not to those of men, are needed to the fuller efficiency of the complicated social machine, would, in increasing responsibility and womanly self-respect, give a new impulse to moral and intellectual culture, and form a needed counterpoise to the lamentable tendencies of the social (more truly anti-social) ambitions, in which the energies of the more stirring of the sex have been wasted.

EMILY PFEIFFER.—July, 1878.

MRS. ANDERSON, M.D.

It is because it seems to me that giving women the franchise would be a very great step towards the uplifting of the whole sex, that I take special interest in it.

ELIZABETH GARRETT-ANDERSON.

(Reprinted by permission.)

MISS SHIRREFF.

My interest in the movement for giving the suffrage to women householders is founded, *first*, on a keen sense of the injustice of excluding one class of ratepayers from the privilege granted to others, merely because they are women; while their duties and liabilities remain the same. *Secondly*, on the fact that the history of this country shows us, that only as certain

sections of the community obtained the suffrage, were their special wrongs redressed; and that it is evident, how much the mere agitation of this question has done, to bring about reforms which would probably have been neglected for generations to come, as through generations past, had not the unwelcome prospect of a wider door to be opened for influence hitherto little felt, made it desirable to cut away some of the grounds of complaint. *Lastly*, my conviction of the cogency of the arguments urged by the friends of the movement is strengthened by the circumstance, that its adversaries are driven year after year to depend on the same contradiction of known facts, on the same flying from argument to prophecy, on the same appeals to custom, to associations, and predilections, to the same pathetic iteration of the "*sentiment* of our forefathers;" whereas had they been able to find one simple intelligible reason to serve their purpose, we must, in fairness to them, suppose that they would in the course of debate, here and there at least, have brought it forward.

EMILY A. E. SHIRREFF.—August, 1878.

MISS BUSS

(Principal of the North London Collegiate School for Girls).

I think that women should possess the franchise, as the best existing means for their protection and the representation of their interests. The interests of all classes of men are represented *directly*, those of women only *indirectly*.

FRANCES M. BUSS.—July, 1878.

MRS. BYERS

(Principal of the Ladies' Collegiate School, Belfast).

It is perfectly obvious that from sheer necessity many women are obliged unaided and alone, to make a struggle for existence not only for themselves but for helpless relatives. In this struggle women have many *natural* hindrances of which men similarly placed practically know nothing. I often wonder why

good men do not unitedly step forward and free women householders from any legal or artificial disabilities that they can remove, and thus take away any reason for their agitating about a question of personal rights, a thing that must always be disagreeable to women of good taste and refinement.

MARGARET BYERS.—Sept., 1878.

MRS. HOGGAN, M.D., L.K.Q.C.P.I.

It is difficult to over estimate the importance of women's suffrage from an educational point of view. The possession of political rights and the responsibility of political duties will fortify in women the virtues of citizenship, the lack of which has become a reproach to them, and will tend to form that habit of mind, so conducive to the general well-being, which enables its possessor to look at everything from the two-fold standpoint of private and of public interest. The suffrage will also prove a precious safeguard in women's hands of the natural right of children, during the period of their minority, to the enjoyment of maternal care, as well as of those personal rights of their own which have been heretofore ignored by our legislators, owing to their inability to discover and recognise them.

FRANCES ELIZABETH HOGGAN.—August, 1878.

MRS. CRAWSHAY.

The degradation of women will never cease, until means of earning an honest livelihood are afforded to that large majority which cannot achieve marriage; to this end women must have a voice in modifying laws which impede their doing a fair day's work, for a fair day's wage; and this will never be until the franchise is granted to women on the same conditions as those on which it is granted to men.

ROSE MARY CRAWSHAY.—Oct., 1878.

OPINIONS OF WOMEN ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

MISS COBBE

(Author of "*Broken Lights*," "*Re-echoes*," "*Hopes of the Human Race*," &c.).

So far from the truth is the reiterated statement of certain honourable M.P.s that "Women do not desire the franchise," that in my large experience I have scarcely ever known a woman possessed of ordinary common sense, and who had lived some years alone in the world, who did not earnestly wish for it. The women who gratify these gentlemen by smilingly deprecating any such responsibilities, are those who have dwelt since they were born in well-feathered nests, and have never needed to do anything but open their soft beaks for the choicest little grubs to be dropped into them. It is utterly absurd (and I am afraid the M.P.s in question are quite aware they are talking nonsense) to argue from the contented squawks of a brood of these callow creatures, that full-grown swallows and larks have no need of wings, and are always happiest when their pinions are broken.

FRANCES POWER COBBE.—July, 1878.

MRS. ALFRED W. HUNT

(Author of "*The Hazard of the Die*," &c.).

If women are too weak and too foolish to be trusted with votes, they ought in common fairness to be spared the burden of taxpaying. The latest arguments I have heard of (all the others having really been worn to death) against the manifest injustice of departing in the case of unmarried women from the constitutional maxim about Taxation and Representation being

joined together, is that which is based on the ground that all government rests ultimately on physical force, and therefore it would not be well for the State to have a large class of voters who could vote, but could not (or, it is to be hoped, would not) be able to take part in the rough work of politics. I thought it had been settled long ago that one of the chief advantages of civilised government was, that under its opinion and intellectual judgment as such had full and due means of expression afforded them. The opponents of the Women's (unmarried ratepayers) Suffrage Bill must fall back on the old simple argument of women's intellectual inferiority if they are to put forward any show of argument at all. MARGARET HUNT.—July, 1878.

MRS. MARK PATTISON.

I earnestly desire to see the franchise extended to women. I believe that its educational value would be great, and that by its possession women would be led to exercise judgment in forming their opinions upon questions which at present they regard with ignorant indifference, or with equally ignorant prejudice. I think also that it cannot be contested, that at the present day the right to vote is the one right, without which no other right is secure. E. F. S. PATTISON.—July, 1878.

MISS GROVE

(Lady Resident of Queen's College).

With regard to the extension of the franchise to women, I have the sure conviction that sooner or later it must be ours because it is so thoroughly just a demand on our side. In giving it to us, men only give, what in a free country every class has a right to expect: the power of getting its own case represented from its own point of view; and this is a power which any body of educated men, if it were persistently denied to them, would take to themselves at last by physical force.

ELEANOR GROVE.—July, 1878.

MISS CREAK

(Head Mistress of Brighton High School for Girls).

I am in favour of women's suffrage because it is a doctrine of the British Constitution that Taxation and Representation go together. EDITH CREAK.—Sept., 1878.

MRS. FAWCETT

(Author of "Political Economy for Beginners," &c.).

I am every year more convinced of the value that the granting of the Parliamentary suffrage would be both to men and women. Everything that is now being done to enlarge the sphere of women's lives needs the help that the possession of the suffrage by women would be. In itself, too, the removal of electoral disabilities would be a great good; it would foster public spirit and a sense of public duty in women: when women are shut out from all direct political influence they are apt to forget the claims of patriotism and to grudge all that they or their relatives have to give up for the public good. Anything which brings home to Englishwomen that they are "citizens of no mean city" will help to make our future as a nation worthy of our past. MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT.—July, 1878.

MISS WOODHOUSE

(Head Mistress of the Sheffield High School for Girls).

I hope for the extension of the franchise to qualified women, not only as an act of justice to one-half of the community now practically unrepresented, but mainly as a great motive power in increasing the moral elevation of women, by fostering the feeling of responsibility and strengthening the judgment by exercise on questions, which would then become matters of personal interest. By enfranchisement would be removed, I am convinced, one of the chief causes of that levity in the formation of opinions, and evident irresponsibility of character so common among women and so painful to the trained intellect whether of men or women.

The world, in its career of advancement and eager utilisation of all material forces, can ill afford to leave unrecognised and undirected those moral forces, less apparent, but more important to the well-being of the race of which the greatest is, perhaps, the moral influence for good or ill of women. And we may rest assured that in this case, as ever before, the raising of any class to a higher moral elevation will be a great and lasting gain to all, and cannot fail to subserve the highest interests of society at large.

ELIZA WOODHOUSE.—Oct., 1878.

MISS YOUNGMAN

(Head Mistress of Ipswich High School for Girls).

I have much pleasure in entering my protest against the injustice practised upon unmarried female ratepayers in the withholding of the suffrage from them. Until the taxes are removed from a class popularly considered incapable of forming rational opinions, I hold it to be the duty of every member to exercise the sum of her feeble intellectual powers towards the overthrow of such systematic oppression.

SOPHIE YOUNGMAN.—Oct., 1878.

MRS. SURR

(Member of the London School Board).

So long as there is no slackening of strenuous effort among the noble and patient band who labour for the extension of the franchise to women—their ultimate success is certain.

Surely the hour is not far distant, when thoughtful and honourable men will blush that their sisters should have been debarred so long from exercising a right to which, as ratepayers, they have an equal claim with themselves.

ELIZ. SURR.—Oct., 1878.

OPINIONS OF WOMEN ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

MRS. DAWSON BURNS.

It has been argued that had women the power of voting they would in some instances show how unsuitably that power would be used, or even utterly abused. Even were it so, let it be remembered that non-suitability, or the abuse of the privilege, does not disfranchise a man. Here are two glaring anomalies: A man may drink as much as he pleases, far beyond the bounds of moderation and respectability; may be as ignorant and brutal as he pleases; may be quietly breaking every law that should honestly bind him to his home, his wife, and his children; may be utterly incompetent to estimate either the character or intelligence of the man for whom he is asked to vote; yet, let him only live in a borough as householder or lodger, paying a yearly rental, and he possesses the right of voting at Parliamentary elections.

Contrast this case with that of a woman who has all her life maintained an honourable position; guided her house with consummate judgment; has been first and foremost in various benevolences and schemes for her country's purity and elevation; can always give an excellent reason for the judicious opinion she has formed; yet, whether widow or spinster, as a householder paying taxes, or a lodger renting apartments of the required value, is denied the opportunity of exercising that tact, that judgment, that influence in the election of candidates whom she deems best qualified to legislate for the urgent wants and necessities of the times.

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MISS JEX-BLAKE, M.D., L.K.Q.C.P.I.

If I correctly understand the British Constitution one of its fundamental principles is that Taxation and Representation should go together, and that every person taxed should have a voice in the election of those by whom taxes are imposed. If this is a wrong principle it should be exchanged as soon as possible for some other, so that we may know what is the real basis of representation in this country; if it is a right principle it must admit of general application, and I am unable to see that the sex of the taxpaying householder should enter into the question at all.

The argument respecting the "virtual representation" of women under the present system seems to me especially worthless, as it can be answered alternatively, thus;—If women as a sex have exactly the same interests as men, their votes can do no harm, and indeed will not affect the ultimate result; if they have interests more or less divergent from those of men, it is obviously essential that such interests should be directly represented in the councils of the nation. My own belief is that in the highest sense the interests of the two sexes are identical, and that the noblest and most enlightened men and women will always feel them to be so; and, in that case, a country must surely be most politically healthy where all phases of thought and experience find legitimate expression in the selection of its Parliamentary representatives.

SOPHIA JEX-BLAKE.—Sept., 1878.

MISS PECHEY, M.D. (Berne), L.K.Q.C.P.I.

I maintain that the present subjection of women to a position of political inferiority to men is calculated seriously to retard the advancement of the nation, both intellectually and morally. Only by giving full scope for individual development can a state become truly great; and the full extent of individual development can alone be secured by granting equality of rights to all alike without distinction of sex.

EDITH PECHEY.—July, 1878.

MRS. EILOART

(Author of "Some of our Girls," &c., &c.).

I do not believe that the wrongs the sufferings and the claims of women will ever meet with due consideration until they have that share in legislation which the franchise alone can give them.

ELIZABETH EILOART.—July, 1878.

MISS ANNIE KEARY

(Author of "Castle Daly," "A Doubting Heart," &c.).

MISS ELIZA KEARY

(Author of "Heroes of Asgard," "The Little Seal-skin," &c.).

It is because we think that not only women but the men themselves would be benefited by the association of the sexes in the acts of legislation that we wish to see the suffrage extended to women. Though it has been said that nothing is so like a man as a woman, it is not to be denied that the difference between them is a root difference and that neither is complete without the other—wherever they work together, they work better than apart. The household is ruled jointly by man and woman in practice if not in theory, and it seems to us that the very fact of their essential difference makes it, not desirable merely, but needful that the influence of both should be everywhere felt. Whom God hath joined together, let not conventionality and prejudice keep asunder.

ANNIE AND ELIZA KEARY.—Sept., 1878.

MISS SIMCOX

(Hon. Secretary of the Shirtmakers' Association).

I can only give the same reasons for desiring the political enfranchisement of women that I should give for desiring the political enfranchisement of anyone else; *e. g.*, of the agricultural labourers now, of the manufacturing towns before the first Reform Bill, and of male householders and lodgers before the last. The chief of these reasons is that I think every member of a society has duties towards that society and owes it a debt of service in return for the innumerable benefits of social and

civilised life. And this debt of gratitude and service cannot but be ignored or repudiated by any persons who find themselves permanently and deliberately excluded from civic fellowship. A disfranchised class is either politically ignorant and indifferent, or disaffected. Ignorance and indifference in reference to the welfare of the community, on the part of half its members, though these be only women, seems to me a graver social evil than even positive disaffection in a smaller class. Yet *this* is so serious a danger that hardly anyone now-a-days would deny that if a body of discontented men thought the franchise would content them, that safe and inexpensive remedy should be administered at once. *A fortiori*, then, should the remedy be tried in our case, since we are, to a woman, either unwholesomely discontented with our political status, or else unwholesomely indifferent to the highest interests, social and political, of the community which has a right to our loyalty.

EDITH SIMCOX.—Sept., 1878.

MRS. PATERSON

(*Hon. Secretary of Women's Protective and Provident League*).

For working women especially, I should hope for important advantages from the removal of the political disabilities of women, not so much on account of immediate and direct gains, as from the strengthening of the power of self help. Long tradition and habit have left them only the hope, often but a very faint one, that men know, and will do, all that is for their best interests; they cling to this hope in their industrial life, and allow their wages to be ground down, halfpenny by halfpenny, until at last they can think of nothing but how not to starve. Though only a small proportion of working women might have qualifications entitling them to the franchise, their present hopelessness and helplessness would be lightened by the removal of the injustice which places every one of their sisters, however intelligent, however good and useful a member of society, in the position, as some writer has said, of a "political outcast."

EMMA A. PATERSON.—Sept., 1878.

OPINIONS OF WOMEN ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

PRINCESS MELE BARESE

(née Lilian Mackworth Praed).

It is difficult to give any special reason for desiring the political enfranchisement of women, simply because there are so many reasons for desiring it. But the one which, perhaps, to my mind, has the greatest weight, is after all, not grounded on any wish to benefit women only, or even specially, but rather on the conviction that in raising *them* we should raise men also; that in the higher development of their capacities—such as I believe would undoubtedly result from their political enfranchisement—we should promote the higher development and culture of the whole nation.

E. L. M. MELE BARESE.—Sept., 1878.

MISS DUNBAR, M.D., L.K.Q.C.P.I.

As the social position of women in the civilized world is very different from what it was in primitive times, it is only reasonable to believe that what has altered and improved so much in the past, must be capable of alteration and improvement in the present and future. There are changes which the generations of to-day are witnessing in the education of women and their employment in professions and trades hitherto closed to them. It appears to me, that the extension of the franchise to women is only a natural concession to a just demand made in conformity to the advancement of civilization and the changes effected by the acquirement of new privileges and responsibilities.

ELIZA WALKER-DUNBAR.—July, 1878.

MRS. SOUTHEY

(Hon. Sec. of the Women's Peace and Arbitration Association).

I am in favour of women's suffrage because the basis is justice, and what is morally right must eventually prove to be politically right.

ELIZABETH MARY SOUTHEY.—Sept., 1878.

MRS. BODICHON.

The longer I live the more I see the necessity of women taking an intelligent part in all that concerns the welfare of their country, and I am sure that if they had the power of voting they would feel more decidedly than they do, that they are an important part of the Commonwealth.

BARBARA L. S. BODICHON.—Sept., 1878.

LADY ANNA GORE LANGTON.

To have a share, however small, in the government of his country is one of the noblest ambitions of man; it improves by elevating him; forces him to consider the welfare of others; enlarges his intellect; and if men find themselves benefited and improved by having the franchise, would not women find themselves equally benefited if they also had the power of voting?

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MISS HELEN TAYLOR

(Member of the London School Board).

Domestic life can never have all the elements of the happiness it is capable of giving, while women are careless of one large branch of men's interests in the world: and men's interests can never receive all the development of which they are susceptible, until women share with men in all the tasks of life.

HELEN TAYLOR.—Oct., 1878.

LADY BOWRING.

My opinion with respect to the extension of the franchise remains unchanged. I cannot but think that those women ratepayers who like myself take an interest in social questions, must, as I do, feel strongly the injustice that is done them in being called upon to share in the taxation, without participating in the advantages conferred by property on the other sex, of a voice in parliamentary representation.

DEBORAH BOWRING.—Oct., 1878.

MISS MARY GURNEY.

If women householders were not, as at present, excluded from the parliamentary franchise, their influence would be of much value in securing attention in the House of Commons to measures affecting the educational interests of girls.

MARY GURNEY.—Sept., 1878.

MISS D. NELIGAN

(Head Mistress of the Croydon High School for Girls).

For years I was an indifferent, if not antagonistic, spectator of the efforts made to procure the extension of the franchise to women. When I became a householder, I felt for the first time that the existing disqualification is an unjust one; and I now support the movement not merely from the desire to see justice done to a class, but in the firm belief that it will do much to raise the aims and widen the thoughts of women, a result which must benefit the whole human race.

D. NELIGAN.—Oct., 1878.

MISS ANNIE BARKER, M.D.

(Women's Hospital, Birmingham).

It gives me much pleasure to have the opportunity of expressing my opinion with regard to the movement in favour of women's suffrage. The reform it advocates, I believe, will have a tendency to raise the social position of women, and on many points of vital interest, prove a real gain to them and to the community at large.

ANNIE REAY BARKER.—2nd Oct., 1878.

MISS WOOD

(Head Mistress of the Bath High School for Girls).

It seems to me that a disinclination to allow to woman a possibility of individual life lies at the root of many social prejudices and mistakes. "He for God only, &c., &c." is the text of the speeches in Parliament and elsewhere against the proposed measure. But those who take up the profession of teaching, especially those who are at the head of large schools, are perhaps specially conscious of their individuality, and are constantly reminded that they are social units. Why, then, not political units also ?

S. WOOD.—Sept., 1878.

MISS EMILY DAVIES.

I have long wished to see the suffrage granted to women. Now that it has been so very widely extended, the possession of an individual vote may indeed appear to be of little value, and I should not myself expect any very marked immediate effect on legislation from the concession. But the moral effect would, I believe, be deep and far-reaching. As matters stand, the law asserts in a solemn and emphatic form that women are not called upon to take an active interest in affairs of State ; and it appears to make the assertion on the ground that they are by nature unfit for such action. This I hold to be a mischievous untruth, and believing, as I do, that political interests are among the noblest that can occupy our thoughts and energies, I should welcome the removal of a restriction which so strongly discourages women from taking their fair share in public affairs.

EMILY DAVIES.—Sept., 1878.

MISS MERRYWEATHER

(Lady Superintendent of the Nurses' Home, Broad Sanctuary, Westminster).

I feel that justice and morality can never rule the country where half the population, even when qualified otherwise, is, by the accident of sex, excluded from the representation.

MARY MERRYWEATHER.—Sept., 1878.

396.11 A

Mr. William Woodall, M.P.,

ON

Women's Suffrage.

I believe it has been established that of the landowners in England and Wales one-seventh are women, and these ladies have devolving upon them, as you know, the most important duties. Their opinion and choice is often decisive in the selection of Parliamentary candidates. Upon them devolves patronage and other important functions in regard to the Church, and their influence is often sought and commonly acknowledged in regard to public affairs, but when the day of polling comes these ladies have to stand on one side and see their own labourers who live in the boroughs—and shortly they will see the labourers who live in the agricultural districts—go up to record their votes; yes, stand on one side as if the matter was something quite beyond their own concern. Nor need I remind you of the many cases in which there devolves upon widows—in some cases inherited by daughters—the conduct of extremely important commercial undertakings. In their case, although they have to exercise large and important responsibilities in the course of their duty, the same anomaly presents itself; but while these may be few, we know that there are hundreds of thousands of women of the poorer classes who toil amid many hardships to fulfil their duties as householders, and who are accordingly interested—more interested perhaps than any other class of the community in wise laws and good government.—*Speech at St. James's Hall Meeting, July 5th, 1883.*

396-11A

What the Women Want.

"Whatever do the women want?" we hear the scornful cry.
To you, O "Christian Commonwealth!" we women make reply.
We want a "Christian Commonwealth," where just and equal laws
Shall make a needless mission ours, who plead the woman's cause.

It was a wholesome lesson we were taught as girls at school
That our vaunted Constitution has a fundamental rule,
That whosoever hath no voice in voting or debate
Is free from obligation to contribute to the State.

When we women claim the Franchise, men have one answering note
"By reason of your womanhood, we do refuse the vote."
But when the tax collector calls, 'tis not enough to say,
"By reason of our womanhood we do refuse to pay."

O wise and prudent Rulers! we are women it is true,
But we are fellow citizens and fellow subjects too,
We have hearts and brains and voices, have we no right to say,
By what laws we will be governed—whose the Sceptre we obey?

There are wrongs that must be righted—bitter woes that seek redress.
We can hear our sisters calling in their weakness and distress.
We need the power to lift them from their sad and evil plight.
'Tis for *this* we want the Franchise—and we claim it as our right.

F. E. S.

396 11 A

UNITED WOMEN'S LIBERAL ASSOCIATIONS

FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE FRANCHISE TO WOMEN.

Extract from the Speech of Miss LOUISA STEVENSON (Poor Law Guardian), in Edinburgh, March 9th, 1889.

Miss LOUISA STEVENSON said the resolution she had the honour to second asked the meeting to pledge itself to do all in its power to make the Association successful. First of all, they must be true to their name of a Liberal Association. (Applause.) That the Government should be representative was one of the first principles of true Liberalism, and no association which did not claim that right had any claim or title to be called Liberal. Sympathy with the wrongs of Ireland had had a wonderful effect in awakening the consciences of women of this country to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship. (Applause.)

Their presence there that night showed that they were all in earnest in their desire that such laws should be passed as would make Ireland loyal and peaceful and contented. (Applause.) It was an old and true saying, "If you want a thing done well, do it yourself." At present women had no share in the making of the laws which they were bound to obey. And yet every woman householder who paid the taxes of the realm had a right by virtue of that payment to say how her money should be spent, and having that right she was morally bound to claim it. They had no right whatever to be content to remain in the position of political paupers, receiving from their political guardians whatever dole they might think to be for their good. (Applause.) Right and duty could not be separated. She claimed her right in order that she might do her duty—(applause),—and unless they claimed their rights they could not do their duties. There were duties which could only be done in the exercise of rights. Mr. Gladstone himself had said—"Every section of the community knows something, and something material to the common weal, which the other sections do not know, and can thus make a contribution to the common stock, which without its intervention would be wanting."

Besides, a member of Parliament often felt bound to be a representative only, and found it difficult to get sufficient opportunity for being enough of that in the pressure and among the chances of Parliamentary life. There were women who said they did not want the suffrage. They had all they wanted. But the lot of her was not to be envied who could say, "I sit as a queen and know no sorrow," and who, shut up in the contemplation of herself, took no account of the experience of other people. (Applause.) Those who had all they wanted were the more bound to seek to obtain whatever power the suffrage had to bestow to help those who were less fortunate than themselves, whether their homes were in England, Scotland, or Ireland. (Applause.)

May be obtained at 9 DURDHAM PARK, BRISTOL.

396. II A (a)

~~See especially Page 12 - following page~~

THE
ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN
THE LAW OF THE LAND.

By SIDNEY SMITH.

PRICE THREEPENCE.

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1879.

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THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN THE LAW OF THE LAND.

There are in these British Islands at this present writing thirty-four millions of human beings. In the old-fashioned phraseology of statisticians, they used to be called millions of *souls*—a term to which it may be useful hereafter to advert. Of these, about sixteen and a half millions are males, and seventeen and a half millions women. Seafaring and adventurous islanders, our men push their way over the world, and settle in our colonies, leaving the balance of sex at home always against them. A large majority of our population, our fellow subjects, responsible to our laws, amenable to the behests of our Legislature, taxed for all the uses of the State, the town, and the parish, engaging in the toils of our industry, adjutants in the production of our material wealth, are yet denied the right of Parliamentary representation. Mothers, wives, sisters, daughters of us—

Where we have garnered up our souls,
Where either we must live or have no life—
The very fountain whence our current runs
Or else dries up—

we, fathers, husbands, brothers, turn our backs on the radical principle of our own constitution, for a pretext to leave them civilly defenceless. It is a maxim in virtue of which we have conceded the suffrage to the vagabond, the drunkard, and the thief, that they are entitled to have a voice in the laws they are to obey. Our rulers have been compelled, by the logic of the constitution, to open its doors to millions, in homage to the

doctrine that the State can only tax and govern us by consent of our representatives—to millions who can neither read nor write, of whom indeed we cannot so much as ask the question—to many who, like the men of Nineveh, know not their right hand from the left. Outlaws, convicted felons—even these may elect, nay, may be elected—but there is no room at the polling-booth or in “The House” for Mary Somerville, Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Browning, or Rosa Bonheur. We set their sex to reap our fields, to fill our factories; they are clerks in our Government offices, merchants, shopkeepers, manufacturers, tradeswomen, saleswomen, skilled mechanics, inn, lodging, stable keepers; they take degrees at our universities, and practise as physicians, but they have not, it seems, capacity to judge of the qualifications of a member of Parliament. It is quite a sufficing reason for giving Hodge a vote, that Tom, the cobbler over the way, has one; but there the logic of analogy halts. The successful farmer of five hundred acres, the dairywoman who keeps as many cows, and who, each by her skill, energy, and forethought, not only realises an ample income, but finds the money for the employment and maintenance of hundreds of families—these, it seems, have not the requisite ability to make a cross at a polling-booth, although the man who carries swill to their pigs, or delivers the milk on their milk-walk, is, we are assured, an independent and competent elector. If the latter are not very fit, “the schoolmaster is abroad;” give them the right now, and they may learn how to use it by and by. But no such experimental enfranchisement is conceded to their female employers.

We make women large landholders, ladies of manors, fundholders, householders, burgesses of our cities. Baroness Coutts is free of the city of London, and a member of a livery company—“anything but to the purpose.” They may keep the post and money-order office; by express law they may be, and have been, sextons to bury us, constables to protect us, overseers of the poor, high-chamberlain, high-constable, marshal; they may be, and have personally *served* the office of, high-sheriff; nay, they have repeatedly exercised the function of returning officer of members to serve in Parliament; but yet we are told that they are unfit to choose their own representatives. To cap the climax of this dialectic farce, our law and

constitution set a woman to rule over us—to negative by her single veto the unanimous voice of both Houses of Parliament—to declare war, make peace, or conclude treaties binding us all—while we pronounce her congenitally incapable, by reason of her sex, to appreciate the qualifications of a single commoner. Perhaps the most perfect *reductio ad absurdum* in this regard is, that the State itself, by express Act of Parliament, has created and subsidised the office of schoolmistress. She must pass a stringent preliminary examination of her capacity to teach all that schoolmasters impart to the male sex. Oh, yes; she can *instruct* electors, but she is without the capacity herself to elect. She may be a member, president of the school board, vote for common council or aldermen, be a councillor or alderman to administer the municipal affairs of a city of 500,000 inhabitants; but no, she cannot be an elector of Little Pedlington.

Sex—what is it but a zoologic expression, referring solely to animal functions? Distinctive among the brutes “without discourse of reason,” and ruled by blind instincts and prone appetites, is it to be applied to the immortal part of us? The human soul is of no sex. Can we tell the gender of the mind or intellect? Is not woman, as man, fashioned in the image of her maker? Is there one mental faculty which has been omitted in her cerebral economy? Even if it could be contended that some intellectual power has, by the habits of society or the circumstances of her position, been unequally or imperfectly developed, does not the same answer apply in her case as that which is given to the objection to the enfranchisement of male stupidity—the exercise of the function will educate for its due discharge? The Turks, more consistent than we, degrade their women to a *status* below their own, as we do; but, unlike us, they deny that they have souls.

The plain truth is, the objection to female enfranchisement is founded on utter ignorance of the natural history of the *genus homo*. There are countries in which the body-guard of the sovereign consists of his wives. The amazon is no myth, but a present reality. There are populous tribes in which the social position of the sexes is reversed, and the men, entirely subordinated to the women, fully recognise their own as a purely subservient status, deferring in everything to their

wives as the dominant power. Among savages in general, it is the women who really discharge every duty but that of fighting and hunting. Even among civilised nations, how many classes devolve, not only the industrial drudgery, but the business, of their calling, upon the women. The most contemptuous gibe the fisherwomen can fling at their neighbour is that "she cannot keep her husband." The great Napoleonic wars that drew the male population away to the army, made the women of France fill up the gap, by carrying on the work and managing the business of civil life; and to such purpose was it done, that to this day there is scarcely a department of trade or industry, hardly an office of trust or skill, in which they are not to be found creditably proficient. In our country, who is there who cannot tell off, in his own circle, or within his personal knowledge, cases of women who have, by their commanding intelligence, redeemed the fortunes of a futile husband, or, as widows, brought up and put out into life the family he failed to support? Of those who engage in business, how few become insolvent; how punctual are they, as a rule, in fulfilling trade engagements; how reliable in meeting liabilities; how rigid in the discharge of duties!

It is indeed strange that the English people should raise such distinctions as those on which this disqualification is founded. The law of inheritance excluding females which had been imported into the constitution of France, from the allodial tenure of the Salic settlers, never prevailed in Britain. This nation always recognised the right of succession in the female line. I well remember the plenipotentiary of an Indian prince declaring to me he had discovered the reason of the subjugation of the Hindoos to the Saxons. "In the zenana," said he, "we have secluded our women, and made them wholly unfit to make intelligent and capable men and women of our children." "Daughters," observes Professor Monier Williams, "are little regarded. When a boy was five years old he was betrothed. After the nuptial ceremony a boy returned without his bride to his father's house, but at the age of fifteen or sixteen he was allowed to live with his child wife. He (Professor Williams) had at Indian high schools and colleges often examined boys, half of whom were fathers. Early marriages were the curse of India. The condition of Hindoo girls was one of hopeless

ignorance; they were unable to read, they were never taught rules of health, or the most elementary truths of science. A feeling prevailed that a girl who had learned to read had committed a sin which would bring down a judgment on her or her husband. A young widow had practically no existence; an old widow was cared for by her children, but a young childless widow was regarded as worse than dead. She might not marry again (a man would marry again eleven or twelve days after the death of his wife); she was supposed to be in perpetual mourning for her dead husband, although she might never have seen him except at her child-wedding; and she was a household drudge." What has ruined Turkey and every eastern country, what ultimately sealed the doom of Athens, but leaving the culture of each rising generation of the governing classes to the sultanas and female slaves of the seraglio and the harem? The education of the citizen begins in the cradle. Habits of cleanliness, order, obedience, industry, and truth must commence in the nursery and the schoolroom. Eve was a helpmate, not a slave. The description Solomon gives of a virtuous woman is really of a wife who manages and gives law to the whole family. "Her husband is known in the gates; her children arise up, and call her blessed." "She considereth a field, and buyeth it; she perceiveth that her merchandise is good; and delivereth girdles to the merchant; she openeth her mouth with wisdom."

This is not a mere debating society question. It is something very much more significant than the exercitation of a speculative essay. The spirit which suggests women's disability for electoral functions, keeps them out of many callings whereby they might rise out of a deplorably dependent position, and earn a comfortable livelihood. The daughters of a professional man, who can save little of his income in the necessity of maintaining his position and keeping up appearances, are placed in a state of cruel suspense and dependence by the existing habits of society. In our old and highly civilised country, where the mechanism of life, artificial and precarious, rests on such hazardous contingencies, there are few new openings for those who have fallen by unmerited misfortune out of their natural circle. It was the tradition of the Bourbon kings that every prince and princess should be taught

a trade; and the wheel of fortune so turned, that the knowledge stood one of them in good stead in his extremity. Fathers scarcely do their duty to their children and to society who do not so change the habits of public opinion and the current of custom as to smooth the way for females to enter upon the pursuit of trades and professions, without suffering impediment from the prejudices of fixed but illfounded ideas of their proper sphere or mental capability. To this end no means could be more conducive than their introduction to and exercise of those political functions of citizenship which form the outward sign of civil competency, and impart a *status* that may help them in their conflict with our settled but too sophisticated habits. It is my abiding conviction, that by having "cabined, cribbed, confined" more than one-half of our subjects in the moral zenana, the conventional nunnery of our national prejudices, and cramping their minds, as the Chinese do their feet, so that intellectually we try to make them totter when nature bids them walk as freely as their gaolers, we are depriving the nation of a power, which, if wisely and trustingly developed, would add immeasurably to its inventive enterprise and progressive energy. I have already touched, in this connection, on the part nature and necessity assigned to women in the formation of the physical constitution, the personal habits, the moral and mental character of the rising generation. It is to the gifts and faculties of the mother that we trace the genius and proclivities of the child. Can we gather grapes from thorns? The education of the nursery does not mean merely pap and caudle, or the offices of the wet and dry nurse. In spite of all our prejudices we are compelled, by the very necessities of our domestic arrangements, to delegate the most important functions of the instructor—those which mould the wax of humanity while yet it is molten, and bend the twig while yet it is lithe—to the nurse and the wife, whom yet we fail to prepare by our social culture for their momentous task. They are to educate our children—but who educates the educators? "Women," observes Lord Kaimes, "destined by nature to take the lead in educating children, would no longer be the greatest obstruction to good education by their ignorance, frivolity, and disorderly manners. Even upon the breast infants are susceptible of impressions; and the mother hath opportu-

nities without end of instilling into them good principles before they are fit for a male tutor." In a dialogue (ascribed to Tacitus) describing the glories of Rome in the age of the Commonwealth, it is observed, "Children were suckled not in the hut of a mercenary nurse, but by the chaste mother who bore them. Their education during non-age was in her hands; and it was her chief care to instil into them every virtuous principle. In her presence a loose word or an improper action were strictly prohibited. She superintended not only their serious studies, but even their amusements, which were conducted with decency and moderation. In that manner the Gracchi, educated by Cornelia their mother, and Augustus by Atia his mother, appeared in public with untainted minds—fond of glory, and prepared to make a figure in the world." If we expect our women fitly to discharge their infinitely important office in the economy of education, we must emancipate them from the bondage of conventional subordination, and call them to the exercise of those political functions in which we now inhibit their participation. I say nothing farther here on the folly of denying to the sex the salutary influences of important duties, and the openings to an honourable ambition, which to active and energetic minds alone realise the higher objects of life. Society knows not what it loses when it confines the larger half of human kind in the enchanted castle of a theory which has no real foundation in the natural history of the race. There is no elementary difference in the inherent mental and moral qualities of the sexes. Their apparent idiosyncrasies are the creatures of hereditary transmission of acquired habits, and of the influences of the manners and customs by which they are surrounded and affected. There are man milliners as well as women soldiers. The interchangeability of the supposed spiritual characteristics of the sexes is one of the best settled facts in the history of the race.

Are then these claims to be put off with banter about strong-minded women by weak-minded men? Is the earnestness with which they are pursued by those who encounter ridicule, unmannerly rudeness, and abuse, in a cause which is really identified with the best interests of the community, to be rewarded only with contumely, and baffled by mere masterly inactivity?

Are women's rights *not* rights? Is it fair that the son should be armed with all the privileges and facilities of making his way in the world, and have the family estate handed over by the law entirely to himself, while his sister is at once to be left without the means of living, and disinherited by the very laws she is forced to obey, and by the State that taxes her without her consent, to uphold a system that robs her of her natural patrimony? How many a loving father has seen a noble estate, with its ancestral halls and monumental oaks, decreed by the law itself to pass away from his only child, the last of a long and noble line, merely because she was helpless and a woman, and some "accident of an accident," the "tenth transmitter of a foolish face," far remote of kin, and having too much already, was of the dominant, perhaps only the domineering, gender. This cause is not the crotchet of a mere social oddity. The earnestness it inspires is not the eccentricity of ill-directed enthusiasm, or the mere errand of the female Quixote. We all owe a heartfelt tribute of respect to those who for its sake have patiently borne the misconstruction to which it has subjected them—the quips, and sentences, and those "paper bullets of the brain," which, because they are so light, hit all the harder in the small talk of conventional frivolity.

Let them persevere, and take heart of grace. "In due season they will reap if they faint not." The law of England is with them, although the lawyers are not. It was the deliberate and calculated statement of the Prime Minister, in his place in Parliament, that the English of Acts of Parliament and their meaning were plain enough. The obscurity lay in the ingenuity of their interpreters. It is not St. Stephen's that has shut its doors against women, but Westminster Hall. They are electors by the law of the land, and disfranchised only by the casuistry of the courts. A single decision of the Court of Common Pleas, from which there is no appeal, even to itself, degrades seventeen and a half millions of British subjects from the most clearly established of public rights. The larger half of the rational creation summarily snuffed out of political existence, by Mr. Justice Bovill! *Nulla vestigia retrorsum* from his irreversible decree! "Think of that, Master Brook!" Is it permissible to presume so far as to whisper in the ear of Queen, Lords, and Commons, that the exercise of this power

of political excommunication by a judicial pope, constituted infallible by Act of Parliament, is wholly unconstitutional, and dangerously impolitic. The House of Commons, by long, uniform, immemorial tradition, is the sole legal judge of all particulars relative to its own constitution, and the qualifications of those who elect it. Coke declares, "Judges ought not to give any opinion of a matter of Parliament, because it is not to be decided by the common law, but *secundum legem et consuetudinem Parliamenti*" (4 Inst., p. 15). An "important power," observes Sir T. E. May ("Usage of Parliament," pp. 40, *et seq.*), "peculiar to the Commons is that of determining all matters touching the election of its own members, and *involving therein the rights of the electors.*" . . . A burgess of Aylesbury brought an action against the returning officer in the Queen's Bench for rejecting his vote; and on the Court deciding it had no jurisdiction, the House of Lords reversed the decision. But the Commons resolved (1704) "that they cannot judge of the right of election without determining the right of electors; and if electors were at liberty to prosecute suits touching the right of giving voices *in other courts*, there might be different voices in other courts, which would make confusion, and be dishonourable to the House of Commons; and that, therefore, such an action was a breach of privilege." Other actions having attempted to introduce the jurisdiction of the courts of law in this regard, the suitors and their agents were sent to Newgate, and, continues May, "the question has never arisen since. The Commons have continued to exercise the sole right of determining whether electors have had the right to vote. . . and its determination declared by statute final and conclusive in all subsequent elections, and to all intents and purposes whatsoever." The privileges, the jurisdiction of the House of Commons, which is strictly a judicial tribunal, a "High Court," in all that relates to its constitution and authority, is the property of the nation; and no session of Parliament, resolution of either House, or Act of Parliament, can have or give power to part with it. In giving to courts of law a directive administrative power to regulate the details of registration, it was not in the power or contemplation of the House of Commons to give to the Court of Common Pleas the sole authority, even excluding its own jurisdiction, to determine absolutely,

and *in gremio*, the very essence and substance of the whole suffrage rights of the British people. Yet it is clear, *meo iudicio*, that the Court of Common Pleas has been illegally clothed with an exclusive jurisdiction, which the House of Commons has just as unconstitutionally abdicated. The citizens of America have seen good reason to repent having set the Supreme (Law) Court of the United States paramount over the constitution.

I repeat my thesis. By the laws of England, women are entitled to be registered as parliamentary electors; and the decision—the single judgment of the Court of Common Pleas, which it has no opportunity to review, and from which no appeal is competent—is *bad law*. Is there any presumption in saying this of the judgments of a court which pronounces the same opinion of its own decisions, and which are just as commonly condemned by Courts of Appeal? After all, the fetish worship of horse-hair wigs by the exoteric public is not very accountable. You or I, are we not as able to understand and interpret our own mother-tongue as e'er a judge on the bench? *Ignorantia juris, neminem excusat*. The statutes of the realm are addressed to the subjects of the realm, and assume that they can read and understand them. Those especially which refer to the universal public rights of the poorest and most ignorant, as well as the highest and most cultured, ought to be so plain that "he who runs may read." There is no witchcraft in jurisprudence—even in that of England. No citizen need approach it as if it were a Delphic oracle to be interpreted only by its priests. The construction of English sentences uttered by one's own representatives—ought that to be "past all understanding?" It is the concrete will of the men who meet us at the polling booth, and ask us for "our most sweet voices." Why should it be "*caviare* to the million?" Do not believe it. Judge for yourselves. I shall endeavour to make the matter clear to the simple; and I shall ask my brother lawyers to allow me to take them along with us in the following examination of the point at issue.

The basis of the existing electoral system is the Reform Act of 1832. That is, so to speak, the wicket through which citizens must pass until they reach the parliamentary register. The franchises, which *for the first time* it creates, are dispensed

on the preliminary condition that they shall be restricted to "every male person of full age, and not subject to any legal incapacity." This condition precedent is repeated in reference to every qualification then *for the first time* known to the constitution. Never before, and never after, is such a term as "male person" employed in any statute of the realm. It is an entire novelty, and in reference to such an unspeakably important consideration as the right of the people to choose their representatives, I am entitled to say it is a flagrant innovation. Nay, I am warranted in going the farther length of maintaining that such was the conviction of the framers of the act themselves. While creating and dispensing new qualifications to "male persons," it reserves and perpetuates all franchises in operation at its own date, whether relating to counties or to boroughs; and in continuing to preserve alive and effectual all what are called ancient or reserved rights, which it does, not parenthetically, but by express and separate sections, it drops the word "male" every time it refers to these, and resumes it on every occasion on which it returns to enact a new qualification. What candid mind, interpreting the will of Parliament by its expressed acts, would do other than concede that if it had repeated the word "male" in the continuation of these traditional franchises, it would be restricting what the law and the constitution had left open? The distinction it preserves is too marked, too systematic, and too often repeated to have been adopted *per incuriam*. There is a settled design apparent throughout; and that is manifestly not to trench on any right of suffrage which had been handed down to us from our ancestors. I refer jurisconsults to sections 24, 25, 31, 32, and 33 of 2nd William IV., cap. 45. "The Reform Act of 1832," observes Sir J. D. Coleridge (*Chorlton v. Lings*), "in the clauses which create new franchises . . . speaks of 'male person,' but section 18, limiting the old, has simply 'person;' so sects. 22, 23, 24, et cet."

As far as concerns these ancient rights, we are therefore referred back to the common, customary, and statute law, as it prevailed before the year 1832. The judgment of the Court of Common Pleas rejecting the claim of women to the franchise assumes that at no period of our history had the sex any right of representation—and this is the dictum which I challenge

as wholly without warrant, and opposed to patent facts.

Here let me premise that our earlier statutes and Magna Charta were embodied in Latin. I need hardly add that the word *vir* indicates sex, but that *homo* is employed to signify the human species in contradistinction to the brutes. The *genus homo* applies to either and to both sexes. When Terence says *Homo sum humani nihil, &c.*, it is not in the sense of being a male, but of being human. *Hominum Salvator—pater hominum deorumque* are titles which extend to the whole race, and are not restricted to either gender. In so far as English law is involved, Lord Coke (2 Inst., f. 45) expressly rules that the term *homo* employed throughout Magna Charta has been always held to "extend to both sexes." When the sign of manhood is to be indicated, it is called *toga virilis*, not *toga humana*. From this premiss let the examination of the law start. The first glimpse presented to us in this connection is 20th Henry III., cap. 10, wherein *liberi homines* and *liberi tenentes*, the owners of freeholds, were the suitors at the county courts. On the occasion of the election of knights of the shire all suitors were summoned to the county court, and the majority "on the view" returned the member. It is not denied that women were freeholders, and as such suitors, or that the suitors were the electors. The 53rd Henry III., c. 10, in prescribing who are to attend the sheriff at his courts, exempts only "*religious men and women,*" and then only when they are *not required for some other cause*. Prynne, in his "*Parliamenta Rediviva,*" refers to "The attornies of the Archbishop of York and of sundry earles, lords, nobles, and *some ladies, who were annual suitors to the county court* of Yorkshire, being the sole electors of the knights, and sealing their indentures, witness the first indenture for this county." Among these suitors is named Lucy Countess of Kent. In the Parliament of 2nd Henry V. Margaret Vavasour (not, observe, a *feme sole*) is a party to a similar indenture, and Mrs. Copley in the reign of Edward VI. attests a third. From this premiss, that the suitors or freeholders—*liberi tenentes*—in the county courts, were the electors of the knights of the shire, legislation proceeds from the reign of Henry III., to the 7th Henry IV., c. 15, which provides that "all they that be there present, as well suitors duly summoned for the same cause, as other . . . shall

proceed to the election." Women were "suitors as well as other." The 8th Henry VI., c. 7, declares the knights "shall be chosen in every county by people (therein), whereof every one of them shall have free land or tenement to the value of 40/." Women were "people, and had free land." The 10th of Henry VI., c. 2, uses the term "chooser" for elector. The 7th and 8th William III., c. 25, describes the electors as "the freeholders," directs that "the name of each freeholder shall be set down;" that "no person" shall vote as trustee unless in possession; nor "any person" under age. The 18th G. II., c. 18, continues the term "person" for elector. The 19th G. II., c. 28, referring more particularly to borough elections, still confines the description of voters to the same indefinite and purely generic title. The 3rd G. III., c. 15, prohibits "any person" from voting unless he has taken up his freedom for twelve months. The 11th G. III., c. 55; 22nd G. III., c. 31; 44th G. III., c. 60; and the 11th G. IV., and 1st Will. IV., c. 74, relating to New Shoreham, Cricklade, Aylesbury, and East Retford, confer the suffrage on "every freeholder being above the age of twenty-one years." Women are persons, people, and certainly are comprehended in the category of "every freeholder." Need I add, what is familiar to every lawyer, that the masculine pronoun "him," "his," "he," used in our statutes, extends indifferently to the other sex.

I have carefully passed before the review of the reader every statute that deals with the question at issue, and it is perfectly obvious that there is not one word in any of our Acts of Parliament that even remotely hints at the creation of any distinction or privilege of sex, as attaching to the exercise of the elective franchise. I do not believe it will be denied by any lawyer, that if any of the statutes I have enumerated had been the first to confer the right to vote, it would have been as competent to any woman who was a freeholder, a suitor, a "resiant," a burgage tenant, an "inhabitant," a "substantial householder," to poll in the year ensuing its enactment, as for any male person whatever. I do not understand, indeed, that this is seriously disputed. Certainly there is no attempt in the *rationes decidendi* of the Court of Common Pleas to support the judgment by any appeal to the phraseology of any enfranchising statute. Let me here state categorically the points at issue.

1. The Act of 1832 reserved and continued, with modifications immaterial to the question, all the pre-existent electoral qualifications.

2. In no Act before or since, is there any mention of gender as a condition precedent to the franchise.

3. Freeholders, tenants in ancient demesne, residents, inhabitants, burgage tenants, potwallers, scot and lot occupiers, burgesses, and other holders "of ancient rights," were entitled to vote in the election of members to serve in Parliament for such counties, cities, and boroughs as retained the franchises peculiar to and the accustomed qualification of each respectively; and women were and are freeholders in counties, burgesses, inhabitants, owners and tenants, "substantial householders" in cities and towns, and are therefore embraced within the category of the enfranchised orders.

4. There is no judgment of the Common Law, nor provision in any statute of the realm, prior to that of 1832, and, as I will show, not even in that, declaring gender a legal incapacity. Common Law and statute are equally silent on the subject.

5. The only considerations the Court of Common Pleas and its followers can oppose to these unanswerable propositions are, that women have never been known in the course of our parliamentary history to exercise the suffrage, and that their votes have never been tendered, or at least received, by the returning officer.

But—

1. The proof of non-user must lie on those who urge the plea; and what judicial evidence is there to warrant the assertion? I have given chapter and verse for the right of females to vote. If it be admitted that they are freeholders, inhabitants, burgesses, and that the franchise is given to these orders, my evidence *prima facie* of their title is complete; and if it is to be cut down by the plea of non-user, the desuetude must be not merely conjectured, but judicially proved.

2. Is it capable of proof? What is it that has to be established? The application of the doctrine of prescription to such a subject is sheer nonsense. If the women of Aylesbury never voted, is that proof that those of Cricklade never can? How do you or I or anybody know that women never voted? What is to be the term of desuetude that is to shut the door upon the sex?

To poll is a public duty. The statutes make the Sovereign to call upon the lieges to return counsellors to advise with him in Parliament. The office is imprescriptible. Because women have not *chosen* to vote, is that any reason why they have no *right* to vote? It is *res mære facultatis*. Above all things the suffrage of the people is ever living. "*Omnis libertas regia est, et ad coronam pertinet.*" The House of Commons has repeatedly determined ("Granville," 57, 95, 114, 118) that the franchise is not lost by non-user or *laches*. The qualification in virtue of which the right is constituted is different in every borough, and not the same in city and county. Why is the want of public spirit which keeps one woman or many from the polling-booth, to forfeit the right for others who desire to exercise it? Why are the social habits of one age to fasten incapacity upon the citizens of its successor? How is the failure to poll in Yorkshire, to be counted against the suffrage in Birmingham? How far is it to go back? If it counts against sex, it ought to tell against individuals. Not above half the constituency vote at any election. There are many thousands of registered electors who have never recorded their votes for fifty, even sixty years. If there be anything in the argument of prescription, they ought to be precluded from its exercise. A retired man-of-war chaplain was sent for to read prayers to a man that had been gored by a bull; but he expressed his regret he could administer no spiritual consolation to him, because the Book of Common Prayer contained no service for a man who had been gored by a bull. That is the sort of logic presented by the Court of Common Pleas. Why does it stop at the franchise? Why does it not refuse to women a right of way, because it was not proved that any but men had ever used the road? Very likely a negro never voted. Why not stop the first black man? If we are to pick and choose fanciful exceptions at our pleasure, we may empty the polling-booth and the House. The chaplain might have been referred to the Visitation for the Sick, and informed that the gored man being sick, so came within the category. Mr. Justice Bovill might have been reminded that freeholders in counties and inhabitants in boroughs were electors, and that women were freeholders and inhabitants. It is not because they are women that they claim the vote, but because they are bur-

gesses, *liberi tenentes*, resiants. Is it because freeholders are *men* that they vote? No. It is because *men* are *freeholders*. There was probably a time when Irishmen and Scotchmen were unknown in English boroughs or counties as voters. Why were not the first to poll estopped?

3. Again I postulate, on what earthly ground is sex picked out as a disqualification of adults possessing in other respects all the legal elements of franchisement? The suffrage is a public right, the highest known to the law. The people acquire their privileges for each individual, and for all. Women are the major part of the community. If the general public, by usage, acquire a right, can nobody enjoy it who does not first of all prove that he has been in the use personally to claim its exercise? The title of custom, achieved by the habitude of some who have enjoyed it, accrues to those who have never asserted the privilege. Because *some* men have polled, many men alike qualified who have never polled are entitled to vote, even although they have never been known to do so. Women are human. They belong to our common nature—sprung *ex humo*—like men. Rights acquired by the one sex enure to the other; they are both equally citizens and subjects, amenable to the same laws, liable to the same burdens, which are the correlatives of representative rights. That men have voted, so far from being a reason for confining public rights to the sex, is actually the foundation for the plea that by their assertion of them individually they have imparted and extended them to those who have not—a part of the public have acquired them for the whole.

The judgment of the Court of Common Pleas proceeds on Justice Bovill's two propositions, that "Women are not included in these words, 'every man,' in the Act;" and secondly, "Women are subject to legal incapacity." The last *dictum* I will examine first. Does any statute declare it? Does any resolution of the House of Commons hint at it? Does any judgment of our courts of law express it? Aliens, lunatics, outlaws, peers, servants of the crown, the constabulary, minors—for every incapacity attaching to individuals there is the warrant of enactment, resolution, or decision. Chapter and verse can be given for each. But what Act, committee, or court has ever said that women are under a legal incapacity to vote? Is

half the nation to be disfranchised by a single hazy inference of a branch of Westminster Hall? Mark, Justice Bovill is the first and only judge of England that has so declared. Point to any other shred of authority for such a dictum. If the Parliament of 1832 believed that women were then legally incapable, why did it step out of its way for the first time in the whole course of the statutes at large to insert the word "male" into the Act? Every other uses the term freeholder, people, person, without ever touching upon sex. If women at common law, or by statute, were from time immemorial excluded, why did not the Legislature continue its customary phraseology? Clearly it felt that unless it had employed the term "male," its other provisions would *not* have excluded women.

But it is also evident that the Parliament of 1832 did not regard women as subject to legal incapacity, else it would not have employed the tautology of "male." If women were in the same category as aliens, lunatics, or minors, the word male was quite superfluous. The terms "every person not subject to legal incapacity" would have included women—would have left them outside the constitution, without the use of any adjective specification. Still more singular is it, that in reserving and keeping alive all the qualifications in existence before those itself created, this statute falls back exactly to the accustomed phraseology of the earlier Acts. Whenever it confers a *new* right, it restricts it to every "male person." Whenever it perpetuates *existing* franchises, it continues them to "every person," leaving the word "male" out on set system. At the very least, Parliament manifestly leaves the question open; and I have shown that, by the constitution, the House of Commons, that "High Court of Parliament," is the only tribunal competent to determine the rights of electors. Let me not be misunderstood. It is not necessary for me to argue that the franchises created by the statute of 1832 included women. It is not worth while to argue the point, because if the earlier and later qualifications extend to them, I can make misogynists a present of the first Reform Act.

Nineteen years subsequently to the date of that statute, and sixteen years before the date of that of 1867, Lord Romilly's measure for shortening the language of Acts of Parliament pro-

vided "that in *all acts* words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed and taken to include females, unless the contrary as to gender is expressly provided." With that provision full in view, adopting its very provisions in its own clauses, the statute of 1867 enacts that "every man shall . . . be entitled to be registered as a voter . . . and to vote for a member . . . to serve in Parliament . . . who is . . . of full age and not subject to any legal incapacity." Before the Bill was passed into a law, the Hon. G. Denman, *himself at present a Judge of the Common Pleas*, gave notice of a question on the subject to the Government, which he afterwards put thus: "He desired to know why, instead of the words 'male person' in the Act of 1832, the word 'man' had been substituted in the present Bill. In the fifth clause of the Bill he found that after saying that every '*man*' should be entitled to be registered, it proceeded to say or a '*male person*' who has passed any senior middle-class examination. If the Court of Queen's Bench had to decide to-morrow on the construction of these clauses, they would be constrained to hold that they conferred the suffrage on female persons as well as males." That question was not answered by the Government or its law officers, and Justice Denman recorded his vote to the effect of his opinion. I hardly know how to approach the casuistry by which a conclusion so inevitable has been evaded. Does "man" import the masculine gender? Then it must be "deemed and taken to *include* females." Does it *not* import the masculine gender? Then it does not *exclude* females. But the Act does not stop here. It leaves no room for the judge-made law of Westminster Hall—"No loop nor peg to hang a doubt on." It permits no casuistic exception through which forensic ingenuity may carp its sinuous way. It provides that the word "man" shall include females, "unless the contrary as to gender is *expressly* provided." It will not do that the contrary may be *implied*. The clause is not to be explained away by a quirk suggesting that something else may be *inferred*. The contrary must be expressed, and the expression must be *provided*—that is, a provision directly *pro re nata* must be embodied in a clause, to permit sophistry to shirk an order of interpretation plain and "palpable as a mountain."

This were enough, but it is by no means all. Why was the

vir of 1832 changed into the *homo* of 1867? Why was the term "male" specifying gender transformed into the word "man" signifying species, and comprehending humanity at large—the whole race? Had the transition no meaning? Was it entirely *per incuriam* that the most important clause of an Act of literally incommensurable significancy, was thrown off at a heat, by the great inquest of the nation? It is a palpable inference, incapable of avoidance, that this marked deviation from the terminology of the leading and principal Act had an object. And what other purpose could it be designed to serve than that for which I contend? It is in harmony with the whole genius and spirit of the nation. Selden, in his "Epinomis," states, among the Britons "women had prerogative in deliberative sessions touching either peace, government, or martial affairs." We choose a queen to govern us. Scotch and English of us have always disowned the Salique law. Our Augustan age was that of a female, who took an active part in ruling her empire, and brought it to a point of greatness it never before had reached. As a rule, where it has been a custom for women to pretermitt the discharge of public duties which by reason of their property, residence, or descent the owners had a right to exercise, it has been simply on account of want of interest in the function, or by exemption, not by reason of exclusion or disqualification. In the election for Gatton the "Commons' Journal" records that "*Mrs. Copley et omnes inhabitantes* returned." Heywood, in his "County Elections," quotes the following return: "Know ye me, the said Dame Dorathe Packyngton (tenant in dower of the town of Aylesburye), to have chosen and appointed Thomas Lichfield and George Burden, Esquires, to be my burgesses of my said town of Aylesburye, and whatsoever the said Thomas and George shall doe in the present Parliament, I do ratify and approve to be *my own act*." In the election for Lyme, Luders observes, a list of *Burgenses sive liberi tenentes* was put in, and included Elizabetha *filia* Thomas Hyatt, Crispina Bowden *vidua*, Alicia Toller *vidua*, and the names also of several men. In another list of *liberi homines* five names of women occur. Mark—when the woman returns to the status of *feme sole*, her right revives. This was in the nineteenth of Elizabeth. In the twenty-first, in a similar roll of *liberi burgenses*

and *liberi homines*, sixteen women are included. When the present Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, in arguing as counsel for the appellants, stated "there can be no legal incapacity attributed to women unless it be from non-user, and that cannot take away a public right," Mr. Mellish, for the respondent, admitted, "No doubt, if it were conceded that the right once existed, that which is urged as to non-user would be quite correct." What reasoning in a circle have we here! The only reason assigned by either counsel or judge for women being excluded from the right to vote, is that they have never been known to exercise it; and when it is answered no public right can be lost by its not having been asserted, it is rejoined—Yes, but you must first prove the original right! We do prove it. We show that the customary law, and the statutes on which solely the right is based, are applicable to the sexes indiscriminately. Is any denial given to that? The flank is not even attempted to be turned. The objectors do not answer, do not, because they cannot grapple with that plea. They ride off upon another issue; they contend that women never have used the right, as the sufficing reason for denying it; and then, when they are met with the fact that the exercise of the right is unnecessary to its establishment, women are answered—Yes, but prove you ever had it!

In the case of *Olive v. Ingram*, the judges held "upon the foot of the Common Law," that "a person paying scot and lot" was a description that included women. It has been seen that they were deemed, as "substantial householders," liable to serve the office of overseer. The statute of Elizabeth, observes Justice Ashurst, has no reference to sex. "There are many instances where, in offices of a higher nature, they are held not to be disqualified, as in the case of the office of High Chamberlain, High Constable, and Marshal, and that of a common constable, which is both an office of trust and likewise *in a degree judicial*. So in the case of the office of sexton." "There is a difference between being exempted and being incapacitated." "An excuse from acting is different from an incapacity of doing so." Whitlock observes, "By the custom of England women are not returned of juries, &c., &c.; by reason of their sex they are *exempted* from such employments." Although all statutes ran in the name of the "Kynge," Parliament held "none but

the malicious and ignorant could be persuaded *her Highness* could not use such lyke auctoritie," under that statutory description. In Prynne's collection of parliamentary writs, and in the journals of the House of Commons, are records of not a few returns which, made by female electors, were received. "In the cases of *Holt v. Lyle*, *Coates v. Lyle*, and *Catharine v. Surrey*, it was the opinion of the judges," observes Lee, C. J. (King's Bench), "that a *feme sole*, if she has a freehold, may vote for members of Parliament." "In *Holt v. Lyle*, it is determined that a *feme sole* freeholder may claim a voice for Parliament men." Page, J., to the same effect, "I see no disability in a woman from voting for Parliament men." Probyn, J., "The best rule seems to be, that they who pay have a right to nominate whom they will pay to. . . . An excuse from acting, &c., is different from an incapacity of doing so. The case of *Holt v. Lyle*, mentioned by my Lord Chief Justice, is a very strong case. They who pay ought to choose whom they will pay."

A still more remarkable case, which seems to have hitherto escaped the research of Westminster Hall, remains to be noticed. It has to be premised that Sir E. Coke, whose unhappy domestic history seems to have tainted his judicial authority, and who in the case of women challenged by anticipation the maxim of Justice Probyn, led the Puritan Long Parliament to object to the examination of women before the House as witnesses, on the fanatical pretence out of Saint Bernard that "a woman ought not to speak in the congregation." Let this commentary precede and explain the case following. In 1640 occurred an election for the county of Suffolk, Sir Simonds D'Ewes being High Sheriff. The election began on Monday. "Upon Tuesday morning *some women* came to be sworne for the two Knights, and Mr. Robert Clerke did suddenly take them. . . . There were divers suproversers, but they found no fault with the clerkes in my hearing." Such are extracts from the notes of the proceedings reported by a certain Samuel Dunson, one of the "clerkes." Sir Simonds D'Ewes himself supplies the following:—"By the ignorance of some of the clerkes at the other table, the oaths of *some single women* were taken without the knowledge of the said High Sheriffe; who, as soon as he had notice thereof instantly sent to forbid the same, conceiving it a

matter verie unworthy of anie gentleman, and most dishonourable in such an election to make use of their voices, ALTHOUGH THEY MIGHT IN LAW HAVE BEEN ALLOWED ; nor did the said High Sheriffe allow of the said votes, upon his numbering the said poll, but with the *allowance* and *consent* of the said two knights themselves, discount them and cast them out." The two puritan candidates did not need the female votes, having a good majority without, and standing in awe of Sir E. Coke and Saint Bernard. The carnal reason of worldlings—"the law," gave the right of voting to "some single women," and the clerkes knowing and obeying "the law," took their oaths and entered them in the poll books; but the godly Sir Simonds, "with *consent*" of the "unco' gude" puritan candidates, gave their consciences the benefit of a sacrifice that cost them nothing. The significancy of these facts, however, is not to be mistaken. The "single women" knew they had their rights; devout women, they took the oath; the clerks, accustomed to the procedure, took and recorded them; the High Sheriff, fully acquainted with the law and the procedure at elections, makes his report to Parliament that "they in law might have been allowed." If at that time there was no such custom or understanding of the law, is there any likelihood he so would have reported? Moved by these facts and authorities Bovill, C. J., in the very case now under review, is obliged to concede "it is quite true that a few instances of women being parties to indentures of returns of members of Parliament have been shown, and it is quite possible that there may have been some other instances in early times of women having voted and assisted in legislation. *Indeed, such instances are mentioned by Selden*" ("Epinomis," vol. 3, p. 10). It is perhaps worthy of note that in the earlier stages of our Constitutional and Parliamentary history, peers appear to have been parties to indentures of returns of members to the House of Commons. But while, by 25 Henry VI., the Lords spiritual and temporal were thenceforth precluded from attesting such indentures as not being of the estate or order of the Commons, and no farther trace of their interposition in that regard can be found, women continued to attest returns at least to the reign of Elizabeth. Yet all his Lordship can oppose to his own admissions is that "the fact of the right, not having been asserted for centuries,

raises a very strong presumption against its ever having had legal existence;" although afterwards he candidly says, "there is no doubt that in many statutes 'man' may properly be held to mean woman." I have *proved* that the very words of the common law and of the statutes creating the franchise apply indifferently to women as to men—that the only presumption contended for against woman's rights is non-user, and that non-user never renders public rights obsolete.

There is nothing further to examine in the *rationes decidendi* of the Court against the right, but the attempt the Judges make to govern and override the Statute of 1867 by the Act of 1832. They say the Act of 1832 restricts the right to male persons. And, first, that is perfectly untrue. It confines, indeed, the franchises then *for the first time created* to male persons, but it is careful to extend the qualifications theretofore created to "persons," rigidly omitting the word "male" in every instance in which it continues these in force. They further contend that by the fifty-ninth section of the Statute of 1867, it is provided that it shall be construed as one with the Act of 1832. Even that statement is untrue. The section declares that "This Act, *so far as is consistent with the tenor thereof*, shall be construed as one with the enactments for the time being in force relating to the representation of the people." Mark—it is only so far as consistent with its own tenor it is to be so construed, which practically explodes the pretended restrictions of its interpretation. But further, the construction is not to be limited by the Act of 1832; the plural term enactments is employed, and extends the construction to all those enfranchising statutes which do not suggest one syllable of qualification as to sex, and neither use the words "man" nor "male," but "people," "freeholder," and "person." But to pour water on this drowned rat, the 56th section of the Act of 1867 provides that "the franchises conferred by this Act shall be *in addition* to, and not in substitution for any existing franchises." It is true, Byles, J., contends, that "Acts *in pari materia* are to receive the like construction;" but he fails to tell us which half of the Act of 1832 we are to take to accomplish this feat—the half which gives the new franchise to *male* persons, or the other half which continues the old franchises to *persons*, and leaves "male" out in the cold. The

same ingenious juriconsult has discovered that "the word 'expressly' does not necessarily mean 'expressly excluded by words.'" "The word 'expressly' often means no more than 'plainly,' 'clearly,' and the like." Well, a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse. Pray, how can an idea be "plainly" or "clearly" expressed, but by *expressing* it? Does Parliament here mean that it winks or nods "male," and that such "natural language" will have all the effect of the shake of Lord Burleigh's head in the "Critic?" "Express" is used in contradistinction to "implied." The clause directs that expression not "plainly" and "clearly" *alone, but* by a distinct provision is to be given to any deviation from the governing definition. To give expression to an act is to utter it in words. The very object of Romilly's Act is to ordain that wherever the word "man" is used, it shall mean "woman;" and in the very teeth of the one sole object of that Act, it pleases the Court of Common Pleas to insist on ruling that "man" shall *not* import "woman" — and to hold that "clearly" and "plainly" it does not, although the very sum of the interpreting Act is authoritatively to statute that it shall. I have heard of a coach and six being driven through an Act of Parliament, but have never before seen that feat of charioteering so thoroughly performed as here.

The authority of the Scotch Courts has been taken as a prop for this judgment, but with little reason. Before the Act of 1832 the Scottish franchises had no relation to the English. Acts and rights in the sister kingdom become obsolete and extinguished *a non utendo*; and there was in the sister kingdom no room for the contention that the Common Law right and the statutes originally imparted the franchise to the lieges irrespective of sex. In fact, before the Reform Act, it could not be said that there was an elective franchise for the people of Scotland of either the one sex or the other.

It has been seen that a distinction had been carefully drawn by the courts of law and the writers of legal institutes between exemption from the discharge of public official duties, and exclusion from the privileges attached to legal rights. By tacit consent or custom, and those usages which naturally refine the habits of civilised society, the deference which manhood and good manners extend to the fair sex, instinctively

prevailed in reference to the exercise of duties attached to the possession of civil or public rights. It was to be expected, that women themselves would not be forward to exercise functions, offering no social advantages or pecuniary profits, which would bring them into conflict with the strife of faction, or the struggles of party. Common sense suggests that men would not press wives or spinsters into the service of irksome or unseemly duties, and that their own sex would extend a like discretionary forbearance. Sheriff, overseer, constable, sexton, marshal, chamberlain—these were offices which it was unlikely females of position would have any ambition to fill or the community to force upon them; and, therefore, it is not surprising that the records are almost silent on the subject. Yet when of their own motion or by their own desire they chose to step beyond the ordinary offices of their sex, and to discharge duties attaching to certain rights, no objection prevailed to exclude them from acting as returning officer at parliamentary elections, as the constable of their hundred, or the high sheriff of their county. It became their privilege also to do that by deputy or by proxy which the other sex were compelled to discharge in person; and yet the courtesy which good manners bestowed and the refinement of the sex accepted as a privilege and exemption, it is now attempted to torture into exclusion and disfranchisement.

It has especially to be noted that the sole original use of parliaments was to levy money for the Crown. Their germ is to be found in a summons by the sovereign to the wealthiest freeholders and burgesses to be examined as to their means, and to be admonished to pay. To this all contributed without any distinction of sex. The *feme sole* had to disburse her *quota*—the *femina vestita viro*, by her husband for her. Hence it is, that if a female freeholder marries, her husband is entitled to be registered for her freehold, as "in right of his wife." On her death it is lost, or if the demise be to her own separate use, the husband cannot qualify. But who ever heard in law of an absurdity so glaring as that of one person deriving a right from another who has no right? How could a wife impart to her husband the qualification she herself does not possess? So entirely is the franchise vested in the wife, that whenever she dies, the husband's title *ipso facto* ceases. Could he ever have

derived from her what she herself never had? Mark—it is not because *he* has a qualification that he votes. The property is his *wife's*. If he dies, no process of law or of conveyance is required to re-transfer the qualifying tenement to her. It always was hers. It continues hers notwithstanding her coverture. It is the bare right to vote of which the law constitutes him her proxy—her mandatory—her attorney—to borrow the term used by Dames Packington and Copley. Can a trustee have powers *ultra vires* of the trust? Can a proxy do that which his author cannot? What is an attorney but one executing a power which another has? Who can impart to others a *jus devolutum*, who themselves have no *jus*?

Groping one's devious way out of the blinking twilight of the law into the "liberal air" and broad daylight of plain English, and the common sense of the lay understanding, may we appeal from the interpreters of Acts to the makers of them? If Parliament was satisfied that women never had the franchise, why, for the *first* time in the whole range of the statutes at large, and for the *last*, did it introduce the word "male?" Can it point to a single form of legal incapacity as the result of desuetude alone? Go through the whole list, and everyone will be found the creatures of express law, of specific statute, or of express resolution. Not one syllable of any of these has the slightest reference to gender. Where does the Constitution erect a moral or intellectual test of fitness for the office of elector? It confers the franchise not on *fitness* but on *right*, as the co-relative of *duty* and *burden*. Provision is made in the new Act for those who cannot so much as read the names of the candidates. A felon who has finished his term of servitude may make his mark, and have his representative; but George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Mrs. Oliphant, Miss Edgeworth, Miss Austen, George Sand, or Dé Stael, have no political functions, because Westminster Hall has declared they are incapable of discharging them.

Mr. Gladstone has warned his fellow-countrymen that America is "passing us at a canter." Of all great powers ours is the weakest in material resources. More than half the food we consume we have to import, and yearly our state of dependence becomes greater. It is on the breed of our men, on our people, on the force of character, the energy of cerebral

action, the sum of mental power, we must rely solely to sustain our position. Our governing classes are palpably becoming weaker and less capable to maintain their *status*. There is among them more pressure, perhaps, and excitement, but less faculty of sustained work. Our working men shorten the hours of labour, and deteriorate in productive efficiency. The military standard has to be lowered, and a larger percentage of recruits is yearly rejected. The question of the elevation of our women to higher duties becomes a great political and economical as well as social and philosophical issue. Civilised up to a point of dangerous over-sophistication, tempted to ease and luxury by an artificial social system that offers a thousand sources of self-indulgence, it is not to be disguised that this nation has reached a most critical point in its history—and that without the unanticipated development of fresh industrial and commercial resources, our future prospect is that rather of decadence than of progress. If we would not "fall from the mettle of our pasture," it must be by making our women truly our helpmates. Call them to offices that demand the exertion of higher intellectual powers, and they will impart more efficient endeavour to the rising generation. A masculine understanding—is that to be expected from mothers whose faculties lie fallow, whose moral intrepidity is systematically repressed, and whose aspirations after independence and self-exertion are obstructed and discouraged?

"The sons of Cornelia were worthy of their mother." Elizabeth, Mary of Scots, Lady Jane Grey, were eminent Grecians and Latinists, accomplishments common to their order. Our dames were the physicians of their time and districts. An exaggerated sense of sex wastes accomplishments on the pursuit of mere feminine attractiveness, which might minister to and promote the highest interests of society. We do not want

The soul to spurn its tenement of clay,

but only that the tenement shall be subordinated to its tenant; and, if we be wise, we shall call into action resources of the value of which we have at present but a faint conception. States are great just in the ratio in which the female character is impressed upon the genius of society, and the public life of nations.

Of one other thought in this regard I must deliver myself; yet I know not how to speak or to keep silence. Society condemns our women to bear alone the skaith and scorn of its vices. Hundreds of thousands of them, abandoned and world-forsaken, once innocent, trustful, guileless, "for necessity of present life," live but to drag others down to the dust to which themselves have been cast by the human frailties which they tempt, and for which they suffer. This intensification of the idea of mere sex—this social persistence in keeping before the female mind the one idea that they are women rather than immortal creatures with reasonable souls, and something else and something more than a mere gender of the *genus homo*—this hiding out of view that they have higher destinies and loftier duties than merely to attract, or to "suckle fools and chronicle small beer"—can we wonder that so many, merely taught that their destiny is to live to please, should at last fall to the depth of pleasing to live! Call them to a mission more worthy of their origin, more deserving of their destiny. Arm them with that self-protecting culture that will enable them to pursue a useful calling. Fit them—our girls, as we do our boys—to enter, if need be, upon the great business of life. Fill the empty mind, supply the aimless soul with objects, energise the supine character, by placing before it rational hopes as the result of diligent exertion. *Cy gist l'oisiveté*. Idleness is the mother of the vices, and frivolous pursuits are idleness. Think of it! Think of what we might be and do by calling in to the responsible work of civil society a whole half of all the human beings whose minds we stunt and whose faculties we cramp until, finding no intelligent and worthy outlet for the cravings of their spiritual energies, they waste the talents given them to return with usury, and pervert gifts which, wisely improved, might double the wealth of society, and immeasurably raise the public virtue of the nation.

Replace the desire for the admiration of others by the nobler ambition of self-respect; make our women too proud to be vain—proud of useful duties faithfully discharged, of lofty purposes successfully achieved, of solidity of character, and the spirit of independence. No longer a domestic burden, they may lighten by gainful industry the cares of the fireside hearth, and prop by prudent foresight the house too many help to

undermine. *Si monumentum quæris, circumspice*. What women can do, the conduct of their own cause can best avouch. Where has sounder judgment, more unfailing prudence, more indefatigable assiduity, and more conspicuous practical ability sustained the life and ministered to the promotion of a great public object, than the gifts which have distinguished the chief agents in the assertion of Woman's Rights? It has been the business of my life to form public opinion, to organise the issues of national conviction, and to give a practical direction to political forces. I can therefore speak with at least the authority of experience, when I express the conviction that the conduct of this controversy has revealed the possession of moral and intellectual qualities which prove that the sex to the achievement of whose social status these faculties have been devoted, is in no respect less capable of the highest endeavour than those who seek to withhold from them their rights on the ground of the inferiority of their deserts.

Remember—not the High Court of Parliament, but the Court of Common Pleas, shuts on our women the door of the Constitution—they are denied their suffrage rights, not by the Law, but only by the Lawyers.



...the conduct of their own lives...
...and more completely...
...to the protection of a...
...the rights which...
...the assertion of...
...of a life to form public opinion...
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