

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE JOURNAL.

EDITED BY LYDIA E. BECKER.

VOL. VIII.—No. 87. PUBLISHED MONTHLY.
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MAY 1, 1877.

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PETITION! PETITION! PETITION!—Friends of Women's Suffrage are earnestly exhorted to aid the cause by collecting signatures for the Petitions in support of the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill, the second reading of which is fixed for June 6th. Written Petitions, ready for signature, with full information, will be supplied on application to Miss BECKER, 28, Jackson's Row, Albert Square, Manchester; or to Miss THORNBURY, Secretary, Central Committee, 64, Berners-street, London, W.

LONDON.—A SERIES of MEETINGS in support of the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill, will be held as follows in the various Metropolitan boroughs during the month of May:—

HACKNEY.—A PUBLIC MEETING in support of the Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women will be held in the Old Manor Rooms, Hackney. Rev. Stuart Headlam, Miss Becker, Miss Downing, and Miss Brown are expected to attend.

KENSINGTON.—A PUBLIC MEETING will be held in the Vestry Hall, Kensington, on Thursday, May 3rd. The chair will be taken at eight by Arthur Arnold, Esq. Mrs. Ernestine Rose, J. F. Firth, Esq., member of the London School Board, Alex. J. Ellis, Esq., Chas. McLaren, Esq., W. F. Ashurst, Esq., and others will address the meeting.

TOWER HAMLETS.—A MEETING will be held in the Beaumont Hall, Mile End Road, on May 8th.

GREENWICH.—A MEETING will be held in the Town Hall, Greenwich, on May 10th. Miss Becker, Miss Annie Young, and others have promised to attend the meeting.

CITY OF LONDON.—A PUBLIC MEETING will be held in the Library of the Memorial Hall, Farringdon-street.

LAMBETH.—A MEETING will take place in the Hawkstone Hall, Lambeth.

ST. JAMES'S HALL, PICCADILLY.—A PUBLIC MEETING will be held in St. James's Hall, on Thursday, June 1st.

Particulars of the above meetings will be announced in the daily papers.

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WESTMINSTER.—A LECTURE on the Women's Suffrage Question will be delivered on Thursday, May 17th, by Miss ARABELLA S. SHORE, in St. Matthew's Schools, Westminster. J. A. Roebuck, Esq., M.P., will occupy the chair.

MAN AND WOMAN.—A SERMON preached at S. Editha Tamworth, March 25, 1877, the Sunday next before Easter, being also the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by the Rev. BROOKE LAMBERT, M.A., B.C.L., Vicar. Price Sixpence. The profits of the sale will be devoted to the reduction of the debt on church expenses.—Tamworth: J. Thompson, Printer, Market-street.

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The Executive Committee desire to make known the objects of the Union to all who are interested in the welfare of the working women of England. The Union was established for the purpose of combining all classes of working women into one Association, for their mutual help and protection. There is a uniform contribution per week per member, while the benefits are given for illness, when out of work, and provision for the funeral money of deceased members. Five Branches have been opened, and applications have been received to open others, while the constant addition of new members leads the Committee to hope for a large measure of success. The expenses attendant on organising such an institution are many. The Committee, therefore, earnestly invite all friends of women's work to assist them by their contributions, and to co-operate with them in organising Branches wherever they may be required.

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PETITIONS TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

We earnestly exhort our friends to help the cause by promoting petitions in their several localities. The following is the form recommended:—

To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the undersigned

SH EWETH,

That the exclusion of women, otherwise legally qualified, from voting in the election of Members of Parliament, is injurious to those excluded, contrary to the principle of just representation, and to that of the laws now in force regulating the election of municipal, parochial, and all other representative governments.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable House will pass the Bill entitled "A Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women."

And your petitioners will ever pray, &c.

Write out the above form without mistakes, as no word may be scratched out or interlined, and sign it on the same piece of paper, obtaining as many signatures as you can to follow. After the written heading is signed, extra sheets of paper may be attached to hold more names. The petition may be signed by men and women of full age, whether householders or otherwise. Make up the petition as a book-post packet, open at the ends, write on the cover the words "Parliamentary Petition," and post it, addressed to the member who is to present it at the House of Commons. No stamp is required, as petitions so forwarded go post free. Write, and send along with the petition, a note (post paid) asking the member to present it, and to support its prayer.

SIR ROWLAND HILL, K.C.B.—Steps are being taken to erect a permanent memorial—in Kidderminster, where he was born, on December 3rd, 1795—of Sir Rowland Hill, to whom the nation is indebted for the uniform penny postage system, and for that capital invention the adhesive postage stamp. At a town's meeting convened by the Mayor (T. Radford, Esq.), a committee, consisting of most of the leading inhabitants, manufacturers, and others, was appointed. The chairman is the Rev. G. D. Boyle, M.A., vicar of Kidderminster; vice-chairman, F. Burcher, Esq., deputy magistrates' clerk; treasurer, James Chambers, Esq., actuary, savings bank; and hon. secretaries, James Morton, Esq. (town clerk) and A. W. Beale, Esq. It is thought that no one who has ever received a letter by post will refuse to give at least the value of a postage stamp towards the object in view. The committee have therefore issued an appeal for a national penny subscription; and collecting cards have been prepared, to enable postmasters and other friends in every locality to assist in the movement.

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THE month on which we are now entering is the last period that remains for exertion outside Parliament in support of the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill. Usually, about this period, the question has been determined for the session, and the work for May has been mainly the review of the campaign, the criticism of the debate, and the calculation of losses and gains. This year the debate takes place five weeks later than usual, and advantage has been taken of this delay to organise a more systematic and sustained movement in support of the measure than has hitherto been made in London. A reference to our advertising columns will show that meetings are announced to take place in most of the metropolitan boroughs during the month of May, which will be addressed by many of the leading representatives of the movement, and that a large meeting is to be held in St. James's Hall on the 1st of June. These meetings will afford an opportunity of dealing with some of the objections urged against the measure in the debate of last year, and of placing before members some of the considerations which women have to urge in support of their claim to be admitted to the benefit of representative government.

The meetings held during the past month have been influential and well attended, and have covered much ground. On April 6th a meeting was held in Dublin, under the presidency of the LORD MAYOR. At Stockport and Scarborough large and crowded meetings have taken place in support of the Bill. At Birmingham, an important conference was held at the Midland Institute, under the presidency of Alderman HAWKES, J.P.; and, in the evening of the same day, a meeting was held in the Town Hall, when the chair was occupied by the MAYOR of BIRMINGHAM. Meetings have also been held at Worcester and other places.

The petitions presented up to April 20th were 358, with 109,615 signatures. Among these we found petitions from the Sunderland Chamber of Commerce, signed by Mr. JOHN KNIGHT, president, the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council of Edinburgh, the Mayor, Alderman, and Burgesses of Middlesbrough, the Mayor, Alderman, and Burgesses of Hartlepool, the Provost, Magistrates,

and Town Council of Wick, the Magistrates and members of the Town Council of Forfar, the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of the Royal burgh of Kirkcaldy, the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of Jedburgh, the Provost, Magistrates, and Town Council of Selkirk, the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses of Stafford, and the Mayor, Alderman, and Citizens of Lincoln. We again urge upon our friends the necessity of continuous and increased numbers of petitions as the most direct and effectual method of pressing upon the Legislature the demand of women for the right to be represented in the government of their country.

THE most notable feature of the recent conference at Birmingham was a paper contributed by Mr. SIDNEY SMITH, of the City of London Liberal Association. The writer stated that his official duties led him to support the claims of women before the Courts of Revision of the lists of electors, and to such an examination of the merits of the question as satisfied him that by the law of England, interpreted candidly and without prejudice, women have a right to be registered as voters. Their right has been denied by the Revision Court because it has been assumed that they were persons subject to a legal incapacity. But that disqualification was not to be assumed without proof. Justice BOVILL, even while delivering an adverse decision, admitted that "it was quite true that a few instances of women being parties to indentures of returns of members of Parliament may be shown, and it is quite possible 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." Was there the slightest reason on the face of these facts for contending that women were excluded by reason of legal incapacity? The paper went on to cite the Act passed in 1850, which ordains that in all Acts, words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed and taken to include females, unless the contrary be expressly provided. Seventeen years after the promulgation of that decree, the Act of 1867 was passed. In that Act, so far from making any express provision to exclude the appli-

cation of the Act to women, the words "male person" were deliberately dropped. What was the use of a statute? What was the meaning of words, if judges were to drive a coach and six through an Act of Parliament by ignoring these provisions? A large portion of the time of our law courts was occupied in reviewing and reversing their own decisions. In reference especially to the Reform and Registration Acts, their interpretation has been eminently contradictory; and within a recent period the judgments of the Court of Queen's Bench have been in open conflict with those of the Common Pleas. The writer suggested that Parliament should be moved to have the legal argument for the right of women to the suffrage heard at the bar of the House of Commons. The pleading would open the eyes of the nation to the pretexts on which this right is denied them.

We earnestly hope that some means may be devised whereby the views urged in the paper may be placed before Parliament before or during the debate on the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill. We believe the claim of duly-qualified women to exercise the suffrage under the provisions of the various Acts of Parliament regulating the same to be as sound in law, if the law were impartially interpreted, as it is in equity. No court is infallible, and in most grave issues an appeal lies from one court to a higher one. It seems monstrous that the constitutional rights of half of the people of these realms should have been staked and lost on a single decision of the Court of Common Pleas. If there is no legal court which is competent to review or reverse that decision, we desire to carry our plea to the High Court of Parliament itself, and we pray that our case may be heard in all its bearings and in every aspect and form, confident in the belief that the more closely it is examined the more apparent will its strength become, and in the hope that we shall not look in vain for the redress of our grievances to the justice and wisdom of Parliament.

THE debate on Mr. ANDERSON'S Bill to amend the law relating to the property of married women in Scotland gives evidence of the retrogression that has taken place in the mind of the House of Commons since Mr. RUSSELL GURNEY carried through all its stages a Bill embodying proposals, subsequently rejected in the House of Lords, for giving married women in England the same rights and liabilities as to property and contract as appertain by law to men. Mr. ANDERSON'S Bill was allowed to pass the second reading, but with the distinct understanding

that it was to be materially altered in committee. The LORD ADVOCATE stated that he wished it to be clearly understood that the condition on which the Government assented to the second reading was that the Bill should go substantially on the lines of the English measure, and that no "extreme" questions should be discussed. The principle that he described as extreme he "summed up in a single sentence. It (the Bill) gave to a married woman precisely the same control over her property after marriage as before it."

We gather from the course adopted by the LORD ADVOCATE that he does not object to allowing a woman some control over some of her property after marriage. His objection to the extreme principle of allowing her full control over it reminds us of a story we heard once related by JOHN STUART MILL. Mr. MILL spoke of a man who had a great aversion to extreme principles, and who used to maintain that the right course was always the middle course. It was a just principle that a man should pay his debts, but it would be carrying a principle to an extreme if a man were to pay *all* his debts. On the other hand, it would be an extreme course to pay none of them. The middle course, the golden mean, was to be commended, and that was to pay *some* of them.

The House of Commons appears to think it an extreme course to give to women full right to their own property. It is equally as extreme to deny them any right to any property. It will therefore adopt the middle course, and allow some women some right to some of their property, but how much, and to what property, it will decide for them without consulting their wishes and opinions.

Mr. SHAW LEFEVRE urged that the Act of 1870 was an imperfect measure, and that in this Bill an opportunity might be taken of adopting alterations and improvements; but he was warned by the HOME SECRETARY that any attempt on his part to make the Bill what he would call a "complete measure" would be a breach of the understanding upon which the second reading was assented to by the Government, and that any proposals to that effect would meet with their determined opposition. We fear that this declaration may be taken as decisive of the fate, not only of Mr. ANDERSON'S Bill, but of that of Lord COLERIDGE for amending the English Act, should the latter emerge from the House of Lords with its principle unimpaired.

A House of Commons elected by men only was, in 1870, unanimous in according to women equal property rights with men. A House of Commons, again elected by men

only, now refuses them equal rights. This affords another example of the insecurity of the guarantee offered by the mere sentiments of members of Parliament in regard to justice to women, unsupported by the consciousness that they will have to answer to women constituents for the manner in which they have acted on their sentiments.

It may be alleged by some that the question of the property rights of women is not the only question on which the mind of the House has changed since the election of 1868, and that on other matters on which men are themselves directly interested there has been what some may call retrogression. This may be true, but the difference is that if the House of Commons has assumed a different complexion as to general politics, or on matters in which men have no interests other or unlike those of women, the minds of their constituents have altered, and the House in its present mood fairly represents the electors, who, if they disapprove the conduct or sentiments of those members, have an all-sufficient remedy in their own hands. But there is no pretence for affirming that women in 1877 are less desirous of enjoying the right to own property than they were in 1870, since they have been denied the right to a share in electing the men who have to determine this question. We do not find that any reference was made during the debate to the opinions or wishes of women themselves, nor the faintest recognition of any duty or obligation on the part of members to consult those wishes. The responsibility of representatives is towards those who elect them, and members of Parliament, in dealing with questions directly affecting the property and personal rights of women, are at present bound only to consult the wishes and opinions of men. That they should do so is no matter for either surprise or blame, and not until women have a voice in electing them can we reasonably look for a change in the direction of their views in regard to their responsibility in legislating in matters concerning women.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL, in reply to a question in the House of Commons put by Mr. CLARE-READ respecting the election of churchwardens, stated, among other points, that he "very much doubted whether women had a right to vote, unless there was some special usage or custom to the contrary." As this doubt might have had a serious effect in the vestry election on the ensuing Easter Monday, by deterring women ratepayers from voting, or causing those in charge of the election to reject their votes, inquiries were at once made at the Overseers' office in Manchester as to the usage or custom there prevailing. The reply was that women had always voted in that parish,

and the authorities were satisfied that women ratepayers had the right to vote in vestry.

It seems clear that the ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave his answer on insufficient information, and the incident shows the danger to which the ancient rights of women are exposed through the disposition of those in authority to deny their existence. It is probably in this way that the Parliamentary vote has fallen into desuetude. When women have attempted to exercise it they have been denied with or without reason. This was done by Sir SIMON D'EWES, who, in an election for the county of Suffolk during the Long Parliament, when he heard that some women freeholders had recorded their votes, caused these votes to be struck off the rolls, "although," he says, "they might in law have been allowed."

Had Sir SIMON D'EWES acted on his admission that the votes were legal, and had other returning officers been desirous of preserving the ancient liberties of the whole people, we might now have seen the entire nation, instead of one sex only, in the possession of true representative government.

CERTAIN circumstances brought to light at an inquest lately held on a poor woman who died in Whitechapel deserve the attention of those philanthropists who think to improve the condition of women by putting every possible barrier in the way of their employment in factories and workshops. The unfortunate deceased was, at the time of the accident to which she fell a victim, engaged in washing, although she was in hourly expectation of her confinement. In order to hang the clothes she had washed upon a line, the poor woman got upon a chair, the legs of which suddenly broke, and she fell to the ground, having received a fatal injury from one of the rails. A lodger, summoned to her assistance by the cries of the children, brought a doctor, who actually refused to attend because he was not engaged for the confinement. The house surgeon of the London Hospital promptly attended, but he could not save the patient, who died in half-an-hour. When women in their own homes are compelled by necessity to undertake labour more exhausting, and incur risks more frightful than any to which factory operatives are ever exposed, at the time when the very slaves in the cotton fields of America were allowed to rest, there is something puerile in legislating to prevent women willing and anxious to work for good wages from being called too early in the morning, or having to eat their meals in too great a hurry. Since no legislation can mitigate the toil of the housewife while the cradle is full, it is but fair that no fanciful restrictions should tie her hands when strength and leisure are restored to her.

A. D.

PUBLIC MEETINGS.

BIRMINGHAM.

CONFERENCE IN THE MIDLAND INSTITUTE.

On April 17th, a conference, under the auspices of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, took place at the Midland Institute, in support of Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women. There was a numerous attendance. Mr. H. HAWKES (the Borough Coroner) occupied the chair, and amongst those present were Miss Marianne Farningham, Miss Becker, Mrs. George Harrison, Miss Sturge, Mrs. R. C. Barrow, Miss Morgan, Mrs. Scatcherd (Leeds), Miss Ashworth, Miss Lilia Ashworth (Bath), Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Osler, Miss Osler, Mrs. Ashford, Mrs. G. S. Mathews, Mrs. C. E. Mathews, Mrs. Livens, Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Gould, Rev. H. W. and Mrs. Crosskey, Mrs. Pike, Mrs. J. H. Chamberlain, Mrs. William Kenrick, Miss Martineau, Mrs. J. P. Thomasson, Miss Bailey, Miss Blackburn, Mrs. William Taylor, Miss D. Albright, Mrs. Alfred Southall, Miss Foxall, Mrs. Bartlett, Mr. and Mrs. William Rogers, Councillors R. F. Martineau and R. C. Barrow, the Rev. G. J. Emanuel, Dr. Langford, and Mr. J. P. Thomasson and Rev. S. A. Steinthal (delegates from the National Reform Union), Mr. Phillips, and the Rev. Brooke Lambert (Tamworth).

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the proceedings, said they were met in order to forward a movement which was to give the power of voting for members of the House of Commons to those women in the three kingdoms who were themselves householders or owners of landed property, and who were subjected to all the legal conditions to which men were subjected to entitle them to the franchise. That was the simple statement of their claim, which, if granted, would add to the electoral roll some 300,000 women, having the duties and responsibilities of the franchise, and that would be an addition to a roll now containing more than 2,000,000 persons. As a question of right, the claim was hardly ever seriously contested by their opponents, except by persons coming from the turf, and having propensities of that description, who ventured to say that they opposed the proposal because women as a class were inferior to men. The time when members were returned on the whirlwind of some temporary party measure had gone by, and those who watched the proceedings of Parliament knew very well that almost the whole of its time would be taken up in the discussion and arrangement of questions pressing from house to house, street to street, and town to town, and having reference to the domestic comfort and intellectual advancement of all classes of society, and on these questions he contended that women would be most competent to say who should represent them. There were 267,000 persons holding land, and of these 37,000 were ladies holding land in their own right and being taxed in the ordinary way. What was there in the position of these women to disqualify them from judging of the persons they would send to Parliament to have a voice in the expenditure of the money derived from their taxation? Ever since 1870 Parliament had imposed upon itself one of the grandest tasks imposed upon it in modern times—viz., that of looking after the elementary education of the entire of the rising race, and this had given a fresh and irresistible claim to place women upon the electoral roll. There could be no question more important, and if women who were subjected to all the duties and liabilities of citizens of the State were to be denied a voice in the choice of members who could make or alter acts regulating the question of education, they stood with a brand of inferiority upon them, which, when they thought of it, they would not submit to. (Applause.) Then there was the question of sanitary reform. The present Prime

Minister had made an immense feature of the importance of sanitary legislation, and he (the speaker) would ask who was interested in that, who felt the want of sanitary legislation so much as women? The men left their homes every morning to go out to their work, and some of them did not return until worn-out nature required rest, but the women and children had to remain at home all the twenty-four hours of the day, and, if such were the circumstances, had to suffer from ill-drained homes, ill-regulated streets, every arrangement which produced disease, and everything that was disagreeable around their houses. Women, he considered, were the persons who would give the most feeling, and most anxious, and most sensible votes on questions relating to sanitary reform, and the provision of parks and playgrounds. (Applause.) Then as to the spread of intemperance, all questions brought forward to eradicate this fatal evil were considered by members selected by men, the chief offenders, whilst women, the chief sufferers, were denied a single vote upon the question. He thought this was a perfect mockery.

Miss WILLIAMS (London) next read a paper on "Expediency in Reference to the Women's Suffrage Question." The writer urged that the question of women's suffrage had reached a stage which many other questions had passed. The justice of the claim to representation made by women was almost universally admitted. The weight of argument was allowed to be on the side of concession; sentiment and prejudice threw doubts on its expediency. The victory would be gained if all orators shared the contempt for the argument of expediency so ably expressed by Mr. Chamberlain in the *Fortnightly Review*. A distinguished Italian lately said, "The destinies of nations are in the hands of women." The Eastern Question was a woman's question, and Turkey was only a conspicuous survival from barbarous ages, and a standing protest against the degradation of women. In England the anomaly of one-half the population being excluded from participation in government was inexplicable, for there had never been wanting women who had made good their claim to a participation of government, to a share in all the advantages from which they had been arbitrarily excluded. Having recounted various great achievements of women, the writer continued that women might be told that as they could render such services their enfranchisement was unnecessary, or they might be told to be satisfied with what Mr. Cobden called "their anomalous and singular power of conferring votes by buying freeholds for others." Women of fortune too often had the mortification of seeing that their property conferred on their uneducated tenants, their grooms and gardeners, an influence which was denied to themselves. The fact that women were not a class but of every class made it all the more desirable, not only for themselves, but for the nation at large, that they should be encouraged to form opinions and to express them. When Mr. Leatham demanded for the country a masculine policy he asked for what would be as unsafe as it would be unjust. The stability of the reforms desired would be endangered if they rested on the will of one sex only. Having indicated some of the legal disabilities under which women now laboured, the writer remarked that it might tend to allay the apprehensions of those who dreaded to take a leap in the dark if she pointed out that women were already in a position to affect imperial legislation. They were able not only to influence the question of education and local and parochial self-government by their votes, but to take their seats on those Boards. There were some boons, such as education, which it became statesmen to grant, even when they were not claimed by those who needed them most. With regard to the allegation that the best women did not desire the suffrage, the writer argued that there were

thousands of women who were earning their livelihood who would thoroughly appreciate the Parliamentary franchise. Those who had spent their lives in intelligent devotion to others and who had most at heart the true interests of their sex pleaded this cause, not so much for any advantages to themselves as for the benefits it would confer on society at large.

The following paper, which had been contributed by Mr. Sidney Smith, of London, on "The Law of England as it Affects the Political Rights of Women" was read by the Rev. S. ALFRED STEINHAL:—It has pleased the Earl of Beaconsfield to extend the electoral franchise to the poorest, most ignorant, most dependent of the male population. Lord Derby informed the listening Senate that he had taken "a leap in the dark with the British Constitution in his pocket." Those who were not afraid to make the masses of needy wage-receivers what they call "our masters," yet affect to regard with alarm the political emancipation of women. My official duties led me to support that cause before the Courts of Revision of the Lists of Electors, and to such an examination of the legal merits of the question as satisfied me that by the law of England, interpreted candidly and without prejudice, women have a right to be registered as voters. It is true that in the earlier periods of our constitutional history, when election contests were few, when freeholders and burgesses of any kind were scanty, and the right of representation was so little valued that boroughs prayed the sovereign to spare them the expense and trouble of sending members to serve in Parliament, women probably, like many of the men, seldom took such an interest in public affairs as to appear at the poll. But so little were they excluded from participation in the duties of citizenship that even in the reign of the Third Henry nuns were the only female freeholders excused from attendance at the County Court Leets—and even that not always. The Countess of Kent voted by attorney for knights of the shire for the county of York; while Mrs. Copley returned the members for Gattton, and Lady Packington those for Aylesbury. The elections for boroughs resided in the burgesses, and the burgess rolls contained many names of females. In the early case of *Olive v. Ingram*, Chief Justice Lees, in adverting to Hake-well's Reports, cited that juriconsult as his authority for "an opinion of the judges that a *feme sole*, if she has a freehold, may vote for members of Parliament." Without enlarging upon authorities, it may be enough to quote the admission of Chief Justice Bovill, even in delivering an adverse judgment, that "It is quite true that a few instances of women being parties to indentures of returns of members of Parliament may be shown; and it is quite possible that there have been some other instances in early times of women having voted and assisted in legislation. Indeed, such instances are mentioned by Selden." Is there the slightest pretence in the face of these facts for contending that women were excluded from the elective franchise by reason of legal incapacity? That disqualification is not to be presumed without proof. It is not in any instance a negative or implied, but is a positive exclusion—the creature of express statute, of uniformity in decisions, of recorded awards of committees of the House of Commons. What statute, what forensic judgment, what decision of the House of Commons excluded women from the franchise? The very Act—and it is the only one that even hints at such a barbarism, the Reform Bill of 1832—is decisive of this very point. If Parliament at that time had regarded women as legally incapacitated, it would have simply provided that every person of full age, and "not subject to legal incapacity," should be enfranchised. These words would have excluded women, if their incapacity had then been recognised by the law. But that it was considered legal incapacity did not attach to mere sex appears from this, that the Act provides—and for the first time in our annals—that

only "every male person" not incapacitated shall vote. In that Act, too, it is worthy of note that the use of the word "male" is confined in its application to the franchises then for the first time created. Wherever the statute deals with qualifications by ancient right, the word "male" is left out and the provisions refer to "person" only. So standing the law in the second year of the reign of William the Fourth, Parliament, in the 13th year of Victoria, ordained "that in all Acts words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed and taken to include females, unless the contrary as to gender be expressly provided." Mark, it is not by the general law, but in the particular Act in which the term is employed, that the exceptional provision be desiderated. Seventeen years after the promulgation of that decree the Act of 1867 was passed. In it the words "male person" employed in the Act of 1832 are deliberately dropped. With its eyes open to its own Act declaring that in all statutes words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed to include females, Parliament, for the old accepted words "male person," substitutes the word "man"—a term in our language signifying the human species, the *genus homo*. What is the use of a statute—what is the meaning of words, if judges are to drive a coach and six through the will of Parliament by ignoring these provisions? What is the meaning of the terms "expressly provided," if they do not refer to a provision in the specific Act, and not to the general law? Where, in the Act of 1867, is it expressly provided that "man" shall not include "woman?" Its 69th section, indeed, construes it as one with the previous statute, but only "so far as is consistent with the tenor thereof," while the 58th section provides that its franchises "shall be in addition to, and not in substitution for, any existing franchises." I respect the law, but am not in the least disposed to a fetish worship of horsehair wigs. A large portion of the time of our law courts is occupied in reviewing and reversing their own decisions. In reference especially to the Reform and Registration Acts, their interpretation has been eminently contradictory, and within a recent period the judgments of the Queen's Bench have been in open conflict with those of the Common Pleas. Arbitrarily to fasten a plea of desuetude or adverse prescription upon mere sex appears to me as whimsical and gratuitous as if it were imposed on red hair or a black face. A right by user acquired by the one sex enures to the other by virtue of their common human nature. A right of common, a right of way, any customary privilege acquired by the public—was it ever heard of that women must distinctively prove that the sex had been in use to exercise it? If these views be worthy of consideration, they suggest that Parliament should be moved to have the legal argument for the female suffrage heard at the bar of the House of Commons in presence of the judges. It is surely a *nodus dignus vindice* which concerns the rights of more than a half of the nation, and the pleadings will open the eyes of the nation to the pretexts on which those rights are denied them. Let the people clearly understand the position here assumed by the judges. They have no exclusive monopoly either of the dialectic faculty or of the apprehension of the significance of the words of our mother tongue. Prior to the Act of 1832 there are no words in any statute, judgment of the Courts, resolution of Parliament, or record of customary law that assign the franchise to males any more than to females. Resiant, potwaller, burgess, freeholder, copyholder, tenant in ancient demesne, even freeman and liveryman are terms and offices confined to no sex, but are common to both. The thesis propounded by the Court of Common Pleas amounts to no more nor less than this—that if any order, class, or sex has not been in use to exercise a right or fill an office all the

individuals of these denominations are for ever after precluded from asserting the one or executing the other. I do not believe that to be law. I am sure it is not justice or right reason. In conclusion, I would add that it has been the work of a great portion of my lifetime to organise the forces of public opinion in support of the cause which has proved successful in reference to questions of great national importance; and having viewed with a critical eye the manner in which my countrywomen have conducted this controversy I am enabled to say that in no quality of sound judgment, practical aptitude, resolute perseverance, untiring industry, and ability have they fallen short in comparison with the sex that on the ground of their inferiority in these respects withholds from them their civil rights.

A short discussion followed, and ultimately it was resolved, on the motion of Mr. STEINTHAL, seconded by Miss SPENDER, and supported by Miss BECKER, "That the committees of the National Society for Women's Suffrage be requested to consult with Mr. Sidney Smith as to the suggestion contained in his paper, and, if it be found practicable, to take such steps as might be found advisable."

Miss STURGE then read a paper by Miss Tod (Belfast) on "The Place of Women as Citizens."

The Rev. H. W. CROSSKEY next proposed the following resolution:—"That the exclusion of women householders and ratepayers, legally qualified in every respect but that of sex, from the power of voting in the election of members of Parliament, by depriving a considerable portion of the property, the industry, and the intelligence of the country of all direct representation, is injurious both to the person excluded and to the community at large."

Mrs. ALFRED OSLER seconded the resolution. Shakspeare wrote: "What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." And applying the thought to the subject of women's rights we might go still farther, and assert confidently that this particular "rose" by any other name would smell much sweeter. It is considered an outrageous piece of presumption for women to suppose that they can possibly have any rights but those which men choose voluntarily to accord to them; but if we could convince people of what is really the truth—that the larger interests which would be engendered in women by this simple right of a voice in their country's government is a means of education quite as beneficial as the establishment of College and University examinations for women—if we could only convince them of this, I think the orthodox horror of "anything to do with women's rights" would very soon subside. It is the woman, the mother, who has the greatest share in the formation of her child's character. It has been noted that almost all the best and wisest men have had exceptionally good and clever mothers. The influences which surround us in childhood are rarely effaced from our characters; and the child insensibly takes its ideas, disposition, and habit of mind from its mother, and venerates her as a good and wise teacher and guide, to whom he can look up. But all this is "up to a certain point, you know," as Mr. Brooke, of "Middlemarch," would say. After that certain point their ways diverge—he has come to man's estate—he takes a different point of view, finds himself one of the "nobler sex," and is taught to despise female views and opinions as of no practical weight, and therefore of no importance. But can we expect women to understand and study large schemes for the public good—great questions affecting many nations, of peace or war, economy, temperance, morality, education—when they know that they can do nothing directly towards the attainment of what they think good, or the prevention of what seems to them evil? The same fear which now debars women from any share in governing themselves

and others formerly kept them shut up in convents, veiled, secluded, uneducated, denied even the possession of a soul. Step by step the barriers have been extended, but they still remain. All the privileges accorded to women are still permissive; the old prejudice is as strong as ever—it is only applied at another point. What we are really working for is, not the permission to have and to do certain things, but freedom to do whatever we are able and willing to do, so long as it injures no one. We want to get rid of artificial and conventional boundaries. There is no need for them; nature makes her own, and women, if they would, could no more overstep those boundaries than Columbus could have pushed his discoveries "too far," and overstepped his sphere—the world. It is no more unwomanly for a woman to take part in politics than it is unmanly for a man to nurse a baby. All that is strong and manly we need in the government of a child; and, just as much, all that is pure and womanly we need in the government of men. As home rule can never be perfect without the father's influence to supplement the mother's, so no government which has to legislate for the requirements of men and women can be perfect while the views and feelings of more than half the community are ignored. It is a most hollow pretence to say that women are, or can be, represented by men, in the face of the glaring inequality of most of the laws bearing on women, repeated by men who at the same time prove by the unmanly coarseness of their ideas and speech concerning women how little they are capable of understanding and representing them. Our statute books teem with laws, illustrating the strange way in which women's interests are cared for. Take the case of education:—look how all the great educational endowments of this country have been applied to the use of boys only—from the grammar schools, in almost every town of England, to the Universities. Look at marriage laws, which make the wife, her possessions, and even her children, the property of the husband, almost as effectually as if he had bought and paid for them in a slave market. There is a natural tendency to peace and goodwill in human nature, but when that natural tendency has been perverted or destroyed the consequences of such laws as these are truly fearful, and fill our newspapers with tales of brutality too numerous and constant now to attract much notice. Measures have been brought before the House of Commons to ameliorate the condition of women. These measures afford excellent proof of how the interests of women are cared for by Parliament. Bills allowing women to retain possession of their property after marriage in all respects as they did before have been frequently before the Parliament for the last nine years, but it has evaded doing anything like substantial justice. There are no women constituencies to call honourable members to account for neglecting their interests—women's interests are therefore admirably fitted for neglect. Look again at the divorce laws—was there ever a more glaring injustice than the distinction between the claims of men and women to divorce? For the man who desires to be free it is enough that his wife is unfaithful to him; but for the woman, as if she were incapable of feeling that moral insult, it is demanded that she must also have been subjected to bodily ill-treatment before she can have a legal claim to be freed from her possessor. It is marvellous how, in this enlightened age, one half the human family can say to the other half: it is not fitting that you should interest yourself in the laws by which your life, and the lives of all your fellow-creatures are regulated. It is no concern of yours whether thousands of other women are groaning beneath a cruel tyranny, the result of unjust laws which might be altered. What have you to do with the question whether the children of your country shall grow up ignorant,

neglected, and with every temptation to a life of crime, or whether they shall be taught, cared for, and helped towards an honest livelihood and a good life? Mr. Bright in one of those bursts of eloquence which send a thrill through the hearts even of insignificant and unenfranchised women, may call on us without distinction of sex to say whether, as English people, we will let the cautious murmurs of diplomacy deafen our ears to the cries of tortured men, women, and children—our fellow-creatures. But of what avail is such a question? Mr. Bright, whose noble mind taught him truly that such a question is one for all humanity, was indeed just in his words; but even while thus appealing to women he laid his hand upon their lips, as who should say, "ask somebody else to answer for you; it is not desirable that you should speak for yourselves!" We are not aware that voting for School Boards and Town Councils has unsexed women and destroyed the home life of England, as was so often prophesied. What reasonable ground is there for supposing that a vote for the borough members would bring about these much-dreaded evils? It has been said that women are too much swayed by feeling to be trusted with a voice in governing nations, but at a time when the policy of England appears to have sunk to a mere cold-blooded consideration of material interests, the influence even of a small body, to whom these considerations were subsidiary to the dictates of simple humanity, would be welcomed by all those who believe that nations, like individuals, have a higher mission than the following of their own material interests, viz., the maintenance and diffusion of those principles of truth, liberty, and justice, by which alone the progress of the human race can be ensured.—The resolution was supported by Mr. PHILLIPS, and carried unanimously.

On the motion of Dr. LANGFORD, and seconded by Miss BLACKBURN, it was resolved—"That this conference recalls with satisfaction, as a sign of progress in the political world, the fact that the conference of Liberal delegates who assembled in Manchester, December 15th, 1875, under the auspices of the National Reform Union, adopted, with almost entire unanimity, the principle of the enfranchisement of women householders, and incorporated it in one of their resolutions."

Councillor MARTINEAU then proposed—"That the Executive Committee of the National Reform Union, the Birmingham Liberal Association, the Birmingham Women's Liberal Association, and the various women's industrial organisations, be requested to instruct their representatives, at the approaching conference announced for the 16th May, to propose that the basis of the uniform Parliamentary franchise for borough and county constituencies, should be that adopted in the municipal register," and in doing so, said that he was anxious that the society should not consider that the expression recently used by the senior member for Birmingham, Mr. John Bright, in regard to this question met with the unqualified approval of the town; but, on the other hand, he was sure that they had given great pain to a large portion of the constituency. Their feelings for him were so strong that they would bear the strain of one difference of opinion; yet they had so profited by the instruction he gave them in his earlier days that they entirely disinclined to follow him in his later days, when he departed from that line which he once laid down.

The resolution was seconded by Mr. THOMAS, and carried unanimously.

On the motion of Mr. ROGERS, seconded by Miss C. A. BIGGS, it was resolved to adopt a memorial to the Prime Minister soliciting the support of her Majesty's Government:—

To the Right Honourable the EARL OF BEACONSFIELD, &c., &c., &c., First Lord of Her Majesty's Treasury.
The Memorial of Members, Delegates, and Friends of the National Society for Women's Suffrage in Conference assembled at Birmingham on April 17th, 1877,
Sheweth,
That the Representation of the People Act, 1867, is based on the principle of giving a vote to every householder rated to the relief of the poor.
That an Act of Parliament passed in the year 1850 provides that in all Acts words importing the masculine gender shall be deemed and taken to include females, unless the contrary is expressly provided.
That the Representation of the People Act, 1867, contains the proviso excluding females from its operation, and accordingly certain clauses dealing with the imposition and payment of rates were applied indiscriminately to men and women householders.
That the householders thus included in the operation of the ratepaying clauses of the Reform Acts claimed to be put on the Parliamentary register of electors.
That, by the law and constitution of this country women are not disabled from the exercise of political power, inasmuch as a woman has always been eligible for the exercise of Sovereign power, and the rights of women ratepayers in parochial and local elections are coeval with those of men.
That the ancient laws regulating the Parliamentary franchise contain no limitation of their operation to male persons, and that no statutory declaration of such limitation was made till the Reform Act of 1832, which did not disturb existing rights, while no judicial decision against the right of women to vote in the election of Members of Parliament had been recorded at the time of the passing of the Representation of the People Act, 1867.
That these considerations, together with the plain and obvious meaning of the new Reform Act, as governed by the Interpretations Act of 1850, lead your Memorialists to the belief that women ratepayers are justly entitled to the franchise under the Act passed by the administration of which you were the leader in the House of Commons.
That, nevertheless, the Court of Common Pleas decided in the year 1868 that the same words in the same Act of Parliament should for the purposes of voting apply to men only, though for the purposes of taxation they apply to women. Thus were women, for the first time in English history, authoritatively disfranchised, and by a single decision of one court, and that not the Supreme Court in other matters, and without the opportunity of appeal the right of one half of the people has been denied to any franchise at all in respect to Imperial Government, and thus practically the authority and function of Parliament as a High Court for regulating the franchise have been exercised by the Court of Common Pleas to the deprivation of the political rights of half of Her Majesty's subjects in these realms.
Wherefore your Memorialists humbly pray that you, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, will give your support to the measure now before the House of Commons which is designed to remedy the injustice occasioned by the law as governed by the decision in the Court of Common Pleas, and which declares that the principle laid down in the Interpretation Act of 1850 shall apply to all Acts regulating the franchise in the election of Members of Parliament.
Signed on behalf of this Conference,
HENRY HAWKES, J.P., President.

It was resolved, on the motion of the CHAIRMAN, seconded by Mrs. ASHFORD, to adopt one to the Council of the borough of Birmingham, requesting that body to petition Parliament in favour of the Bill.

A vote of thanks was then passed to the Chairman, and the proceedings terminated.

EVENING MEETING.

A meeting was held on the evening of April 17th, in the Town Hall. The MAYOR (Alderman George Baker) presided. His Worship opened the proceedings by assuring the audience that he took the chair that evening not merely because he happened to be Mayor for the year, but because he felt thoroughly interested in the movement. He could not be considered in any sense a recent convert, because he did not remember the time when he was not in favour of a movement of this sort. In fact, to use an Irish phrase, he was "in favour of it before it began." (Laughter.) It was the voting about which they were met chiefly that evening, and he thought it would be difficult to show why women, who took upon themselves the responsibilities and duties of men, should not have the votes which appertained to men in those positions, and he was sure that if ever the inequalities which existed in our laws between the two sexes were to be remedied it would be when

the women had the vote in respect of members of the House of Commons. If the laws which were so oppressive and so unjust with regard to women were to be repealed it would be by the power of the women's vote.

The SECRETARY (Miss Sturge) then announced the receipt of a number of letters of apology for non-attendance. The first was from Mr. P. H. Muntz, M.P., who was absent on account of Parliamentary duties. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain pleaded a similar excuse, and added: "It is my intention to vote for the second reading of the Bill introduced by Mr. Jacob Bright, in which your society is interested." Letters expressing sympathy with the meeting were also read from Mr. John Morley (president of the Midland Institute), Sir Charles Dilke, M.P., Mr. T. Blake, M.P., Mr. G. O. Trevelyan, M.P., Mr. Burt, M.P., Mr. H. Richard, M.P., Mr. Jacob Bright, M.P., Mr. J. Cowen, M.P., Professor Rogers, of Oxford; Mr. Russell Gurney, M.P., Mr. J. Corbett, M.P., Mr. R. W. Dale, Rev. J. H. Smith, and Sir Wilfrid Lawson.

Mr. C. E. MATHEWS, in moving the first resolution, said he had always been of opinion that women ought to be allowed to do whatever they could show themselves capable of doing. (Hear, hear.) From the earliest periods of history down to the present hour the right of the suffrage had been dependent—and he begged them to bear that in mind, for it underlay everything they had to say that night—upon the ownership or upon the occupation of property. He believed no one upon the platform argued that all women ought to have votes. What they said was, that if a woman was the owner of land or the occupier of a house who would be entitled if she were not a woman to vote, the question of her sex ought not to disqualify her from political representation. He then moved, "That as it is contrary to the principles of free and constitutional government that any class or number of persons should be permanently deprived of direct representation in Parliament, this meeting is of opinion that the Parliamentary vote should be given to women on the same conditions as it is granted to men."

Mrs. SCATCHERD (Leeds) seconded the resolution.

Mr. J. C. COX (Belper) supported the resolution. He said their opponents were really unable to urge any reason why women should be denied the privilege, except the same old argument of remaining as they were. Were they able to point to the fact that School Boards had become dangerous to the nation, or were inefficient, because women were empowered, not only to vote at those elections, but to sit at the Board. He alluded to the difficulties women laboured under in respect to the Factory Acts, and said there was an innumerable number of Acts which would never have been passed if women had the vote, and would be materially amended when they had obtained the franchise. They might be quite sure that the laws relating to the guardianship of children would be very materially amended, and they would have some monstrous injustices in the laws relating to seduction changed, and there would be a great deal more done in the way of the Married Women's Property Bill than had already become law. He believed that the success of the movement would be advantageous not only to the other sex, but also to the nation and the broad instincts of morality.

Miss BECKER, who was very warmly received, spoke in support of the motion, which was carried.

Mr. J. S. WRIGHT proposed, "That all persons whose names are on the burgess roll in boroughs should also be on the roll of Parliamentary voters, whether they are women or men; and one register should serve for Parliamentary and municipal elections." He said it was a great anomaly that in Birmingham when they had elections for different purposes they should have different voting lists. If they had only one list there would be a great advantage to the town. He moved the resolution

heartily, because in the course of his experience in elections where women had voted he had never experienced any difficulty in regard to them. He had no reason to fear any ill result from the placing of women on the Parliamentary register, seeing they were now allowed to vote in municipal matters.

The resolution was supported by Miss LILLIAS ASHWORTH and the Rev. BROOKE LAMBERT.

The Rev. S. A. STEINTHAL (Manchester) supported the motion, and said that it was absurd to suppose that in a town like Birmingham, which was strongly Radical, all women, if they had the franchise, would give their votes for Conservatives.

The motion was carried unanimously.

Miss STURGE, who was received with applause, moved that petitions embodying the foregoing resolutions be adopted, and signed by the Chairman on behalf of this meeting; and that memorials be sent to Mr. John Bright, Mr. Muntz, and Mr. Chamberlain, members for this borough; and to Mr. C. N. Newdegate and Mr. W. B. Davenport, members for the county, requesting them to support Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women.

Mr. T. BESTON seconded the motion, which was passed; and the proceedings terminated with a vote of thanks to the Mayor for presiding.

The following is the text of memorial to Mr. John Bright:—

To the Right Honourable JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.

The Memorial of the Inhabitants of Birmingham in public meeting assembled on April 17th, 1877, in the Town Hall, Birmingham, Sheweth,

That representation being now reduced to a household qualification, it is unjust to exclude from the Parliamentary franchise, on the ground of sex only, those householders who fulfil the conditions which entitle persons to a vote in the election of Members of Parliament.

That a Bill for the redress of this injustice has been introduced in the House of Commons, and awaits the second reading on June the 6th.

That this Bill does not disturb the conditions of the franchise beyond what has been already sanctioned by Parliament and the country, and does not introduce any new principle or theoretical opinion which it might be found difficult to adopt.

That for ages past there has been an extensive franchise in all parishes, which franchise has always been exercised without distinction of sex. That when Parliament came to legislate for Poor Law Unions, it adopted the same franchise as the base of the Union franchise. When it came to legislate for Corporations and for Schools, it adopted the same franchise as the basis, and that there can be no valid objection to having the same franchise conferred upon the people for elections to the House of Commons.

That the electoral franchise is that which makes the only difference between despotism and freedom all the world over. That any government is free to the people under it, whatever its form, where the laws rule, and the people are a party to the laws; but so long as half of the people are debarred from the right to exercise the electoral franchise, the section so debarred are not in the sense of the constitution a party to the laws, and the government of the United Kingdom is not free for the whole people.

Your Memorialists gratefully recognise the inestimable value and vast force of your labours for the political enfranchisement of your countrymen. But there is now a movement for a wider political justice than any which you have hitherto advocated. Your Memorialists trust that your political sympathies may advance with the advancing needs of time. They hope that you will no longer rest content to see one-half of the subjects of Queen Victoria, and that half those whose influence would most naturally be exercised on the side of peace, kindness, and morality, excluded from all share of representation in the counsels of Her Majesty's Government; but that you will believe and act on the belief that the depths of the misery, and crime, and ignorance in this country can only be reached by an appeal to the justice, the intelligence, and the virtue in the entire people.

Wherefore, your Memorialists pray that you will give your support in the House of Commons to the Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women.

STOCKPORT.

A crowded public meeting was held on April 9th, in the Mechanics' Institution, Stockport. The chair was occupied by HENRY BELL, Esq., Mayor of Stockport. Among those on the platform were J. Smith, Esq., J.P., ex-Mayor, Mr. Thomasson, Rev. J. Black, M.A., the Rev. W. A. Blake, and two ladies who accompanied Miss Becker and Miss Biggs.

After some remarks by the CHAIRMAN, the first resolution

was moved by the Rev. W. A. BLAKE, seconded by Miss CAROLINE BIGGS, and supported by Mr. J. PENNINGTON THOMASSON, and carried unanimously.

The Rev. J. BLACK rose to move the second resolution, when a young gentleman in the gallery called out that he had an amendment to propose. The Mayor ruled that he was too late, as the resolution had been passed, but that he could speak on the second resolution if he came on the platform. The resolution to adopt petition and memorials was then moved by the Rev. J. BLACK and seconded by Mr. JAMES SMITH, ex-Mayor. The young gentleman then came to move his amendment. He gave his name as Cadwell, from Heaton Chapel. He said women were the weaker sex. A woman required the support of Parliament to enforce the right of voting if she got it. If a woman required the support of Parliament to enable her to vote, how could she possibly on earth vote by herself? Did a man ask for the support of Parliament to enable him to vote? ("Yes.") He thought when a man voted he generally exercised his own discretion. ("Ought to do.") Women, the ladies, he should say, had already the right to vote in municipal elections, and what more did they want? He believed woman was intended for man's comforter. He ventured to say this was a fair question. ("Let's have th' amendment.") He begged to move an amendment:—"That woman is totally unfit to exercise the franchise in Parliamentary matters, or if she is—('Are you capable of judging?') He did admit in some cases that women were perfectly capable of exercising the right they were seeking for now, but not in all cases. There were bad women and there were good women. There was a greater amount of ignorance existing as to political opinions among the female than among the male portion of the country. For why, it was not a man's duty to go to the wash tub and scrub floors; it was a woman's duty, morally speaking. ("Your mother wants you.") They seemed to be getting very restless, and he would thank them for their kind attention. The speaker then subsided.

The MAYOR said he did not recognise any amendment in what Mr. Cadwell had said. He called on Miss BECKER, who spoke in support of the resolution, and in doing so she referred to the support which had been given to the measure by the members for Stockport since the introduction of the question in 1867. The resolution was carried unanimously, and the meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chairman.

SCARBOROUGH.

A large and enthusiastic meeting was held on April 10th in the Old Town Hall, Scarborough. The room was crowded in every part, the ladies, who were certainly not in the minority, apparently taking great interest in the proceedings. The MAYOR (B. Fowler, Esq.) presided, and there was also on the platform, Miss Becker, Mrs. Oliver Scatcherd, Miss C. A. Biggs, Councillors Whittaker, Land, Hutton, White, and Hick; the Revs. Mesquitta, Tetley, Briggs, and Thornley; Captain Brockwell, Dr. Cross; Messrs. W. Rountree, J. B. Baker, A. J. Tugwell, H. M. Cross, together with a number of other ladies and gentlemen.

The MAYOR, in opening the proceedings, said he had received letters from Mr. A. Duncombe and Dr. Teal, expressing approval of the object of the meeting, and regret for non-attendance.

The first resolution was moved by Dr. CROSS, seconded by the Rev. W. H. TETLEY, supported by Mrs. OLIVER SCATCHERD and Miss C. A. BIGGS, and carried unanimously.

Captain BROCKWELL moved a resolution for the adoption of petitions and memorials, which was seconded by Mr. H. M. CROSS, and supported by Miss BECKER.

Mr. T. P. WHITTAKER, who rose in the body of the hall, said

that he was one of those foolish persons who objected to the suffrage being extended to ladies. Mrs. Scatcherd had stated as a right of women to the vote that they were not exempt from taxation, but they were not specially taxed. It was also stated that women as a class were not represented, but they were not a class—they were a sex common in every class of society. A tax which referred to women also referred to men, and when men taxed women they also taxed themselves. They had been told that man took all the property; yes, and he took the responsibility also. (Laughter.) If the wife got into debt, the husband had to pay. He became responsible before the law for that property, but if women also held the property a good deal of trickery would ensue—(hisses)—they should wait to hear what he had to state then they could hiss. Men could then defraud their creditors by simply stating that the property belonged to the wife, and how could they prove otherwise? The woman could not claim the children because the husband was responsible before the law. If a man deserted his children he was fetched back, but if a woman ran away the law did not interfere. If the burthen rested upon the husband and responsibility was vested in him, he ought to claim the children and the property also. He had yet to learn that Town Councils had been elevated since women possessed the vote. Some one said that it was not good for man to be alone; but many a man wished he was alone. (Laughter and applause. A Voice: "Are you speaking personally?") As to the political part of this question. He as a Radical should not feel quite satisfied to find himself in company with a strong Conservative upon it. He strongly objected to taxation being a test of voting. Other points were also objected to, Mr. Whittaker stating that he should not have risen to object had anybody else better done so.

Mr. J. B. BAKER spoke in favour of the resolution.

Mr. Councillor WHITTAKER, who was received with loud applause, said this was a free country and they lived amongst civilised people, and he trusted that they knew how to treat with respect persons differing from them in opinion. His son had drawn a picture showing what a disastrous thing it would be if a man was to pull one way and his wife the other. Well, this was not a greater calamity than the father pulling one way and the son the other. He did not think the world would come to an end in either case. Some thought that women were persons likely to be influenced by others. Well, there was nothing unreasonable and illegitimate in this. If a lady could be influenced by a persuasive or kind gentleman to give a vote in the direction he thought good, it was certainly as legitimate a proceeding as it was to influence a man by a pint of beer, and this they knew was no uncommon case. He was sorry that they had lived to learn the fact pointed out by his son, that the giving of votes to ladies had seriously lowered the standard of the School Board and Corporation of this borough, and he felt it the more because it was only recently that he had become a member of that august body. They had opened the door to allow the light through the aperture—the sunshine of freedom, citizenship, and power—well, supposing they took down the shutters too—(applause)—that there might be more light, more sunshine, and more power. He believed in the reasonableness and justice of the extension of the franchise to the ladies, though such a thing might be to the interest of the Conservative party. (Laughter.) Perhaps it might be that Conservative gentlemen were more polite, more courteous, more attentive to the ladies. The Radicals must improve their persons, pay attention to their manners, don white waistcoats and kid gloves, and go in for the franchise, then they would see whether the Conservatives would be returned.

A vote of thanks to the Mayor for presiding concluded the proceedings.

WORCESTER.

A largely-attended meeting was held on April 18th, in the Music Hall, Worcester. The Mayor (Mr. M. Jones) presided, and on the platform were Mr. Airey, Mr. J. D. Clarke, Mr. Wetherall, the Misses Ashworth, Mrs. Ashford, Miss Sturge, &c. The usual resolutions were spoken to and carried.

TOWER HAMLETS.

A meeting was held in the Tower Hamlets Radical Club on March 27th, to hear an address from Miss Becker, Dr. Bickers in the chair. After the address a motion for a petition in support of the Bill was carried unanimously.

LIBERTON.

An interesting and well-attended meeting was held at Nether Liberton. A paper was read by Miss Ella Burton on "Political Women of History." In the discussion which followed, it was mentioned by Mrs. Masson that the appeal for professional and and class signatures had been cordially responded to.

DUBLIN.

A meeting in support of the extension of the franchise to women householders was held in the Antient Concert Hall, Dublin, on April 6th. Ladies and gentlemen in nearly equal proportions occupied pretty fully the lower part of the hall. Throughout the evening the respectable portion of the audience, who constituted the majority, showed a disposition to hear the lady and gentlemen speakers with attention; but a considerable number of individuals of coarser type indulged in interruptions from time to time, so much so that the Lord Mayor had repeatedly to request the interrupters to conduct themselves properly. Amongst those on the platform were:—Serjeant Sherlock, M.P.; S. M. Greer, of Londonderry; Rev. James Stevenson, Rev. H. G. Carroll, Abraham Sheekleton, Dr. Sigerson, Charles Casson, Henry Wigham, Mrs. Oliver Scatcherd, Miss Helena P. Downing, Miss Tod, Mrs. Casson, Mrs. Greer, Miss Corlett, Miss Hatchett, Miss Cusack, Miss Haslam, &c. On the motion of Mr. WIGHAM the chair was taken by the Lord Mayor.

Letters expressing sympathy with the movement were read from Mr. O'Shaughnessy, M.P.; Mr. William Johnston, M.P., of Ballykilbeg; Lord Talbot de Malahide, Sir Robert Kane, Benjamin Whitworth, M.P.; and Mr. Thomas A. Dickson, M.P.

Serjeant SHERLOCK, M.P., moved a resolution deprecating the exclusion of women who were legally qualified from the right to vote in elections for members of Parliament. In Liverpool women could vote for members of the municipal council. Irishwomen were deprived of that right, and seemed to be thus treated as inferior in the scale of civilization to their sisters in England. The right in question, from which women in the highest social rank and of the highest accomplishments were excluded, was exercised every day by men who were lowest in the social scale. Their immense empire was governed by a woman in a manner which contrasted favourably with the rule of many of her predecessors. (Applause.) The London University had consented to grant degrees and diplomas to lady students; and the Governors of Gray's Inn Hospital were about to establish a school of medicine exclusively for women. The cause of women's suffrage included amongst its supporters politicians of all schools. As to the idea that there was any danger to be apprehended from women if admitted to the franchise coalescing and acting in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the other sex, it was perfectly idle. Women would always differ in opinion amongst themselves just as much as men would.

The Rev. JAMES STEVENSON seconded the resolution. The distinction which they were endeavouring to remove was one created, not by God at all, but by the caprice of human legislation. In the Presbyterian Church, of which he was a member,

both men and women voted in the election of ministers, elders, and office bearers.

Mrs. OLIVER SCATCHERD who, with Miss Helena P. Downing, attended as a deputation from the Central Association, supported the resolution, which was declared carried amid cheers.

Miss DOWNING proposed the adoption of petitions to both Houses of Parliament, and memorials to the six members for Dublin city, county, and University, requesting them to support the Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women.

The motion was seconded by Mr. FAY, M.P., who said he was sure the interruptions had not come from men who had national principles in their hearts. (Hear.) He was himself a Nationalist, and he was sure that no man having a patriotic heart would object to extending the privileges of the franchise to Irishwomen. (Hear.)

Miss ISABELLA A. TOD supported the resolution, which was carried, and on the motion of Mr. C. EASOR, a vote of thanks was passed to the Lord Mayor, and the proceedings terminated.

DRAWING ROOM MEETINGS.

On the 7th April, a meeting was held at The Elms, Chiswick, the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Eiloart. Mr. Eiloart presided. Miss C. Biggs opened the discussion by moving "that the possession of the Parliamentary franchise by legally qualified women would be a benefit to themselves and the community at large." The Rev. John James (of Brentford) seconded the resolution. Mr. Brett criticised the remarks, moving an amendment. The discussion was carried on by Mr. Jeffrey, Mr. Knocker, Mr. Reed, Miss A. Shore, and the Rev. T. Slade Jones (Isleworth). The resolution was carried. Miss Blackburn moved, Mr. Jeffrey seconded, the adoption of a petition; this also was carried, and the meeting separated with a cordial vote of thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Eiloart.

On the 9th, a well attended meeting was held at the house of Mrs. Atkins, M.D., 68, Abbey Road, St. John's Wood, Mr. A. W. Bennett in the chair. Resolutions in favour of women's suffrage were carried unanimously.

DEBATING SOCIETIES.

RYDE, ISLE OF WIGHT.—At a meeting of the members of the Ryde Literary Society, on April 4th, a debate took place on the question whether the franchise should be extended to women. T. Dashwood, Esq., P.P., occupied the chair, and the subject was introduced by a paper on the affirmative side by Mr. J. Harmsworth. Mr. Spencer followed with a paper on the negative. The great majority of those present held up their hands for the affirmative motion.

DARLINGTON.—At a meeting of the members of the Debating Society, held Monday, April 9th, an interesting discussion took place on the question of the right of women to vote in all Parliamentary elections. An affirming resolution was carried by a majority of five.

KEIGHLEY MECHANICS' INSTITUTE.—At the annual general meeting of the above institute, held last month, for the purpose of electing a new committee, a lady was among the successful candidates. There were 24 nominations for 13 vacancies, two of the candidates being ladies. Miss Robinson, who was elected, stood eighth on the list; Miss M. E. Smith, who was unsuccessful, stood fourteenth, being defeated by only one vote. This is, we believe, the first time that a lady has been elected a member of the committee of any mechanics' institute.

PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Wednesday, April 18th.

MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY (SCOTLAND) BILL.

Mr. ANDERSON, in moving the second reading of this measure, said: It is to give to married women in Scotland the same privileges as those possessed in England—in fact, to extend to Scotland some of the protection given in 1870, by the Act passed through Parliament, mainly through the exertions of the learned Recorder of London. The object of the Bill, briefly described, is simply to enable a woman, even if she is married, to call her own her own. The law on this matter in Scotland is exceedingly bad. The only protection a married woman has for her property or her earnings is through the Court, and then it is only given in the case of a wife who has been deserted by her husband. The result of this state of the law is that unpleasant husbands, who would be far better away, do not desert their wives, but remain within reach, and so get hold of their earnings whenever it suits them. As for protection of property, there is none at all. The state of the law would be absolutely intolerable if it were not for the fact that bad husbands are the exception and not the rule. The protection orders obtained in the Court are insufficient. It is a very invidious thing for a wife to apply to the Court for protection against her husband, and she would submit to a great amount of injustice before she does it. For that reason I think her property ought to be made her own by common law, and that she should have the remedies of the common law to protect her rights. At present our law is actually a bribe, and confers a large premium upon unprincipled men to endeavour to get wealthy young women to run away with them. If men can induce girls to do that, naturally there are no marriage settlements, and the result is that, as soon as they have married, the personal property of the woman, or all that will subsequently come to her, becomes the husband's. Real estate does not become the property of a husband in this way, but he can deal as he chooses with the earnings, though he cannot make away with the property. He may thus, if he turns out a bad husband, dissipate all his wife's personal property—gamble it away, spend it in riotous living, spend it on mistresses if he likes; and this greater iniquity may happen—he may will it away, and it may transpire that the wife, when she finds herself a widow, may also find that her husband has willed away all her property to his mistress, and that she herself retains but a widow's portion of that which was really and entirely her own. Whether that depth of infamy is reached or not, the relatives of the husband may come in and take away a share of that which was her property. This law is a remnant of the old Roman law, by which a woman was simply the chattel of her husband, and not entitled to hold anything of her own—by which the woman and her possessions passed into the ownership of the husband. We have changed that law in the matter of sentiment, and the time has now arrived when it should be changed as a matter of law as regards property. It seems anomalous that we should consider a woman because she is married incapable of administering or dealing with her property. So long as she is a spinster she is able to deal with it, but the moment she becomes a wife she is incapable of doing so; and then, again, the moment she becomes a widow she is once more able to deal with it. Married life in Scotland is dealt with as if it were a state either of lunacy or criminality, for it is only lunatics and felons who are similarly incapacitated from dealing with their

property. All civilised nations except Scotland have changed this law long ago. It is thirty years ago since America relaxed it in some of the States, and I believe now that all the States, or nearly all of them, deal with the property of married women in the most liberal manner, and that most of those who were opposed to it are of opinion that it has worked extremely well. In our own colonies we have worked in the same liberal way. It is twenty years ago since the law was relaxed in Upper Canada. Seven years ago Victoria relaxed it, and England did the same a similar time back; but still the law in Scotland remains unchanged. That would not have been the case if women had received a little more influence in the matter of our legal legislation, and I appeal therefore to those hon. members who vote against giving women the franchise, and I say it is doubly incumbent on them to show that they are willing to protect the property of women, and save them from every possible injustice, seeing that they refuse to allow them to have some share in the legislation by which they are to be bound. The English law of 1870, although it made considerable progress in the way of protecting the property of married women, was not sufficient. So much was that the case that Lord Coleridge is about to introduce a measure into the other House, which in due time no doubt will be here, for remedying the defects in the English law. The English law affords protection in these respects: it gives married women all their wages and earnings, and all the investments she has been able to make out of these. It protects for her all deposits in savings banks, all moneys in the funds above £20, and all shares and debentures in joint-stock companies and benefit societies. It protects all the personal, however large, that may come to her intestate, and all real property, however large, that she may receive in the same way. There is a strange anomaly here, however, because where the property does not come intestate—that is to say, if it is bequeathed to her—then the husband gets all except £200 personality. This is a strange anomaly, for which I cannot account. Under the Act to which I refer a married woman can insure her own or her husband's life for her own benefit; she can maintain actions at law, and exercise all the rights of property. Further than this, under the English Act a husband is no longer liable for his wife's debts except to such an extent as he may have received property from her. That is one of the provisions I have introduced into the Bill. The other provisions I will briefly describe. After the passing of the Act women are to have a separate stake in their moveable property, and the rents arising from real property are also kept separate. Marriages contracted before the passing of the Act are to be exempt from its provisions, except with regard to property vesting after the Act passed. There is, however, a provision that in the case of marriages before the passing of the Act married people may come under the Act voluntarily on giving a certain notice and sufficiently guarding the rights of creditors. The fifth clause arranges for the protection of the earnings of married women, and is very much so in the English law; and the sixth provides that upon the wife's death the rights of the husband and the rights of the children shall be the same in regard to the separate estate of the wife as they would have been if the estate had not been taken away from the husband. The husband will no longer be liable for the ante-nuptial debts of his wife, except so far as he has received property from her. The wife's estate will be liable to household expenses, but there will be no interference with ante-nuptial contracts, except to give to those who are so imprudent as to marry without ante-nuptial contracts, something of the same protection as if such con-

tracts had been made. If, therefore, a rich girl runs away, and gets into the hands of a man whom her friends consider dangerous, they may exercise their influence over her to get her to create a separate trust, which she will have power to do, and in that way they would save her property from the husband. The Bill will also save the property of those people who are of a class who do not usually have ante-nuptial contracts, but who afterwards may become possessed of property. More than all, it will protect those wives who belong to that class who never have ante-nuptial contracts at all—the poor or earning classes. It is, however, only right that they should receive the protection which the Bill will give them for such earnings as they may be able to make. In short, the Bill gives nothing to any woman that her parents might not have given her by an ante-nuptial contract. I have no doubt every member of the House, when one of his daughters marries, takes care that she has an ante-nuptial contract, in order to escape from the present state of the law; and I maintain that this is an absolute and conclusive proof that the present state of the law is bad and intolerable. (Hear, hear.) I think we are shut up to the conclusion that it really is bad. If it is not, we ought to prevent people from entering into ante-nuptial contracts, because if the existing state of the law is good, we ought not to allow it to be evaded. As we are shut up to that conclusion, I hope this Bill may be permitted to pass its second reading without any opposition at all. In case any amendments are proposed in Committee, I shall, of course, be glad to take them into consideration, but I trust the House will now endorse the principle of the measure by reading it a second time. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. ROGER MONTGOMERIE was unable to assent to the proposal that the Bill should be read a second time without any opposition whatever. A woman in Scotland enjoyed rights which were unknown to the law of England. When she married, her husband, it was true, took possession of her property; but, after her decease, her next of kin, whether they were her children or not, received their share of the goods. Again, her husband could not deprive her of more than two-thirds of her property. He admitted, however, the necessity of making some alteration in the existing law. There were bad wives as well as bad husbands—(hear, hear)—and he did not wish to give bad wives the same power that bad husbands possessed at present. Unless this Bill were greatly modified, he should deem it his duty to vote against the second reading. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. M'LAREN said that as the hon. and learned member for North Ayrshire had admitted that some change in the law was required, it was not necessary to go into the details of the Bill at the present stage. The hon. member, while conceding that great changes ought to be made in the law, contended that great changes ought also to be made in the Bill. The latter, however, was a question of consideration in Committee, and if the Bill should reach that stage, his hon. friend the member for Glasgow would be willing to insert an amendment which the Lord Advocate might submit. It was said that bad husbands were very few in number, but the law was always made for the wrongdoer, and not for honest men. (Hear, hear.) If there were any husbands who abused the property of their wives, a law ought to be passed to remedy the evil. In Scotland a woman on the death of her husband was entitled to one-third of the whole of her property, and to one-third of the rents. In that respect his countrywomen had the advantage of their English sisters, but it was not right to say that if a woman had brought a large fortune to her husband she should not be entitled to take away more than two-thirds of her property. Why should he have a

right to take the two-thirds? (Hear, hear.) He thought the principles of the Bill were most just. Of course he reserved to himself the right to move amendments in Committee, but he did not think it would be wise to take up the time of the House by entering on a long discussion of the Bill on the present occasion.

Mr. ORR EWING, who was very indistinctly heard, was understood to say that the Bill had been described as a measure for taking the breeks of the man and putting them on the woman. (A laugh.) His hon. friend the member for Glasgow wished to make the presumption of the law the same as if there had been an ante-nuptial contract. This Bill would give power to a woman, if her husband misconducted himself, to have possession of the property which belonged to her. He was sure his hon. friend would allow the Bill to be modified in Committee, and therefore he trusted that the Government would assent to the second reading. (Hear.)

Mr. GRANT DUFF said no doubt it would be possible to amend the Bill in Committee, so as to make it a good Bill, but he thought his hon. friend the member for Glasgow and the other gentlemen whose names were on the back of the Bill would have exercised a wiser discretion if they had brought in the Bill in a form which all hon. members could unreservedly support. The Bill in its present form he could not unreservedly support, because it would make the law of Scotland very different from that of England as it was settled in 1870. He granted the hon. gentleman's contention that the law of England, as settled in 1870, was not exactly what we could wish it to be. (Hear, hear.) This he most fully admitted; but he thought that the passing of a law with regard to Scotland, which should be in some respects a better law than the law of England, would be less advantageous than assimilating the two laws at the present time and amending both. Therefore he should not be inclined to support the second reading of the Bill, unless he understood from Her Majesty's Government that they would only support it upon the understanding that it was to be so altered in Committee as to make the Scotch law correspond with the English law. (Hear, hear.) When the laws of the two countries as regards married women's property were made the same, a Bill might be brought in for amending both the laws, but it was undesirable to introduce greater confusion in the laws of the two countries by passing this measure as it stood. (Hear.)

Mr. MARK STEWART thought the reasons of the last speaker were worthy of attention. No one could deny that in Scotland great hardships were oftentimes entailed on married women. It would be easy to give many illustrations of this, and to make a long statement on the subject. The hardship frequently applied to persons who had not the means or the opportunity of having lengthy marriage settlements drawn up, and therefore such persons required some protection. It might be possible to amend the present Bill in Committee of the whole House, but his opinion was that it would be better to refer it to the consideration of a Select Committee.

Sir E. COLEBROOKE: We owe a debt of gratitude to my hon. friend for bringing this Bill so far in the direction of assimilating the law of Scotland to that of England. We are not bound to tie ourselves down by too strict a line, because it must appear to many that there are circumstances in this Bill which are worthy of great consideration. The law of Scotland is at present different from that of England, and I think that when we make any alteration, we are bound to consider to some extent the interests of the people of Scotland. There was one point alluded to by the hon. member for Ayrshire as to the rights of wives to the personal property of their husbands. I was under

the impression that the law does already give them that right, and if it is so, I think it is time it should be amended. A wife may not have contributed in any degree to the property during her husband's lifetime, and yet she and her relatives share it on his death. There was a case where a wife had not contributed a penny to a man, who had in fact married a servant, and on his death all her people came on his farm. These were cases that ought to be remedied. I object entirely to that part of the Bill which goes beyond the law of England, and which denies the claims of a wife until other claims are satisfied. If there is not to be joint-stock, let them be separately liable, and do not let the wife fall back on saying that is the husband's property. There are spending wives as well as spending husbands, and separation of interests ought to be an offence against the law. I will only say in support of the suggestions of another hon. member, that this is a Bill that might fairly go to a Select Committee. If there are so many points brought before this House my hon. friend will have little chance of carrying his Bill, but if it is sent to a Select Committee it may be put into a form that would enable it to pass this session.

Mr. WHEELHOUSE: So far as the law of both countries is concerned, that of England, however satisfactory to Englishmen, undoubtedly might be improved. I do not say that it is not right that the Scotch should have some of the powers they possess, but what I wish to provide is, that in dealing with the civil rights in both countries appertaining to married persons, there should be one general idea for the whole, so that Scotland and England may be brought much more in accord than they are at this moment. I speak the sentiments of a large number of people when I say it has pained them more than once, and not only pained them, but they have thought it a scandal, or something approximating to a scandal, that a person should be legitimate by the law of one country and become illegitimate immediately he gets over the border. Surely these are not matters for a small Bill like this. Let us have an assimilation of the law of one country to that of the other, and I think that may be satisfactorily managed. No one can doubt that there are clauses in the proposed Bill which are absolutely necessary. It is only right, fair, just, and equitable that the wife should be entitled to take care of her own wages—her own earnings; but I think it would be very injudicious indeed, and unwise, to give a married woman control over all her property, and to make her independent of her husband in every sense of the word. I know quite well that state of things would not be tolerated in this country for a moment, and I think it unwise to go so far as this Bill goes to promote such a condition of things in Scotland. On the other hand, if we can only assimilate the marriage laws of England and Scotland into one whole, so as to remove inequalities on the one side or the other, it will be a step in the right direction. (Hear, hear.)

The LORD ADVOCATE: In reference to this Bill, I desire to say, first of all, that I am of opinion that some alteration ought to be made in the law of Scotland with regard to the estate of a wife; and in the second place, that any alteration so made should be on the lines of the English measure of 1870. (Hear, hear.) I should certainly not have dreamt of opposing a Bill brought into this House with a view of effecting a change in the law of that character, but if it had not been for the explanation given by those who bring in the Bill, and have spoken in this House, that they did not intend to press the Bill to the extreme point that it reaches, I should have been disposed to ask the opinion of the House as to reading the Bill a second time. After the expression of opinion, however, from one side of the House and the other,

I cannot say that I see that it is improper not to offer any opposition to the second reading of the Bill. At the same time the House will allow me to make one or two observations as to the amendment of the law of Scotland, and as to the manner in which this very delicate and intricate amendment can be approached, and the mode by which improved principles should be introduced into such a measure. I do not refer to what appeared to me to be the somewhat extraneous advocacy of the hon. member for Glasgow, founded upon the supposed frequency of the abduction, or something like that, of rich heiresses by penniless gentlemen, who afterwards spend their fortunes. (Hear, hear.) I doubt whether that prevails to any great extent, or that there is any feeling in respect to property rights which would induce married women to feel themselves in the position of criminals or lunatics, or that anyone entering on matrimonial relations incurs in the slightest degree the charge of insanity. (Laughter.) It is necessary in reviewing the relation of spouses in Scotland, and the obligations that are intimately connected with them, to see which do and which do not exist in England. Whenever there is no marriage contract in England the husband can leave his wife penniless and disinherit his family. In Scotland, if the husband has a fortune, his wife has a certain portion of it. The husband comes under the obligation to leave his wife two-thirds and a portion to the children of the union. This obligation rests upon him, and in order to do that he is allowed to a great extent to obtain control over his wife's estate. I should take the opportunity of approaching an alteration in this state of the law with much of the care suggested by my hon. friend the senior member for Edinburgh. I cannot regard the change of law in this respect as tending to counteract the designs of bad husbands. On the contrary, it has appeared to me that you will get a great many cases of difference where both spouses were perfectly well behaved to each other and under no imputation. Those who are familiar with the law are perfectly aware of that circumstance, and it rather occurs to me that the proper principle to legislate upon in that case is to make a fair and equitable disposition of the property between the spouses and the children in cases where there is no contract. There are bad fathers as well as bad husbands, and it is desirable that certain rules should exist for the apportionment of an estate in the event of a will not being made. I do not say that the law that regulates the rights of spouses in the absence of contracts is a bad or infamous law; but I wish to point out what the effect of this Bill will be, and that may be summed up in a single sentence. It gives to a married lady the same control over her estate after marriage as before, and gives no more control to the husband. He has not even control over his wife, and any designing person who gets control over her may direct her property to himself. In that case it would subvert the ordinary relations of man and wife. It would create an empress and slave, instead of an emperor and slave, as is said to exist at present. The wife could incur any amount of domestic expense for herself, which the husband's estate would be liable for in the first instance, while her estate would not be liable except there was a deficiency proved in her husband's estate to meet the debts; and even then the lady has the best of it, because the husband might pay in the first instance, and his estate might be exhausted before a penny of the lady's is taken from her, and then the husband might have to go to prison, whereas she would be exempt. I have ventured to refer to one or two matters, but I wish to be understood that I have not referred to them for the purpose of opposing the second reading of the Bill, but because I wished to make it perfectly understood that the Government

gives its assent on the understanding that the Bill is substantially to be on the lines of the English Bill, and that we are not to discuss these extreme questions which have been alluded to to-day. With regard to the Committee on the Bill, I may state that I have been in communication with the hon. gentleman who moved the second reading of the Bill, and I am glad to say that he concurs with me in thinking that the Committee upon the Bill should not be taken until such time as the legal bodies of Scotland, who are greatly interested in the matter, and are possessed of much better information in regard to the practical working of the present system, have had an opportunity of considering this Bill, and favouring us with their opinions.

Sir G. CAMPBELL said he came down to the House to-night prepared to vote against the Bill, and he must confess that he was rather sorry he should not have an opportunity of doing so. But it did seem to him that the learned Lord Advocate had given excellent reasons why the Bill should not be accepted by the House. He thought that if this Bill was to pass, it would simply amount to this—that marriage would be reduced to a chumming together without any community of goods or community of interests. He had seen a good deal of the operation of a law of that kind, for the law which it was now proposed to introduce into Scotland was simply the Mohammedan law. According to the Mohammedan law, a woman after marriage occupied exactly the same position as if she were single. He had seen a great deal of the operation of that law in India, and he was bound to say that it worked very ill. Marriage was simply a civil contract according to Mohammedan law, and the consequence was that a man and woman were not bound together in a community of interests, or a community of goods. They were constantly squabbling and constantly going to law, and marriage was reduced simply to a contract to chum together. It followed that Mohammedan law afforded facilities for dissolving marriages, because if a man was bound to live with a woman under these conditions the man would rebel, and would naturally insist that, as other contracts were dissolved at will, marriage should also be dissolved in the same manner. He was altogether opposed to this Bill as it stood at present, but he thought it was in very safe and good hands, and if Her Majesty's Government thought fit to give a second reading to the measure, he for one should not take it on himself to oppose it.

Mr. SHAW LEFEVRE said it appeared to him that the arguments which had been used against this measure would apply equally to the Act of 1870. (Cries of "No, no.") That was the case. The Act of 1870 gave security to married women for their earnings. In fact, it appeared to be carried to a greater extent than was anticipated when the Act was passed, because he observed in a case before the law courts the other day it was decided that a married woman was entitled to keep a racehorse separate from her husband, and have the earnings of that racehorse for her separate use. As regarded separate property other than the earnings of a married woman, the Act of 1870 was in a very confused and complicated state. For instance, if property came to a married woman by descent, then it became hers absolutely for her separate use; but if property was left to her by will under her name as a married woman, then it went to the husband, unless the will provided that the property should be for her separate use. He ventured to say that the Act of 1870 was an incomplete measure, and he presumed his hon. friend the member for Glasgow felt that in extending the provisions of the Act of 1870 to Scotland it would be reasonable to review that Act, and see whether they might not go beyond that Act and secure a greater meed

of justice to the married women of Scotland. He ventured to suggest that the Bill should be read a second time and referred to a Select Committee, that Committee to take into consideration the present state of the law of Scotland, and how far it would be wise to go beyond the Act of 1870.

Mr. RAIKES could not understand the argument of his hon. friend opposite (Mr. S. Lefevre), inasmuch as the hon. gentleman was one of the original promoters of this class of legislation in the House. He wished to point out that the Bill of 1870 was a very different thing to the Act of 1870. The Bill as first introduced was a Bill very much on the lines of the present Bill. There were 25 clauses in the original Bill, of which 22 clauses did not become law. The clauses of the present Bill which corresponded with the Act of 1870 were clauses 5, 7, and 8. He trusted the House would remember what the learned Lord Advocate had already stated—namely, that in assenting to the second reading of the Bill, the Government were not in any way pledging themselves to the adoption of the measure in its present shape, because if it was insisted that the Government were to pledge themselves, he should be inclined to vote against the second reading. He understood, however, there was no such intention, and that they were merely proposing on the present occasion to endeavour to remedy the state of things in Scotland, according to the lines of the Act of 1870.

Mr. ANDERSON said as there was no opposition to the second reading of this measure, he had no right to reply, but he hoped the House would allow him to say that if the hon. Chairman of Committees (Mr. Raikes) proposed to eliminate 21 clauses out of his Bill of 10 clauses, he thought it would be a very difficult matter. He certainly was not disposed to fight for extreme measures, but surely, when there were such bad provisions in the Act of 1870 as had been alluded to in the debate, it was admissible to amend them in bringing in a Bill for Scotland.

Mr. CROSS: I should not have risen, sir, if it had not been for the observations which fell from the hon. member for Reading (Mr. S. Lefevre). The hon. member wants in Committee to go beyond the Act of 1870, and I only say that it is utterly against the understanding which we have come to. To such a proposal as that I am prepared to give my opposition.

Mr. SHAW LEFEVRE said he only suggested that the Committee should inquire whether it was desirable to go beyond the Act of 1870.

Mr. CROSS: I am not prepared to go beyond that Act, and that is the understanding which has been arrived at. I do not think that the country would for one moment consent to any such alteration. My opinion is that it would not be wise to lessen the marriage tie in any possible way—(hear, hear)—or to make such absolutely separate interests as would be likely to lead to such a result. I do not want to enter into the debate, but after what fell from the hon. gentleman opposite, I thought it my duty that I should enter my firm protest against what he has said.

The Bill was then read a second time, and the Committee was fixed for the 15th of May, Mr. Anderson stating that, if required, he would postpone the Committee beyond that period.

MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY COMMITTEE.

The Committee desire to call the attention of their friends to the debate which took place in the House of Commons on Wednesday, the 18th of April, upon the Married Women's Property (Scotland) Bill, introduced by Mr. George Anderson, Sir Robert Anstruther, Mr. M'Laren, and Mr. Orr Ewing.

The Bill was read a second time without a division; but the

whole course of the debate shows how difficult it is for any Legislature to see justly the needs of an unrepresented class of the community.

The Committee urge all who wish to see the law with regard to the property of married women amended to petition Parliament *at once* upon the subject, as Committee on the Married Women's Property (Scotland) Bill is at present fixed for Tuesday, the 15th of May and as the second reading of Lord Coleridge's Bill, applying to England and Ireland, may not improbably take place about the same time.

Petition forms (printed and written), leaflets for distribution, and other papers may be had from the Secretary, Mrs. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY, Congleton, Cheshire.

Subscriptions should be sent to the Treasurer, Mrs. JACOB BRIGHT, 15, Cleveland Square, London, W.

TWO NOBLE WOMEN:

MRS. CHISHOLM AND MRS. NASSAU SENIOR.

Within the last few weeks two noble women have passed from a world which they leave better for their exertions and richer for their lives. On March 25th, Caroline Chisholm died at her residence in London, after a long illness, at the age of 67. Mrs. Chisholm was born at Wootton, in Northamptonshire, about 1810. Her father belonged to that class of Englishmen of whom Lord Macaulay says, "they are an eminently manly and true-hearted race." Her mother had charge of the family while it was yet young, her husband having died early. Left with easy means she gave to her children an education which at that time was accounted prodigious. The young girl who was afterwards to make such a stir in the world was accustomed to think upon subjects which even now are regarded as extremely difficult, and suitable only for minds of the highest calibre. When in her 20th year the future "Emigrant's Friend" was married to Archibald Chisholm, Esq., then serving in her Majesty's Indian army. Captain Chisholm was soon ordered to Madras, and he took his young wife with him. There she did good work in founding schools, but when she went with her husband to Sydney her true mission began. She organised homes for emigrants, and reformed their modes of transport. Through her personal efforts 11,000 persons were settled in Lomes in Australia. The governor of Sydney, who had formerly regarded her as a deluded philanthropist, now wrote to Mr. Gladstone, saying that "Mrs. Chisholm, a lady who had on many occasions made herself useful to the Government," had pointed out certain desirable reforms in the carriage of emigrants. The reforms were forthwith effected. Earl Grey wrote asking for an interview and suggestions. The Emigration Commissioners listened to her representations. A committee of the House of Lords summoned her to give them the assistance of her testimony. Lord Grey impressed upon Sir C. A. Fitzroy, the new governor, the importance of regarding her views. Honoured and confided in, she now founded the Family Colonisation Loan Society, repudiating Government and parochial assistance. By a singular combination of abilities she succeeded in conveying emigrants for £12; and Mr. Lowe, then (1850) a member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, alluded to her efforts in these terms:—"There is a very benevolent and amiable lady (Mrs. Chisholm), to whose exertions too much praise cannot be given, who is now sending emigrants out at £12, but the Government price is £18. Thus, then, it seems there is not only more independence, security, and family ties preserved, but it is a cheaper mode." Her influence at home was enormous—abroad it was unparalleled. The governor allowed her the privilege of franking

letters, a privilege only once before granted to a woman—the wife of the President of the United States: Lord Stanley (late Lord Derby) wrote to the governor—"You will express to Mrs. Chisholm the high sense I entertain of her services in behalf of the emigrants." Mr. Lowe declared that her mission was "one of the most original that was ever devised or undertaken by man or woman, and the object, the labour, and the design were all beyond praise." In all her toil she never lost sight of those duties which are the dearest of all. Her six children and her husband possessed her affection and her untiring love. The *Freeman's Journal*, from which we have extracted the above particulars, concludes its notice by the following words from the preface of a work describing her life and labours: "We have seen no seeking in the spirit of vanity for public applause, but a high-minded principle pervading every act, a self-denying zeal daily in operation, a practical wisdom ever exercised, a gentle womanly sympathy ever applied, an intuitive knowledge of the secret workings of the human heart added to a woman's keen penetration, by which the feelings of others were divined and led into a channel for public benefit."

Mrs. Senior's labours are more recent, and will be fresh in the memory of most of our readers. We shall therefore content ourselves with quoting the following tribute to her memory:—

IN MEMORIAM.

JANE ELIZABETH SENIOR.

Died, aged forty-eight, at 98, Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, on Saturday, March 24; buried at Woking Cemetery, Monday, March 25.

Mrs. Senior, sister of Thomas Hughes, Q.C., and daughter-in-law of the late Nassau W. Senior, was appointed by the Right Honourable James Stansfeld, President of the Local Government Board, first, in February, 1873, temporary Assistant Inspector, and in January, 1874, permanent Inspector of the Department, to inquire, and report, especially, on the female departments of Workhouses and Workhouse Schools, and the care and education of female pauper girls and the nursing of infants. She was forced by the illness of which she died to resign this employment in November, 1874. Mrs. Senior was the first woman ever employed in such a capacity.

Not for the bright face we shall see no more,
Not for the sweet voice we no more shall hear,
Not for the heart with kindness brimming o'er,
Large charity, and sympathy sincere.

These are not things that ask a public pen
To blazon its memorial o'er her name;
But, that in public work she wrought with men,
And faced their frowns, and over-lived their blame.

Yet never swerved a hair's breadth from the line
Of woman's softness, gentleness, and grace;
But brought from these an influence to refine
Rough tasks and squalid, and there leave its trace.

Honour to him who in a sneering age
Braved quip and carp and cavil, and proclaimed
A woman's fitness pauper needs to gauge,—
In purpose strong, in purity unshamed.

For paupers to have sex: the workhouse walls
Hold mothers, maidens, and girl-babes, on whom
A woman's eye with woman's insight falls,
Sees its own ways for sunlight to their gloom.

And so this noble and brave lady turned
From glad life, luxury, and thronging friends
That hung on her sweet voice, and only yearned
To guide her holy work to useful ends.

But Death to Life begrudged her, striking down
The task unfinished from her willing hands,
Leaving to women yet to come the crown
Of her left life's-work, that for others stands.

Then lay and leave her in her quiet grave,
Where the sun shines undimmed, the rain falls clear,
And birches bend, and deodaras wave
Evergreen arms of welcome o'er her bier.

Punch.

LADIES AS POOR LAW GUARDIANS.

Miss Maud Stanley, cousin of Dean Stanley, has been elected a guardian of St. Anne's, Soho, Miss Margaret Collett has been re-elected for the parish of St. Pancras, Mrs. Howell has been also elected for the same parish, and Miss Merington has been re-appointed for Marylebone. *Punch* remarks that Mr. Bumble was thrown into a violent fit of indignation when he encountered the intelligence in a newspaper. Our contemporary says:—"The election of ladies to the office of guardian is regarded by Mr. Bumble as a most unprovincial innovation. He is highly scandalised to see that it is an increasing 'abit, and thinks the ratepayers might just as well put them wicious paupers under the wings of guardian hangels at once; which would be making the workhouse the very reverse of the place as it was intended for." The sentiments of Mr. Bumble appear to prevail in the vestry of St. Pancras, for we learn that at the first meeting of the newly-elected Board, the two ladies were excluded from the committee on the workhouse and the schools, and thus practically excluded from the work of the Board. The *St. Pancras Guardian* remarks that the logical construction of the course they have adopted is that they as a Board are to usurp the place of the ratepayers, and decide who shall be allowed to perform the duties of guardians of the poor. Miss Margaret Collett writes to the same paper stating that in 1876 she was elected a member of the Board of Guardians, and this year re-elected without a contest. She sought election on the ground of her experience among the poor, and because of the extreme importance of having the assistance of ladies in the constant detailed supervision of the workhouse and the school. In that supervision she has for twelve months laboured faithfully and actively, and not without success. When the Board met for the purpose of nominating the several committees for the ensuing year, they deliberately excluded her from these committees. All the most important work of the Board, and especially all the work at which a lady can be of most use, is and must be done at these committees; and the result of the vote is practically to turn her out of the workhouse and the schools.

We learn, however, that doubts have been raised as to the legal qualifications of both the ladies to serve on the Board at all, and that the question may have to be decided by the Queen's Bench.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN INDIA.

Professor Fawcett, M.P., presided on the afternoon of April 19th at a meeting held at the Langham Hotel, Regent-street, when Lady Anna Gore-Langton read a paper on "The Social Condition of Women in India." In proposing a vote of thanks to her ladyship, Professor Fawcett said as he had never visited India his own opinion was worth nothing, but he might mention that he had that morning received a letter from a gentleman of high standing in the Indian Civil Service, who, referring to the lecture they had heard, said, as far as his own observation went, he could testify not only to the accuracy but also to the good sense of all the remarks made by the lecturer. For himself he must say the subject was one of great importance, and the lecturer had truly told them that unless the condition of women was improved the condition of the country could not be advanced. That was true of England, France, and America; it was true of every country, and it was particularly true of an Oriental country like India, where the women from time immemorial had occupied a position, comparatively speaking, much lower than that enjoyed in Western civilization. He thought

the lecturer had with great sagacity pointed out that one of the very first things that ought to be striven after—a reform which, as it were, lay at the basis of every subsequent improvement—was that a strong and vigorous effort should be made not only by the English Government, but by the English people, who had taken on themselves a great responsibility in assuming the rule of 200 millions of people, to improve the education of women in India, and that there must be and ought to be a field of inexhaustible interest in elevating the social and moral condition of the vast population whose affairs for good or for evil we had undertaken to govern. On the motion of Mr. Ashurst, a cordial vote of thanks was given to Professor Fawcett, and the proceedings closed.—*Times*.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR FEMALE MEDICAL STUDENTS IN PARIS.—£100 per annum for five years, £75 ditto, £65 ditto, £55 ditto, £45 ditto, £35 ditto. These scholarships will be awarded to women who obtain the diploma of *Bachelier es lettres* and *Bachelier es Sciences restreint*, in Paris, after Nov. 1st, 1878, under the following conditions:—1. At the time of presenting the diploma mentioned above the candidate must not be over 30 years of age, and must not have been registered as a medical student in Paris before October, 1877. 2. At each examination held at Paris for the diploma, the highest scholarships then unappropriated will be offered to the women who have passed in the order of merit as shown by the published results of the examination. 3. Any person accepting a scholarship is considered to bind herself to study in Paris during the following five years according to the usual course prescribed for medical students. 4. In case of any person holding a scholarship giving up her medical studies before she has taken her M.D. degree in Paris, it is expected that she will either produce a certificate signed by two qualified medical practitioners to the effect that her health renders it impossible for her to continue her medical studies in Paris, or that she will repay the amounts she has received in respect of her scholarship. Application to be made to Miss Orme, 38, Chancery Lane, London, E.C.

The last legal obstacle in the way of women students of medicine has been removed by the consent of the governing body of the Royal Free Hospital to admit them to clinical instruction. Before next winter all arrangements will be completed, so that a complete medical education may henceforth be obtained by women without leaving London.

KIDDERMINSTER SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION.—At the recent election for the School Board at Kidderminster, a lady, Mrs. Talbot, came forward as one of the four Nonconformist candidates, who were all returned. Mrs. Talbot stood fourth on the list, and polled 1,819 votes.

WOMEN AND THE JEWISH CLUB.—At a conference of metropolitan club representatives on questions of club organisation, Mr. Davies (Jewish Club) said the special feature of this club was the admission of women as members. The prejudice against their admission was disregarded, and the experiment had been attended with satisfactory results. Women are admitted on the same conditions of payment as men; the whole family at times going together, and this is found to contribute to the success of the club. The Jewish Club is composed of 600 men and 250 women.—*Workmen's Club Journal*.

The University of Calcutta has at length resolved to admit female students. At the debate in Council, the motion allowing women to acquire degrees was carried, with only one dissentient voice—namely, that of Father Lafont, a Roman Catholic clergyman.

MANCHESTER NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE. SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS RECEIVED DURING APRIL, 1877.

	£	s.	d.
Mrs. Stephen Winkworth	55	0	0
Mr. Hugh Mason	10	10	0
Mrs. William Hargreaves	5	0	0
Miss Rigby	1	1	0
Mr. Peiser	1	1	0
The Dowager Lady Emerson Tennent	1	1	0
Mrs. Rhys	1	1	0
Mr. H. Measham	1	1	0
Mrs. Edward Carbutt	1	1	0
Mr. A. Ireland	1	1	0
Miss Ashworth	1	1	0
Miss Lillias S. Ashworth	1	1	0
Mr. J. Atkinson	1	0	0
Mrs. W. Haslam	1	0	0
Miss E. Collierig	1	0	0
Mrs. Brankston	0	10	6
Mr. E. A. Lupton	0	10	0
Miss Atkinson	0	10	0
Miss Maria Atkinson	0	10	0
Miss Gouch	0	5	0
Mr. T. H. Martin (London)	0	5	0
Mr. J. G. Blumer	0	5	0
Miss M. Shatwell	0	2	6
Miss Jane H. Simpson	0	2	6
Rev. J. Page Hopps	0	2	6
Mrs. Busby	0	2	6
Mr. J. Paterson	0	2	6

YORK—(continued).

Mr. E. T. Wilkinson	0	10	0
Mrs. Sherwood	0	5	0
Mr. Parker	0	5	0
Mr. Empson	0	5	0
Mrs. Rotherford	0	5	0

SCARBOROUGH.

Mr. A. D. Cross	0	10	6
Mr. Joseph Petrie	0	10	0
Mr. Councillor George White	0	5	0
Mr. Frederick Pontifex	0	5	0
Mrs. Rowntree	0	5	0
Mr. Alfred J. Fugwell	0	5	0
Mr. John W. Teale, M.A.	0	5	0
Mr. Plummer Yeoman	0	2	6
Mr. Henry M. Cross	0	2	6
Mr. S. Woodhouse	0	2	6
Mr. J. Hildyard	0	2	6
Miss H. P. Theedam	0	2	6
Mr. J. B. Baker	0	2	6
Mr. R. Murgatroyd	0	2	6
Mrs. Marris	0	2	6
Mr. John Beckwith	0	2	6
Mr. Councillor Cockerill	0	2	6
Mr. Maude	0	2	6

BATLEY.

Messrs. Jos. Parker and Sons	0	10	0
Mr. Samuel Jubb	0	10	0
Mr. William Senior	0	10	0
Mr. W. J. R. Fox	0	5	0
Mr. Wm. Vero	0	2	6
Mrs. David Vero	0	2	6
Mrs. Abernethy	0	2	6
Mr. Wm. Blamires	0	2	6
Mrs. Preston Sheard	0	2	6
Mrs. Wm. Ellis	0	2	6
Mrs. Wood	0	2	6
Mrs. Ellis	0	1	6
Mr. Allen	0	1	0

ALFRED S. STEINTHAL, Treasurer. £94 5 0

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH OF NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE. SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS RECEIVED FROM MARCH, 1876, TO MARCH, 1877.

	£	s.	d.
Henry Hawkes, Esq.	2	2	0
"Z Y X"	2	2	0
Mr. Councillor Hadley	1	1	0
Carried forward	25	5	0

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS (continued).

	£	s.	d.
Brought forward	5	5	0
Joseph Chamberlain, Esq., M.P.	1	1	0
Miss Chamberlain	1	1	0
Miss C. Chamberlain	1	1	0
Miss Bailey	1	1	0
Mrs. George Dixon	1	1	0
Mrs. Wm. Middlemore	1	1	0
Mrs. O. C. Osler	1	1	0
Mr. Councillor R. F. Martineau	1	1	0
Mr. Councillor Pickering	1	1	0
Mr. F. Ryland	1	1	0
George Baker, Esq., (Mayor)	1	1	0
Mr. J. E. Baker	1	1	0
Charles Sturge, Esq., J.P.	1	0	0
Miss Sturge	1	0	0
Mrs. A. Southall	1	0	0
Mrs. Tyndall	1	0	0
Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Taylor	1	0	0
Mrs. Arthur Albright	1	0	0
Mrs. C. Mathews	0	12	0
Mrs. W. B. Smith	0	10	6
Mrs. Twigg	0	10	6
Mrs. R. W. Dale	0	10	0
Mrs. Wm. Kenrick	0	10	0
Mrs. Southall	0	10	0
Mrs. Ashford	0	10	0
Mrs. Goodrick	0	10	0
Mrs. Wm. Rogers	0	10	0
Mrs. R. C. Barrow	0	10	0
Mrs. F. Impey	0	10	0
Mrs. Cattell	0	5	0
Miss Kimpton	0	5	0
Miss Foxall	0	5	0
Rev. T. G. Crippen	0	5	0
Mrs. Bartlett	0	5	0
Mrs. J. Cash (Coventry)	0	5	0
Mrs. G. B. Kenway	0	5	0
Mr. Councillor Perkins	0	5	0
Mrs. Saxelby	0	5	0
Misses Steadman	0	5	0
Mr. T. V. Gardner	0	5	0
Mrs. R. Impey	0	5	0
Miss J. M. Hill	0	2	6
Miss Eliza Orme	0	2	6
Mr. Pank	0	2	6
Miss Dixon	0	2	6
Mrs. Archer	0	2	6
Mrs. James Johnson	0	2	6
Mrs. Wm. Matthews	0	2	6
	£33	7	6

CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

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