LETTER

BY

Mrs. Josephine E. Butler,

READ AT THE

World's Women's Christian Temperance Union Meeting at St. James' Hall, London, May 6th, 1892.

PRINTED BY PERMISSION.

"8 North View,
"Wimbledon Common,
"*May 5th*, 1892.

"Dear Friends,

"I am very much grieved to be prevented by weak health from attending your meetings. I have not yet been able to leave my house since my severe illness. I feel little competent even to write as I should wish on the subject of your meeting. What little I say must be on the subject of Social Purity, which I rejoice to find is now an acknowledged item in the programme of the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union. I have fought a long battle in my day, which was, as you probably know, against the scandalous endorsement by our Legislature of the idea of the necessity of vice, involving the legal enslavement of a portion of female society. This conflict of the past is, I imagine, very much forgotten at the present day, and our younger workers may never even have heard of it. I wish to recall an incident in that conflict. It was in a long night of March, 1883, in which a discussion of our subject was going on in the House of Commons. We had arranged—we women—to hold a devotional meeting during the whole of the time that Parliament sat, and to continue it even through the night if the debate continued so long. I came and went during that night from the House of Commons to the room of our meeting, which was near. In that room I observed women of all ranks, from elegantly dressed women, some few even of our aristocracy, to some of the most ragged and miserable outcasts of the purlieus of Westminster. I was glad to see

them kneeling side by side. There were earnest prayers born of that deep sorrow of heart which all good women felt then on account of the injustice and cruelty of which Parliament had been guilty towards us. There were many tears shed and prayers offered. Then a venerable American lady rose and said: 'Our tears are good, our prayers are better, but it would be better still if behind every tear and every prayer we had a vote at the ballot box.' We all said 'Amen' to this sentiment. Now this question of the women's vote is to the front again, and it is so much on my mind that it is impossible for me not to refer to it. Purity and temperance have been promoted greatly by the efforts of women, and will be so, I hope, more and more. The results of these efforts are felt already to some extent in the home, the school, the university, the workshop, the drawing-room, &c.; but what about Parliament? What about the personal character of our legislators? About the prevention of evil laws, and the enactment of good laws for the furtherance of morality, social justice, and purity in Society?

"We may pray and we may preach about these things, and we may raise our voices to some little extent during the excitement of a contested election; but that is not enough. My friends, we must have the suffrage. It is our right,—and it is cruel, and a continued injustice, to withhold it from us. It has lately been said that the women generally of the country have not shown any desire for the suffrage. Some years ago I can assert that the women of the country showed a very great desire for it. Men do not know that at the bottom of that desire, underneath many other good motives, there lies a bitterness of woe which is the most powerful stimulus towards the desire for representation in the Legislature. I am sometimes afraid that one of these days some other terrible injustice may be enacted in Parliament through which women will again suffer as they did under those laws I have alluded to. Perhaps it might not be an altogether bad thing, if it caused women to utter once more the bitter cry to which none of our legislators could pretend to be deaf. But have we not, as it is, sufficient trouble, and misery, and degradation among our own sex to make us utter even now the bitter cry,—a cry, however, at the same time of hope, courage and confidence?

"I look upon the right of representation as one of the most powerful means towards the attainment of that purifying of the moral atmosphere, and that correction of evil traditions among us at which we all aim. Think for a moment of the state of London, of New York, and other great cities peopled by the Anglo-Saxon race!

"Is it not a perpetual, enduring disgrace to us that even at this day thousands of women walk the streets of London who are given up to a life of vice—to a cruel enslavement—often induced by extreme poverty and friendlessness. Now I am not aiming at this moment at stimulating Rescue work. That is a very needful and a very Christlike work; but I regard as far more important our influence upon our fellow *men*. We should aim at prevention in the widest and highest sense. We must prevent evil by changing public opinion, by bringing all the forces of heaven and earth to bear on this awful question of the great social vice, which has been truly called by the late M. de Pressense 'the typical crime of the universe, including in itself all other crimes.' Ambulance work is no doubt good and necessary; but it would be far better to put a stop to war, than that we should merely continue to bind up the shattered limbs of soldiers ruined by war; and rescue work is only ambulance work in the moral world. We must go more to the root of the matter. But until we women have a voice as citizens, our influence in the efforts to change and purify public opinion will not be so powerful as it ought to be. Men will not regard our words nor understand our actions as they ought to do.

"I am very sorry for those good men who deny us the vote; for in denying us our just rights they are standing in their own light and retarding human progress.

"The Law of God rests its Eternal Throne upon the basis of human equality. It is strengthened and not disturbed by diversity of Sex; but it is both weakened and disturbed by the attempts of men to interfere with and arrest its just progress. No doubt most of you are aware of the fact which I have seen published in a New York paper, that a Bill has been brought before the legislature of New York this Session to regulate the business of public prostitution in the several cities and towns of the State of New York. The Bill licenses houses of ill-fame, registers all women known to obtain a livelihood by immorality, and places them under police and medical superintendence and espionage. The editor of the *Philanthropist*, of New York, says: 'This revival of Regulation propagandism here at a time when in European

countries, as in Belgium, Holland, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, and even in France (its stronghold), influential and already partially successful efforts are in progress for its abolition, is indeed astonishing and much to be deplored. . . . Unremitting vigilance will be required to prevent the consummation of these immoral legislative schemes, which are fraught with untold degradation to both sexes, and with grave peril to the individual, to the home and to society.'

"We are all looking forward to next year's great 'World's Fair' at Chicago, and I feel personally deeply anxious that this question of Social Purity, and of the perpetually renewed attempts in America to degrade and enslave women for purposes of vice, should be seriously taken up and worked at by us women, previous to the date of that great gathering in America.

"I ask myself—why should we be content with a mere watching against and prevention of one attempt after another? Might we not aim at some movement of so powerful and prevalent a kind as would prevent these materialistic agitators for State Regulation of Vice from ever again venturing to bring forward their horrible schemes in any part of our respective countries?

"I cannot at this moment clearly point out to you any more practical steps than those you are taking to this end: but I know that Christ has said, 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth,' and that that power is at our disposal if we have the faith and resolution to take hold of it. Why should we not? These are days of great spiritual miracles, and I trust that these miracles will not be wanting in the region in which you and I are working and striving.

"I remain,

"Yours loyally and affectionately,

"JOSEPHINE E. BUTLER,

"*President of the Purity Branch of the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union.*

"*To the* PRESIDENT W.W.C.T.U. MEETING
AT ST. JAMES' HALL."

Copies can be had of Mrs. A. TANNER, 37 Durdham Park, Redland, Bristol. Price 2/6 per 100.

THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE APPEAL.

Central Committee,
National Society for Women's Suffrage,
10, Great College Street,
Westminster, S.W.,
January, 1894.

Dear Madam,

More than six months have now elapsed since it was resolved, at a meeting of the General Committee of this Society, to promote an Appeal in favour of Women's Suffrage to Members of the House of Commons, from women of all classes and all parties. The scheme received generous offers of co-operation, so that it was eventually arranged that the work of collecting signatures should be carried out by a Special Committee formed for that sole purpose, consisting of ladies connected with various organisations for active public work amongst women.

The time is now at hand at which it was originally requested that all signatures should be sent in, in order to have all prepared for the Session of 1894. The Committee, therefore, now desire to give their members and friends some account of what has been

done or may yet be done to assist in further extending the Appeal.

The present position of Parliamentary business indicates that a longer time may be allowed for the collection of signatures than could have been at first anticipated, and the Special Appeal Committee have therefore decided not to call in the books till March 31st.

The work of collecting signatures has been carried on partly by organised volunteer systematic canvass, partly by supporters working individually amongst their friends. In both lines of work much energy has been shown. Numerous meetings have also been held in support of the Appeal, including public meetings in Huddersfield, Kettering, Jarrow, Liverpool, Manchester (3), Mansfield, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Northampton, Shields, Tynemouth and Ventnor. Eight drawing-room meetings have been held in Birmingham and its suburbs in connection with the Birmingham Women's Suffrage Committee. Conferences of workers and drawing-room meetings have also taken place at Bradford-on-Avon, Brighton (4), Bristol (4), Clifton, Eccles, Falmouth, Leeds, Luton, Melbourne, Nottingham, Oxford, Reigate, Truro and Tunbridge Wells, and in different parts of London.

In addition to the above, which were held expressly in support of the Appeal, the Appeal has been

advocated at numerous meetings held in connection with political associations.

A list of the principal meetings will appear in the "Englishwoman's Review" for January 15th. A list of ladies who have rendered valuable support to the Appeal will also appear in that Review.

The Committee earnestly beg those friends who have not yet returned their books of signatures to kindly send in all that are already filled at once, either to the office of the Central Committee, to their local centre, or to the Special Appeal Office, as the case may be, and to continue working for additional signatures till March 31st, when all signatures must be sent in.

We remain, dear Madam,

On behalf of the Committee,

Yours faithfully,

MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT,
Hon. Sec.

HELEN BLACKBURN,
Secretary.

NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

REPORT

OF A

PUBLIC MEETING

HELD IN THE

HANOVER SQUARE ROOMS, LONDON,

ON MONDAY, APRIL 28th, 1873,

E. B. EASTWICK, Esq., M.P., in the Chair.

PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, 9, BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.

1873.

PUBLIC MEETING.

ON Monday evening, April 28th, a public meeting was held in London in the Hanover Square Rooms. Long before the hour at which the chair was taken, the hall was crowded in every part, and when at eight o'clock Mr. Eastwick, M.P., the chairman, came upon the platform, a most enthusiastic demonstration took place. Amongst those present were—R. Ward Jackson, Esq., M.P.; R. N. Fowler, Esq., M.P.; D. C. Heron, Esq., M.P.; Sir Harry Verney, M.P.; Wm. Johnston, Esq , M.P.; Duncan M'Laren, Esq., M.P.; Miss Gurney, Miss Le Geyt, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Arnold, Mrs. Sims, Mrs. Buckton, Mrs. Lucas, Mrs. J. Stansfeld, Rev. Dr. Fraser, Mrs. Jacob Bright, Miss Tod, of Belfast; Lady Belcher, Rev. A. G. L'Estrange, Thos. Webster, Esq.; Mrs. Webster, W. H. Ashurst, Esq.; Mrs. Sheldon Amos, Miss Wolstenholme, Colonel and Mrs. Brine, W. D. Christie, Esq., C.B.; C. H. Hopwood, Esq.; James Hole, Esq.; Sir John Murray, Lady Anna Gore Langton, Professor Newman, Madame Venturi, Mrs. Thomas Taylor, Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Garrett Anderson, Mrs. Westlake, Miss Beedy, M.A.; Rev. E. A. Fitzroy, Mrs. Lucas, Miss Hamilton, Mr. Hoskins, Miss Becker, Rev. B. Glover, Miss Crowe, Miss Stevenson, Miss Sturge, of Birmingham; Miss Boucherett, the Provost of Dumbarton, Miss Downing, Col. Richardson Gardner, Mr. Stone, Lewis Morris, Esq.; Mark Marsden, Esq.; Mr. and Mrs. Wakefield, of Dover; Miss Dick, of Burntisland; A. J. Williams, Esq.; Miss C. A. Biggs, Mrs. Eastwick, Mrs. F. Malleson, Miss Agnes Garrett, Miss Rhoda Garrett, F. A. Allen, Esq.; J. S. Symon, Esq.; Miss Apps and Miss Dunbar, of Dover; Miss H. Blackburn, &c.

The CHAIRMAN, after a few prefatory remarks, said this was the sixth anniversary of the great national movement for the promotion of women's suffrage, which began in 1867. It was his conviction that they had no reason to be dissatisfied with the progress they had made, or be doubtful of the ultimate result. One of the most common arguments that had been used by the opponents of the Bill which was now before the House had been cut from under their feet by the Ballot. (Cheers.) It used to be said, at every debate on this question, that the suffrage ought not to be conceded to women because it

would expose them to all the uproar and disturbance attending a contested election. Uproar and disturbance on such occasions were things of the past, thanks to the passing of the Ballot Bill. He never himself thought there was anything in that argument, but it was necessary to lay some stress upon it, because the great leader of debate, Mr. Gladstone, thought so much of it that he suggested, as a means of avoiding the difficulty, the Italian plan of giving women votes by deputy. The next encouraging fact was what had taken place in connection with School Boards. Mrs. Grey, who was a candidate at the School Board, went down when hundreds and thousands of working men were hurrying to the hustings, and they stood aside for her to pass, and took off their hats as they gave her their cordial wishes and support. (Cheers.) Very gratifying was it to reflect upon the great success which had attended the efforts of ladies desiring to obtain seats on the School Boards. Eighteen ladies had been elected on the School Boards for Scotland. Another gratifying fact to be mentioned was that in the great public school at Harrow fifteen of the masters had signed a petition in favour of women's suffrage; and in the University of Cambridge a large proportion of the tutors had subscribed to it, including all the tutors of Trinity College. In the debate of 1871, Mr. Bouverie said that the desire for women's suffrage had died out in America; the right honourable gentleman's expression was, "The women's game is played out." (Laughter.) Was it played out? One of the articles of the convention which nominated General Grant especially called attention to the women's suffrage movement, and urged its great importance. The men who stood at the very summit of literature and oratory in America supported the movement. Such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mr. Higginson, the essayist, Mr. Wendell Phillips, the great orator, and Judge Hoare. Mr. Emerson had said that the women's suffrage movement was an era in civilisation. In the great territory of Wyoming, which would, he hoped, become one of the states of the Union, the suffrage had long been given to women, and had been exercised by them most faithfully and successfully. Mr. John Stuart Mill, in the debate of 1867, said that if the law denied the vote to all but the possessors of £5,000 a year, the poorest men in the nation would now and then acquire the suffrage; but neither birth, nor fortune, nor merit, nor intellect, nor exertion could ever enable a woman's voice to be heard in the Parliament whose laws touched her interests as much as any in creation. (Cheers.) He (Mr. Eastwick) trusted those words would soon be applicable only to the past, and he earnestly appealed to the meeting to go on and maintain the struggle with the same moderation and patience that had characterised it hitherto, and which were the best guarantees of success. (Cheers.)

Mr. R. N. Fowler, M.P., wished to say why, ever since he had had the honour of voting, he had voted in favour of Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill. Sometimes it was said that the proposal was a great innovation in the institutions of the country; this was a proposition he utterly denied. The change, if change it were, had not been made recently, it was made by an Act which was passed as long ago as the year 1835; it was made by the Poor Law Act, under which ladies were allowed to vote in parochial elections, and he would challenge anyone to deny that the exercise of the franchise by ladies at such elections had not been attended with the greatest advantage to the administration of the great Act. We had therefore nearly 40 years' experience, and it had been an experience of a most satisfactory character. More recently we had the experience of the municipal elections, and the result had been equally satisfactory. Taking these facts into consideration it certainly was not now necessary to argue that the time had arrived for going a step further and applying the principle already conceded to Parliamentary elections. (Cheers.) He had not yet heard who was to lead the attack on Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill. On previous occasions it had been Mr. Bouverie, who upon this question had not acted consistently with his own principles or the traditions of his family. The passing of Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill he (Mr. Fowler) believed would be a general advantage to the country, and no sound or valid argument could be brought forward against it. The day could not be far distant when a general election would take place. It might be this year, or it might be next, but it could not be far distant. The friends of the woman's suffrage movement could not expect much from the present House of Commons, because, in view of its approaching dissolution, the votes were given more with reference to the hustings than anything else. The great fact to be borne in mind was that the country would soon be appealed to, and he would, therefore, entreat the ladies to use their influence, and the gentlemen to give their votes in favour of the candidates who would pledge themselves to support this great measure. (Cheers.) He moved:—"That to recognise sex as a ground of disqualification for voting in the election of members of Parliament is contrary to the principles of English representation, unjust to those excluded, and injurious to the whole community." (Cheers.)

Miss Becker, in seconding this motion, said the arguments in favour of the principles it embodied had been so well and so often put before the country that very little more was now necessary for those who had been so long working for the cause than to give some account of the progress made. The agitation had in fact progressed at a rate which could not be surpassed in the history of any other political movement.

With but small means at its disposal it had produced a great effect. Since September last upwards of 150 public meetings had been held in various parts of the country in support of Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill. They had all been addressed by ladies, and at all of them resolutions had been passed in support of the Bill. Meetings had been held in Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, and Birmingham, and in every instance the verdict had been the same, namely, a unanimous assent to the justice of the measure. Not only, however, had great public meetings so pronounced, but municipal councils had adopted petitions in favour of the principle. Upwards of 30 town councils had petitioned for the Bill, including such important bodies as the councils of Manchester, Edinburgh, Bath, Dewsbury, Middlesboro', and many other places. The members of these councils had had experience of Women's Suffrage in the election of those bodies, and had therefore recommended the Bill to the House of Commons. There had been in addition memorials to Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli, praying for their support to the principle of the Bill. They had been signed by upwards of 11,000 women; and it had been sought to have many places represented rather than many names from each place, and the memorials therefore represented a force of public opinion amongst women which ought to have great weight with the gentlemen to whom they were addressed, and with the nation. (Cheers.) The question was felt by women who were working and thinking to be one of deep practical earnestness. It was sometimes said that women had not sufficient political education to fit them for the franchise; she believed the amount of political education among women was greatly underrated by men, and that the political education of both men and women was not so good but that there was room for improvement. (Cheers.) But whilst men had every opportunity of improving their political education, women by the fact of their political disabilities were debarred from much of this educational process. (Cheers.) Sometimes that objection might be made by men who did not think it a desirable thing that women should obtain political education or think intelligently on political matters. She had nothing to say about these, but to those who did believe that women ought to have an influence in the country, whether directly or indirectly, she would ask what opportunities women had of acquiring political education while they were shut out from a vote? (Cheers.) Political education amongst women must be acquired in the same way as amongst men, and when women had more political power there would arise leaders amongst them who would bring to bear upon political matters not only the intelligence which was common to all, but also opinions especially advanced from a woman's point of view. It was

natural that women should speak more effectually to women than men do, but in the present state of affairs the women who thought on political matters were in a manner compelled to be silent on public questions. Women of all shades of political opinion were seeking the franchise; but if any woman who was prominent in this question desired to give effect to her sentiments she was told she must not do so because the suffrage cause would be injured. On this account, thoughtful women were compelled to hide their sentiments lest it should injure the cause. This had had a disastrous effect upon the growth of political life. There were many social questions which were of deep interest to women, and upon which they held strong opinions; amongst others she might mention the Bill to render legal marriage with a deceased wife's sister. A great many women had petitioned for that Bill, as some had petitioned against it; but it was hardly possible for a woman to take an active part on that Bill without giving offence to one or other among the Members of Parliament who are voting for the suffrage. She had even heard it said that certain members refused their support to women's suffrage because women had petitioned against the Deceased Wife's Sister Marriage Bill. Such a state of things could not be favourable to a development of political opinions amongst women, and it was a strong reason for removing their disabilities. Again, it had been said that the possession of the suffrage would expose women to various corrupting political influences. That objection applied equally well and with still greater force to the municipal franchise; municipal elections were very distinctly political, but the influences brought to bear upon municipal voters were mostly of the narrow, more degrading, and least elevating kind, whereas in Parliamentary elections we had something higher and broader. Under the existing state of things, therefore, women were exposed to the worst kind of political influence, and shut out from the higher influences of politics; and so long as women had the municipal and not the Parliamentary franchise they were at a disadvantage as compared to men. There was now a Bill before Parliament ostensibly to assimilate the municipal franchise in Ireland to that in England; yet the framer of the Bill had limited the franchise to men. She hoped their Parliamentary friends would take care that this omission was rectified, and that the women ratepayers of Ireland were allowed the same privileges as their sisters in England. (Cheers.) It was very striking to read in the debate on the Ballot Bill the extremely elaborate provisions made to secure the franchise to the illiterate voter. This was the cause of a feeling of shame to many intelligent women, who, though admitted on the School Board, are excluded from the franchise where the poorest and most ignorant of men were admitted. In

old times there was a law called benefit of clergy; reading was so rare an accomplishment that when a man possessed it he could not be hanged, and could save his life by reading a verse. (Laughter.) If something like the converse of that law were adopted among women, and the same provision were made to enable a woman to vote who could prove to the satisfaction of a returning officer that she could read and write, the result would be gratifying. (Laughter and cheers.) Another objection was that the giving of a vote would involve women in considerable publicity and turmoil; but that objection was done away with by the granting of the School Board Franchise and the right of sitting on School Boards. The position of a voter in a constituency was not necessarily one of publicity at all. Any woman could go and give her vote under the Ballot Act with no more publicity than going to a place of amusement. The position of a candidate at a great popular election was, however, one of great publicity, and no person could be elected on a School Board who did not make their views known to the electors, and in some degree become personally acquainted with the great body of the constituency. The constituency that elected the School Board of Manchester was one of the largest in the three kingdoms, and in that constituency women were invited to become candidates; and it was perfectly ridiculous to say that women might do this and yet not be permitted to give a vote for the Parliamentary Members for Manchester. (Cheers.) As to the reluctance which some professed to feel at involving women in the excitement of political discussion, they were already involved in it by the elections to which she had referred; for there was no branch of politics which involved more fierce discussions than that in which the politico-theological element entered, as at School Boards, and to the full force of which women were exposed. It was surprising that the House of Commons should refuse women this vote. In spite of what the hon. member who preceded her had said, she confessed to being one of those who did expect something even from it, for she expected something like logical consistency in the arguments it brought forward. (Cheers.) And she did not see with what consistency the House of Commons could give women as much as it had given and withhold the rest. She had some faith in the logic of men—at least they were very fond of telling us they were guided solely by logic and reason, and not by emotion or prejudice. (Laughter.) The present was a peculiarly fitting time for passing Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill. We were on the eve of a general election. In the earlier years of the present Parliament it was urged as an objection to the passing of the Bill that the addition of so large a body to the constituency would require that Parliament should be dissolved in order that the opinion of the new constituency might be taken.

Now then was the opportunity; before appealing to the country let this new constituency be admitted, and then the next Parliament would represent a very much wider body of opinion. (Cheers) She would not say that the return of any member to the House of Commons would be influenced by the vote he gave on this question, and she felt very certain that no member would lose a single vote in consequence of having given a vote for this measure of justice. (Cheers.) There was in Lancashire a short time ago an election in a large constituency. There were two candidates before the electors—Conservative and Liberal—and both were questioned as to whether they would, if returned, support Mr. Bright's Bill. The Conservative unhesitatingly replied that he would vote for the Bill; the Liberal returned an evasive answer. A Liberal elector said that ever since he lived in the constituency he had voted Liberal, but if the Liberal candidate did not promise to vote for Mr. Bright's Bill he would vote for the Tory, and there were six or seven others whose votes would follow his. (Cheers.) Now, she did not wish to threaten members. (Laughter.) She would appeal to their sense of justice and right, at the same time reminding them that they might conciliate a great deal of kind feeling amongst the women of their constituencies by voting for this Bill. She for one never believed that any men deliberately intended to do any kind of injustice or wrong to women. If the wrong was done it was through ignorance. Men tried to do what they thought good for women; but women were now beginning to ask that their own voices might be heard in the matter. Finally, she would say that this women's suffrage movement did not proceed from any kind of antagonism or rivalry with men; it proceeded, on the contrary, from the deepest and truest sympathy in their highest hopes and aspirations. (Cheers.)

Miss Rhoda Garrett supported the resolution.*

A gentleman amongst the audience here moved an amendment, the effect of which was that it is contrary to the interests of the State and woman herself that she should be admitted to any share in politics. A young lady in the body of the meeting seconded the amendment, which was supported by Mr. Mason Jones. (We regret that we have not reports of the speeches of these two gentlemen.) On the amendment being put to the meeting it was rejected by an overwhelming majority.

Lady Anna Gore-Langton said: It seems to me, that on this subject, the removal of the political disabilities of women, there exists some misapprehension. When it is mentioned in society, its promoters are accused of wishing to revolutionise

* Owing to an unfortunate omission on the part of the special reporter, notes of Miss Garrett's speech were not taken, and the newspaper reports were too incomplete to make use of here.

domestic life, by setting women in authority over men. This is quite a mistake; we have no such intention. It would be folly, and would make women ridiculous. Speaking for women, I say that we have far too great respect for our husbands and fathers to wish for an instant, if even such a thing were possible, to deprive them of the headship of their families which God has given them. Happy wedded life, where husband and wife mutually aid each other, and share each other's interests and pursuits, is the greatest of earthly blessings, and is far too sacred to be interfered with. But such happiness is not intended for all. We do not ask for the franchise for young girls, or for wives whose hearts and whose hands are filled with domestic duties; but for those women who have the qualification which is required of men. Many circumstances of late years have combined to bring forward this claim. The spread of education and of cheap literature—the quicker circulation of ideas—the more active political life of men, consequent on the lowering of the franchise, which has brought political discussions into the sphere of many more homes—the rapid increase of the population—above all, the surplus of women, who in 1861 were nearly a million in excess of the men—this has obliged many more women to work for their own support. In 1861 there were between two and three millions of women working for wages, or possessed of independent means, and since then the number must have increased. These women contribute by their industry to the well-being of the country; they are taxed the same as men, submit to the same laws. Is it just they should not have the same privileges? In the beginning of the last century, a legal authority said he conceived "that giving a vote for a representative in Parliament is the privilege by which every Englishman protects his property, and that whoever deprives him of such vote deprives him of his birthright." Englishwomen possess property, how are they to protect it? In old days, when might was right, women for the sake of protection were married very early in life, or consigned to the cloister. Even then, under certain circumstances, they were allowed to choose a champion to fight for them. In these days, when law is paramount, there seems nothing unfeminine in giving a vote for a representative in Parliament. The Ballot Bill has made elections more orderly, and therefore facilitates women voting; but if men dislike seeing their faces at the polling booth, why not allow women voting papers, such as are used at the University elections; they can be sent by post. When women set to work in various ways, they are confronted by a kind of trades union among men, which tends to lower their wages, and keeps them out of many fitting and remunerative employments. When they examine the laws peculiarly affecting their

sex, their property, and their children, they find them partial, one-sided, and more in favour of the men than they would be if the opinion of women was also consulted. Only a few weeks ago, a Bill passed through the House of Commons, though it did not become law, which was entirely one-sided, for while it permitted a man to marry his sister-in-law, it did not permit a woman to marry her brother-in-law. Was that fair? The consequences of any alteration of the marriage law would be so serious to women, that surely none such ought to be made, unless their free and independent opinion on the subject can be arrived at, and that can only be done by giving them the franchise. The objection is made that if women vote they must also sit in Parliament. That is not a necessary consequence. Formerly women voted for directors of the East India Company, as they now vote for railway directors; but we have not yet heard of a woman becoming a director. Besides, clergymen have the franchise, but are prevented by special Act of Parliament from sitting in the House of Commons. Women are now trying to improve their position by obtaining juster laws for their sex, better education, and the removal of many impediments to their work. They are trying by perfectly legitimate means to use that influence which they are said to possess to so great an extent, and of which men seem so fearful, to obtain what is now the dearest wish of many a female heart—the political franchise. Is not this a higher, nobler aim than amusement, dress, or finery? These latter men give them to any extent, even to their ruin. Time will show if they will help them to their higher aims. I quite allow there are many women happy in quiet, domestic life, amply provided and cared for, who say they do not want a vote, for it would be rather a trouble. They are quite content with their position; and so they ought to be, and long may they continue so. They have everything to make life easy and comfortable. But generous and liberal minded women will allow that charity does not consist solely in almsgiving. There is a feeling—sympathy—by which we understand each other's hearts; it does more to bind us together, and to smooth away the distinction of classes, than even the giving of gold. Let us exercise that feeling, and imagine ourselves in the position of our less fortunate sisters, who are toiling on amid difficulties and temptations alone and unaided. In a short time, I think, many will then agree with the opinion I have long held, that in reason and in justice those women who have the required qualification ought to have the political franchise. I, therefore, move the second resolution, "That this meeting approves of the Bill entitled a Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women, and authorises its chairman to sign petitions in its favour to both Houses of Parliament."

Mr. Heron, M.P., seconded the motion. He had always been of opinion that the argument as regarded the property qualification in connection with this question was unanswerable, and that when a woman, either by the descent of property or by hard, earnest, and laborious work in the world, under difficulties and disadvantages that men could not dream of, had acquired property it should entitle her to the franchise in the same way in which it would entitle the possessor to a vote if he were a man. He never could understand the argument which would deprive her of it, unless she was, in the language of the opponents of the movement, physically unfit to exercise that very low privilege, the electoral franchise. By what was called the logical argument it was said that women were the creatures of impulse and passion, and that they were unable to understand the bearing of any logical argument. But if we were to go to logic and make that a test of the electoral qualification, who was there fit to vote, or even to be a member of Parliament. (Laughter.) There had been women, from Mary Wolstencroft downwards, who had been distinguished not merely as creatures of impulse and passion, but as powerful writers, clear and logical thinkers, able to express their opinions upon every subject as well as most men, and better than many. He would ask any opponent why on earth a woman should be deprived of the property qualification for the franchise? Women were allowed to exercise the municipal franchise, and in that way to influence the property of important cities; women not only voted, but sat on the School Boards, and had proved to be not the least influential, and certainly not amongst the worst members of the School Boards. (Laughter and cheers.) In the House of Commons there was an argument known as the pedestal argument: people said women ought to be placed upon so lofty a pedestal as never to be degraded so as to walk through the mire of a contested election—(laughter)—they must be put aloft to be admired, but must never exercise the rights and privileges of a free and free thinking British subject. The pedestal argument, however, had been very nearly exploded, because the gentlemen who used it never reflected, or, if they did think, put the thought aside, that while they said women should be placed upon a lofty pedestal politically, yet as regarded the ordinary daily life there was no domestic drudgery too severe, no work too hard for women. A favourite argument with opponents of this measure was that men were sent to fight and bear the hard burdens which the State imposed, and that women were exempt from them. He would ask that appeal to the common sense of the meeting whether in a great struggle affecting great nations the women did not suffer as much, nay ten times more than the men. (Cheers.) The mere excitement of battle was

nothing compared to the prolonged agony of those at home. In Paris, while the men in the field were receiving their daily rations, in the garrets and cellars of the besieged city the women were perishing of famine. Was not the name of Florence Nightingale embalmed in history as an answer to this peace and war question so often heard. (Cheers.) In every relation of life that he could discover, both as regarded their conduct and judgment, women, if admitted to the franchise, would be amongst the best electors of the British Empire. It was often said that most women were Conservative in politics. He said, if they desire to be Conservative let them, and if they choose to be Liberals let them. (Laughter.) He hoped it was not necessary to spend much time in proving to the meeting that there was no such very tremendous danger to the British Constitution if the few women who, by the descent of property or industry were entitled to the franchise, were allowed to exercise it, even though it involved walking through the mire of a contested election. And he would remind those who were continually speaking of the dangers of a contested election, that we had got rid of a great deal of the excitement and annoyance of the nomination and polling day by the beneficent operations of the Ballot, and there were now none of the scenes which of old discountenanced women from going to the polling booth. (Cheers.)

Miss Beedy, in supporting this resolution, said: A few years ago the English Parliament gave women the municipal franchise. Now we are asking you to see that the same arguments and same reasons that secured for women the municipal franchise hold with equal force in demanding for them the parliamentary franchise. If men own property on which they are taxed, or occupy houses for which they are rated, if they represent property and bear the burdens attaching to it, you say according to the constitution of the country they have a right to the franchise. No one inquires what their particular tastes or pursuits may be—no one asks whether they study language and history or science and mathematics; no one asks whether they are engineers or artists. These matters are not considered. If they represent property, it is admitted that they have a right to the franchise. Now we are asking you to admit that though the pursuits of women are necessarily somewhat different from those of men, that though their tastes and experience are somewhat different, yet that these facts should have no influence in excluding them from the rights that attach to the property that they represent. Some women are asking for the franchise as a defence to property; women who own large landed estates, or are heavily taxed, feel that they need the franchise to defend their individual rights. But a larger number of women are asking for the franchise as a

means to secure just legislation. (Hear, hear.) They see that wherever the interests of men and women conflict it is impossible for women to get full justice from men, just as it would be impossible for men to get full justice from women—(laughter and cheers)—that wherever the interests of one party is opposed to the interests of another party, it is impossible for either one to determine the strict line of justice between the two. A still larger number of women are asking for the franchise as a means of securing a wider sphere of employment for women, and better opportunities for education. (Cheers.) But I am sure that the demand that women are making is for the most part misunderstood. (Hear, hear.) A very common opinion is that women are putting themselves into antagonism with society—that they are trying to grasp a new range of duties that will necessitate a neglect of the homes and the children—that they are attempting to invade the sphere that nature has appropriated to men. The very reverse of this is true. Women are only trying to get themselves into a position where they can do their half of life's work better than they now do. They are trying to put more competent women in charge of the homes. It is a shame to us that more scientific knowledge is spent on the food and rearing of cattle than on the food and physical habits of children. (Cheers.) But the one is in the hands of men trained to scientific observation and habits of reasoning, and the other is in the hands of women, to whom it is thought to be a mistake to teach science and mathematics. (Laughter and cheers.) It is a small thing that mothers are devoted to their children; they must learn that good intentions can never take the place of wise action. The child is in their hands, and both the length and quality of its life are very largely at the mercy of their wisdom or folly. Mothers need to know more of the world than they do; they need to know what dangers there are, where they lurk, and what paths lead to them, in order to be able to successfully guard their sons and daughters against them. Women are not trying to take the place of men; they only want to come up alongside of them, instead of walking behind them; they want to do their part of the world's work as well as men do theirs; they want to tear down the old notion of the inferiority of women. Some fear that if women are allowed to come into political life that it will make them coarse and unrefined. What is it to come into political life? What is it that women are aiming to do in this respect? Simply to study and examine all the questions that affect the interests of society, and when they have formed opinions upon those questions, to give expression to those opinions in the form of a vote for a man who will advocate those opinions in Parliament. Do you think Lady Burdett Coutts coarse and unrefined for taking just this sort of

interest in the welfare of society? and do you think she would be any less refined if she gave a vote to help a man into Parliament who would urge forward her schemes by wise legislation? I venture to assert, there is scarce a man or woman in the kingdom who would not rejoice to have the franchise conferred upon Lady Burdett Coutts. But I suppose we must admit that the women whom this franchise movement is aiming to produce will not be quite like the typical women of the past. Women who think are different from women who live only in their senses and emotions. They cannot have the same infantile trust, they cannot be the same free-from-care balm. But in considering the desirableness of any exchange, we must compare what is given away with what is received. The American Indians, you know, sold their lands to the white men for glass beads and red paint, and does it not seem as though women, in giving up what they might have for what they do have, are making a somewhat similar bargain? (Laughter.) But you say women do not want the franchise. I believe it is true that the class enfranchised by the Reform Bill of 1832 did not desire the franchise, and that the majority of those enfranchised by the Reform Bill of 1867 did not care for the political privileges that were given them; and it is still more true that the American slaves did not want their freedom. A few of them did—the brighter ones, those who hired their time from their masters and managed their own lives, did want their freedom. But the majority of the slaves did not, and it is not strange that they felt as they did. The slave lost favour by wishing to be independent of his master; and women know that they lose favour with most men by wishing to be more independent of men than they now are. (Cheers.) No, women, as a class, care nothing about the franchise for women; not even the majority of those for whom we are asking it desire it. They have not thought about it; they are accustomed to the leadership of men in all political matters. There are as many men who desire the franchise for women as there are women who desire it; and the majority of women will desire the franchise when the majority of men desire them to have it. There are some men who are so generous as to lament that when women assume a position of political equality they will no longer be able to show them the courtesy they now do. This is a very amiable objection, and I am disposed to think we value the amiability of these men more than their good sense. (Laughter.) When the anti-slavery contest was raging in the American Congress, and the question was being discussed whether slavery should be allowed to go into the new territory of Kansas, a South Carolinian made a touching appeal to the House of Representatives, saying, if he should decide to remove his residence to Kansas he should think it a great hardship and

cruelty not to be permitted to take his dear old nurse with him, the good old woman who had watched his cradle and petted his boyhood. A veteran abolitionist interrupted him, saying, "Take your dear old nurse with you. We do not propose to prevent you from doing that, but we mean you shall not sell her when you get her there." Now women, as I understand it, do not propose to avoid any of the courtesies that it is the pleasure of men to extend to them, but they do think it best to get women into a position where it shall not be in men's power to abuse them, if at any time, by any chance, they should not be in a courteous mood. (Laughter and cheers.) But it is said that women know nothing of politics. It is true that there are many questions before Parliament in which women have little interest, and concerning which they have little knowledge. There are some legislative questions that men understand better than women, and always will understand better than women; and there are other legislative questions which women understand better than men, and always will understand better than men; and it is in favour of these that we wish to utilise the experience and wisdom of women. And what are the questions that are occupying the attention of legislators at the present time? How to prevent disease, how to administer the charities, how to educate the people, how to make men sober and temperate. Are these questions in which women feel no interest? are these questions in which women have no counsel to give? I take great pleasure in supporting this resolution.

Mr. W. Johnston, M.P., supported the resolution briefly. He recommended the supporters of the measure before Parliament to prosecute their movement until what they required was given. He referred to the observations of Miss Becker as to the defect in the Bill which she had mentioned, and he would take care, when the proper time arrived, to move an amendment that would give Irishwomen the same privileges as Englishwomen enjoyed. (Cheers.)

The resolution was carried with acclamation.

Miss Sturge proposed the third resolution, viz.: "That this meeting expresses its best thanks to those Members of Parliament who have voted in favour of the Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women, and hopes they will again support the measure when brought forward on Wednesday next." She always, she said, felt the poverty of language when she wished to move with any force a vote of thanks, and she was especially anxious that the present vote should be a cordial one. She wished as forcibly as she could to express her thanks to the gentlemen who had had the courage for so many sessions of Parliament to be in a minority. It did require courage to occupy that position, and perhaps it would require still more

courage to openly change your opinions. She hoped we should find the members who had already voted for this measure, which she so firmly believed was for the benefit of the community, would every one of them record their votes in its favour; she hoped the majority would have the courage to change their opinions, that she might be able to include them in the vote of thanks next time. (Laughter.) Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen last year spoke of the clouded existence of man, and she imagined it was in consequence of that cloud in which the majority of them had hitherto been involved that they were unable to see the question of Women's Suffrage as she would wish them to see it. (Laughter.) One of the gentlemen who had spoken upon the amendment which the meeting had rejected had gone back for an argument as far as Adam and Eve. Perhaps she might have recourse to her Quaker theology and quote the words of George Fox, who on one occasion, when some one wrote to him about the preaching of women, replied that before the fall Eve was equal to Adam, and that the New Testament restored that equality. (Cheers.) She had heard it said that women ought not to be entrusted with a vote, because they were liable to panic; but the conduct of certain opponents of the measure convinced her that panic was not confined to women. She assured the gentleman who had moved the amendment that there was no reason why they should be alarmed. Capacity, she believed, would find its own level anywhere; capacity was a divine law, and that man had little faith who fancied that God's law required bolstering up by the laws of man. (Cheers.) She would remind her hearers that progression was often liable to contract experience. A gentleman once told her that it was quite clear that it was not intended that women should speak in public, because of their voice. That was absurd, for Mr. Glaisher had stated that in a balloon a man's voice could be heard a mile, a woman's could be heard two miles. (Loud laughter.) One was continually hearing what had been termed the peace and war argument. It might be true that women could not go out as soldiers, but this was an argument that always reminded her that Dr. Watts, who was no mean authority, wished to confine fighting to dogs. (Renewed laughter.) She claimed the vote for women householders, who were paying their rates and taxes, on the ground of our common humanity. It all just came to this—either men were infallible or women had no souls. (Loud laughter.) At an old French Council in the thirteenth century the question was discussed whether women had souls, and it was carried by a majority of one. (Laughter.) The same question in a different form would come before Parliament when Mr. Jacob Bright introduced his Bill. (Cheers.) What had hitherto been the majority might again affirm their own infallibility,

and at the same time deny that women had mind and soul. She would remind them of this council of the 13th century which affirmed it by a majority of one; surely the present House of Commons might do as much for us as the French Council did for the women of the thirteenth century. (Laughter.) Liberty of conscience was a mockery without liberty of action; and women ought to be allowed the latter—allowed to act for the best according to their capacity. A gentleman wrote to her not long ago that he objected to women's suffrage because it would increase the power of priestcraft. Surely if a man's sense of right was to override a woman's sense of right that was mancraft and priestcraft too. She cared little for the sentimental pedestalism which was given to ladies, because it was generally taken from the level of womanhood to give to ladyism. (Cheers.)

Mr. W. H. Ashurst seconded the resolution. He referred to the official appointment given to Mrs. Nassau Senior, and said he was able to inform the meeting, on the best authority, that she did her work as well as any of her male competitors could do it. (Cheers.)

The resolution was then carried unanimously, and on the proposition of Mrs. Arthur Arnold, seconded by Mrs. Buckton, a vote of thanks was passed to the chairman.—This compliment Mr. Eastwick briefly acknowledged, after which the meeting closed.

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THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN

A SPEECH

DELIVERED AT A MEETING OF THE CENTRAL NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE, ON APRIL 18TH, 1893

BY

J. V. JONES

(Principal of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire)

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THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I could wish that this afternoon there were a more experienced Chairman. But when I was asked by our hostess to preside, I found myself obliged to subdue my inclination to refuse the honourable duty lest I should seem wanting in devotion to the cause for the advocacy of which we are assembled. Of that cause I have long been a convinced adherent. I regard it not as an ideal for an ideal state to be carried out in the dim and distant future, but as a reform urgently demanded here and now. Without it I believe we shall fail to solve successfully many social political problems that are pressing themselves with ever increasing insistance on the attention of our statesmen. The argument for it is so simple that perhaps the uppermost feeling in my mind as I begin to speak of it is one of astonishment that we should be meeting here to-day sixty years after the first Reform Bill to advocate it as a new reform : one of surprise that it has not been settled long ago as a necessary and logical outcome from the principles of the English constitution. And yet perhaps one ought not to be surprised; at least those of you who are working for the cause ought not to be depressed. Great is the power of reason and it will prevail ; but great also are the inertia of an old established and customary mistaken policy, and the impenetrability of a long-settled and widespread mental fog.

Is it not, I will not say "an absolute or ultimate principle of constitutional equity", but is it not a principle lying as fundamental in our system of parliamentary government, that every member of the community possessed of certain property qualifications, sane, well-behaved, of mature years, and capable of forming or being taught to form an intelligent opinion on public affairs should have a constitutional method of expressing that opinion by vote ; and that it is to the interest of the state and of good and stable government that the aggregate opinion so expressed should determine our legislation and control our executive? Let us take that principle as our major premise. The minor premise is this :—There are women who fulfil all these conditions—

women who satisfy the conditions embodied in our Registration Acts, women who are sane, well-behaved, of mature years, and capable of forming an intelligent opinion on public affairs.

The conclusion is—therefore these women are entitled to a vote; these women are entitled to have their opinion registered as part of that aggregate opinion which determines the laws under which they as well as men have to live, and the taxes they as well as men have to pay. I have ventured to present you with a syllogism—and I have done so because it is an epitome of many arguments in favour of woman's suffrage, and because the reasoning is cogent enough to shift the burden of proof on to those who are opposed to that reform.

The objector must find fault with one or other of the premises. He must say either that women do not fulfil the conditions, or that even if they do it is contrary to the nature of things or inexpedient in the interests of the State that the term "members of the community" in our first proposition should be interpreted as including women. I am going to speak of the first two of these lines of objection. I cannot in the time at my disposal do more.

1. Do women fulfil the conditions? The only condition with which we need deal is that of fitness to form or capacity for being taught to form an intelligent opinion on public affairs. The objector may maintain, as many do maintain, as I have heard many maintain in nicest language in the presence of intelligent women, strangely enough acquiescing in the dictum, that women are not reasonable, and therefore on the whole incompetent to form just, true and enlightened opinions on political matters. Perhaps it is put in this form, "Women have insight but cannot reason out a thing," or perhaps, "Women walk by faith," or some other smooth utterance is made to gild the pill presented for their acceptance. But the gravamen of the charge is the same, however choice the language, and it means simply this —that women are not reasonable creatures.

Now my experience (you must take it for what it is worth) leads me to meet this statement with absolute and unqualified denial. I have for twelve years been connected with colleges in which men students and women students are taught in the same classes—and I have been convinced by my experience of their work that the human intellect cannot be divided into male and female; that the man's mind and the woman's mind

are made alike; that properly trained the woman may become man's equal in all intellectual pursuits; and that she is fitted to shine side by side with man in all departments of human knowledge.

Believe me, in a few years, when the education of women has had more time to bear its fruit, we shall hear no more of this objection. It already comes too late in the day. The battle of woman suffrage is being fought and won in our schools and colleges and universities. The present line of objection cannot be maintained in a country where women are being educated into self-reliance and a knowledge of their own power.

But let every man take heed how he makes it, for in so doing (I hope I weigh my words) he is conspiring with the powers of darkness. If the objection on this ground is made and women accept it, you obtain indeed a logical defence against the extension of the suffrage to women—but you obtain it at a fearful cost. For in answering the woman demanding her citizenship, you have insulted her womanhood. If she believes you she will live on a lower plane, and maybe let her faculties slumber till she becomes, as in the history of many nations she has become, not man's mate but man's slave. This objection on the ground of intellectual inferiority (for that is what it comes to) is like the grave in "Hamlet":—

Hamlet.—What man dost thou dig it for?
Gravedigger.—For no man, sir.
H.—For what woman then?
G.—For none neither.
H.—Who is to be buried in it?
G.—One that was a woman, sir, but rest her soul! she's dead.

But the woman in England is not dead, and the objection of the objector falls blunt. There is in her capacity for intellectual achievement and there is in her the will to achieve.

2. I pass on to the second possible line of objection —an objection to the major premise of our syllogism— the objection that it is contrary to nature for women to be citizens. This objection may be called, ladies and gentlemen, the doctrine of "the sphere".

In the Debate last year in the House of Commons on the question of Women's Suffrage, the arguments for and against were put with exemplary skill, and among the speeches made against it I single out Mr. Asquith's as putting in very forcible language this doctrine of the "sphere."

At the conclusion of his speech he said :—" I have heard this measure recommended in the name of democracy. But it is not a democratic measure. The doctrine of democracy demands that we should equalise where inequality exists among things fundamentally alike; but not that we should identify among things fundamentally unlike. The inequalities which democracy requires that we should fight against are the unearned privileges and the artificial distinctions which man has made and which man can unmake. They are not those indelible differences of faculty and function by which nature herself has given diversity and richness to human society."

Nature *herself*, ladies and gentlemen. We notice, by the way, that Mr. Asquith makes nature of feminine gender while appealing to nature as arbiter on this important political question.

From this passage I infer that Mr. Asquith thinks that men and women are fundamentally unlike ; and that they are distinguished by indelible differences of faculty and function by nature herself; and that therefore it is contrary to nature that women should meddle with political matters, and in accordance with nature that so far as politics are concerned women should be like good children in the old saw, "seen but not heard". O nature! what impieties are uttered in thy name! *Are* men and women *fundamentally* unlike? Well, at any rate they are both *human:* that is a considerable fundamental likeness. That there is an indelible difference of function in certain respects is clear, but is it germane to our present discussion ?

And if I were to ask for proof of the natural and indelible difference of faculty I imagine Mr. Asquith would refer me to the work done in the world by men and women respectively. But who will say that the distribution of work in this complex society is made by nature in the narrow sense in which it is used by Mr. Asquith as opposed to the arrangements " that man has made and that man can unmake ". I think if we compare the position, the education and the opportunities of women with the position, the education, and the opportunities of men, we find that for the latter there are (to use Mr. Asquith's words) many of " the unearned privileges and the artificial distinctions which man has made and man can unmake ". And I claim from his own argument that it is the business of a true democracy to fight against them. The

appeal to nature is always a dangerous one. We are so apt to identify nature with our idea of it, and to receive a rude awakening. Mr. Asquith's appeal to nature as arbiter upon the question of woman's sphere reminds me of the story of the advocate who said at the beginning of what was to have been an eloquent peroration, " My Lord, it is written in the Book of Nature—" and was stopped by the question of the Judge, " I beg your pardon, upon what page ? "

The fallacy of assuming that unlikeness for certain purposes means unlikeness for others quite different is a common one in the art of debate. Let me pursue Mr. Asquith's method of reasoning a little further. Men and women are by nature fundamentally unlike, therefore if men write books, women ought not to write books. Men and women are by nature fundamentally unlike, therefore if men are school teachers women ought not to be school teachers. Men and women are by nature fundamentally unlike, therefore if men are cooks women ought not to be cooks. Men and women are by nature fundamentally unlike, therefore since men walk women ought not to walk—a conclusion which seems to be accepted in China. Each one of these propositions is as reasonable as Mr. Asquith's when he says that men and women are by nature fundamentally unlike, and that therefore if men vote at parliamentary elections, women ought not to vote at them.

And the fallacy, ladies and gentlemen, in respect of this particular question of the relation of women to political duty is nearly as old as human thought. It is laughed at, riddled with destructive criticism, and left a thing of shreds and patches in the fifth book of the Republic of Plato. Yet here it is still playing its part in all its old undiluted unreasonableness in perhaps the ablest speech made against woman suffrage in the House of Commons last year. Is it not time to have done with it ? Even antiquity cannot make it venerable. Let us bury it without any sort of ceremony.

No, ladies and gentlemen, there is no resting place for our objector in this doctrine of " the sphere ". He is forced to desert this high doctrine and to take refuge in denying our major premise on the ground that it is not at present expedient that women should be reckoned members of the political community.

We are now face to face then with the narrow issues of expediency. But the time I have allotted to myself is nearly up. I do not propose therefore to deal with

these very important points—and moreover it is unnecessary, for speakers coming after me will be able to grapple with many of them far more effectively than I could. I would only appeal to everyone to approach these considerations of immediate expediency with a free and open mind. If my arguments have been fair we must carefully clear our intellectual atmosphere of every trace of two impurities, of two things, difficult to get rid of indeed, but which we must expel even from the remote corners of our minds if we are to arrive at a true conclusion on this matter. (1) We must free ourselves from any idea that women so differ from men intellectually that they are unable to form true, just, intelligent and enlightened opinions on public affairs. (2) We must free ourselves from preconceived notions in regard to woman's sphere; from that inherited bias, that ancient prejudice handed down to us from the age of chivalry, which at once deified woman and enslaved her. Deified and enslaved? Yes, by no means an impossible combination. I remember reading a story when I was a little boy of a white man wrecked on a cannibal island. The cannibals counted him a god; so they did not eat him. But they so organised his life for him that he could do nothing he wanted to.

And I will in conclusion say only this:—Christianity has once for all secured the recognition of the moral individuality of woman. She stands as a person before God responsible for all her acts. In England she has achieved, too, legal personality; she can hold property, enter into contracts, and perform the duties of a legal person. But we still withhold from her political individuality, the rights of citizenship. And we do it *unjustly* to her detriment and to the detriment of the community. And so long as we do it one side of her nature is prevented from growing and can bear no fruit. We do her injury whether she is conscious of it or not, for we in part check the development of her truest and deepest self. But she does not and cannot suffer alone. For so stunted, unsympathising with men in many of the things that interest them most keenly, taking a scanty and unreal part in the discussion of many of the most vital questions of the time, she is the worse wife, the less perfect mother, the poorer friend: and the whole social and political organism suffers with her.

Women's Liberal Federation

SPEECH

BY THE

Countess of Carlisle

DELIVERED AT A MEETING IN

ST. JAMES'S HALL, on JUNE 19th, 1894

HELD IN SUPPORT OF

Amendments to Extend the Franchise to Women in the Registration Bill, 1894.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Our business to-night is of the utmost importance. We are met together, not to travel over the long history of our twenty-seven years' struggle for Women's Suffrage, not simply to make speeches about the abstract rights of women, but to demand, with all the insistance that in us lies, that now—in this actual Parliament—in this very session, our own Radical and deeply revered Government should listen to the prayer which we, the unenfranchised women of England, Scotland, and Wales, make to them.

We are strong in our thousands, but we are stronger still in the indomitable perseverance with which we shall continue to urge our plea. We of the W.L.F. are supporting, with the fullest sense of our responsibility, an amendment to a Government Bill. This amendment is ruled in order by the Speaker. It is strictly relevant to the enfranchising purposes of the Bill, and its effect will be by putting an end once and for all to the electoral disabilities of

women, to make the Registration Bill as truly democratic and epoch-making an achievement for the Government as is the great measure of the session, their far-reaching and historic Budget.

It is true many of us, perhaps most of us, hold that no Reform Bill can be thoroughly democratic which does not grant universal suffrage, and few can doubt that before long manhood suffrage will be included in the Liberal programme. Some say, therefore, "Let us wait to give women the suffrage, until we have passed manhood suffrage." But surely the fact that manhood suffrage is in sight, makes it all the more necessary, if, as we believe, Women's Suffrage must ultimately be conceded, that a certain instalment of women voters should be enfranchised at once, in order that many English women may be practised in their political duties before the full rush of universal suffrage overtakes us.

Our action in support of this amendment can in no wise be called factious. There is no politican in the Liberal ranks who can bring the smallest fraction of evidence against the record of unwavering party fidelity of which we Liberal Federation women make our proud boast. There are indeed some Liberal women who express a desire to form an independent woman's party, but our Federation rises above such a sectional short-sighted policy as this, and proclaims enthusiastically and honestly that it is an indivisible portion of that great Parliamentary party, which is striving steadfastly to carry out the many reforms that we Liberal women long for, and for the furtherance of which we demand the vote.

But because we are loyal Liberals, must we therefore be dumb, unless we have leave to speak? Not so. Faithfulness to a party can never degenerate into servility, without injury to the party to which allegiance is given. And, indeed, if the Executive of our Federation were inclined to bow down to official orders, the rank and file of our organisation would not tolerate such action. This Federation has no machine-made policy, dictated from any headquarters. Its policy is fashioned by the associations which have sprung up in every part of Great Britain, and it is the many, not the few, who are pressing this suffrage question to the front.

Does the Government hold our powers and our number cheap? Do they ask more work of us? more proof of our capacity, and of our genuine political fervour? Then let them set what task they will before us, if only they will not "smiling put the question by," if only they will give us a pledge that they will put our women's Reform Bill in its rightful place in the Liberal programme; and that task shall be performed. Are our eighty thousand members in the English and Scotch Federations not enough to gain us a hearing? Why then, let us recruit in the next few years into our ranks, up to a quarter of a million of women, and set them in the field as effective electioneerers. Will that suffice to make our Liberal leaders realise that we are powerful allies and that we are worth reckoning with?

They say we harass the Government. There have been importunate women before now, who troubled the law-givers, and we do not forget the woman in Scripture whom the judge speedily avenged for fear of her "continual coming"!

They say we jeopardise the Bill. Far from it. If we carry our amendment let the Government accept it, and then Mr. Balfour and Lord Salisbury, leaders of the Opposition, will probably offer less obstruction to the Government measure, since they are both favourable to the policy of Women's Suffrage.

They say we hamper the party. But if the Government leave the question open with their followers there can be no hampering of members. The hampering will come of any attempt to coerce the Liberal members into voting against their pledges and against their convictions. The leader of the Irish party, Mr. Justin McCarthy, is a veteran in our cause, and many of his fellow Nationalists are ardently desirous of helping us to the fulfilment of our aspirations, even as we have ever helped them towards the realisation of their own nationality; whilst a large number of Radical members will resent keenly any effort on the part of the Government to make them oppose what they hold to be an essentially Liberal principle.

We have faith in Lord Rosebery and we believe that he will desire to do us justice. In the first speech he made after he became Prime Minister [the speech at the Foreign Office], he rebelled strongly against the injustice of putting disabilities because of what he called "the accident of birth," on those who, like himself, were "ready to do reasonable service" in political life, and he added these emphatic words:—"Our Liberalism has been an enfranchisement, not an exclusion." To the Lord Rosebery of this speech we now confidently appeal, hoping that he will not "wholly scorn to help our equal rights." His advent to the Premiership was hailed as that of a leader who was steeped in the new Democratic beliefs, and certainly our woman's question is closely bound up with that new creed. There is at least no doubt what the Labour men think on the subject; we may be sure that they will fearlessly stand by us, and will aid our efforts to secure equal political opportunities for men and women.

Let the Government accept the inevitable, for it is always better in life to do that sooner, rather than later. And after all, what stands in our way but antiquated superstition, and old sentimental prejudice? And this from men! Let us have done with false sentimentality which masquerades in the garb of true

sentiment, but which too often is used as a cloak for base feelings, and let us have both in men and in women that true robustness of mind which does not shrink from accepting the new developments of Radicalism, provided they are in accord with reason.

The new political gospel will sweep away all class monopolies, such for instance as are embodied in the existence of an hereditary House of Lords, and it is bound also to destroy sex monopoly, thus leaving the arena of life free, so that all may play their part therein, and all may serve; for Privilege has had its day and will not be suffered much longer to live in our land. Will not the Liberal Government help us to bring in the new era by throwing wide open the gates of citizenship and bidding the women enter into their inheritance of full political freedom? Will not Lord Rosebery, although by the accident of birth he be an aristocrat, will he not interpret the voice of the People, and "speaking straight to the hearts" of the women* of his country, say to them, "I am the man who will do this great deed for you."

* "I for one shall not despair one day to see a Minister, Prime or otherwise, who shall not scruple from time to time to come down from the platform of party, and speak straight to the hearts of his fellow-countrymen."—*Lord Rosebery at St. James' Hall, March 21st*, 1894.

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Women's Printing Society, Ltd., 66, Whitcomb Street, W.C

QUARTERLY STATEMENT

OF THE

Central National Society for Women's Suffrage

29, PARLIAMENT STREET, S.W.

JANUARY 28*th*, 1890.

QUARTERLY STATEMENT

OF THE

CENTRAL NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

29, PARLIAMENT STREET, S.W.

January 28th, 1890.

THE MANCHESTER CONFERENCE.

UNDOUBTEDLY the most noteworthy event of the past three months, in the progress of the Women's Suffrage Movement, has been the resolution unanimously carried at the Manchester Conference of the Women's Liberal Federation.

More than once representative gatherings of Conservative women have carried resolutions in favour of Parliamentary enfranchisement; but this is the first occasion on which delegates from the Women's Liberal Associations throughout the country have been called upon to give a public expression of their opinion. The Conference was convened by the Executive Committee of the Women's Liberal Federation on the second day of their Annual Autumnal Meetings, and was held in the Memorial Hall, Manchester, on the morning of Wednesday, December 4th.

Margaret Lady Sandhurst, who presided, said her opinion with regard to Women's Suffrage, which was to be the main subject of discussion, was well known, and she need not waste the time of the Conference with any words with regard to it. She was strongly in favour of Women's Suffrage, and anxious to see it promoted by every means in their power; but she did not wish to see it a prominent object of the Federation. She had been asked to announce that any resolution passed by the Conference was to be held merely as the expression of the opinion of this particular meeting, and in no way binding on the Federation. In addition, she would like to say for herself that, as a resolution had never been brought forward or a vote taken in the Conference, and as the attendance was somewhat limited, any resolution which might be passed would not be altogether satisfactory as expressing the opinion of the delegates in general.

Miss A. A. Bulley (Manchester) read a paper on "The political evolution of women." Miss Bulley pointed out that a considerable growth of civilisation was necessary before the faculties of women could obtain a chance of development. One of the things that had kept women back was the sheer difficulty of living, the struggle for existence, which in its

earlier stages rendered physical strength the one thing necessary. Under these conditions the powers of women had lain dormant, and it was not until society had advanced to a more peaceful and settled stage that any improvement in their position was possible. Immense strides had been made by women during the last twenty or thirty years, and what had enabled them to show what they could do had mainly been the progress of science, which had made wealth and leisure easier to attain, had made locomotion easier, and had in many ways made the weak the equal of the strong. Stephenson and Watt, though they probably little suspected it themselves, had worked for the best interests of women. Women would never have attended Liberal meetings if they had had to go over rough roads in a stage coach, armed with a blunderbuss. She believed the right to vote would never limit the powers of women. At present their power was irresponsible, and she considered that an objection. Without making any prophecy as to the future, she would say that whatever helped the fullest and most complex development of society would aid the development of the political evolution of women.

Miss Florence Balgarnie read a paper entitled "The non-enfranchisement of women considered as a stumbling-block to national progress." It was now admitted, she claimed, that strength of mind and body in women was not a less good thing than sweetness. The political exclusion of women was not merely injurious to themselves, but aided as a direct and indirect hindrance to true national progress. Each extension of the franchise had been the precursor of reform, and the extension of political power to women would force those in authority to listen to their demands. In spite of social efforts for their amelioration, women were distinctly on a lower labour plane than men. In many cases women performed the same duties as men at about half the wages. No longer the "blackleg" of the political world, woman would cease to be the "blackleg" of the industrial world. At present she was the Chinaman of the industrial classes. With the permission of Lady Sandhurst, she moved the following resolution:—

"*That in the opinion of this meeting the Parliamentary franchise should be extended to women on the same conditions as it has been granted to men.*"

Miss Ryley (Southport) seconded the resolution with a paper on "Women's suffrage as a plank in the Liberal platform." She said: I think we women, who claim the right to vote for the men who represent us, or rather who do not represent us in Parliament, have three distinct classes of opponents, There may be many more, but I want only to speak of these three, and unfortunately all are to be found in the ranks of the Liberal party. (1) There are the men who, I suppose, from conviction, but I would rather think from

tradition, are conscientiously opposed to the interference of women in political matters at all (2) There are the men who, while asking for the active co-operation of women in political matters, are reluctant to grant them the vote, because of the additional strength which they fear would accrue to the Conservative party, and (3) the third class of opponents is composed of those women who are desirous of taking an ever-increasing interest in politics, and who have thrown in their lot with the Liberal party, and yet who profess to have no personal desire for the Parliamentary vote. What do they want to exert political influence for, if they do not also desire to strengthen that influence by the strongest weapon that can be placed in their hands? If they exert an influence *without* the vote, how much greater would not that influence be *with* the vote?

The resolution was supported by Mrs. Pilling (Accrington) and the discussion was opened by Mrs. Ormiston Chant who said: She differed from some dear friends on the platform on this subject. To her thinking, the Women's Liberal Federation would hardly do its work thoroughly until it recognised that the political emancipation of women was its first step. Until they could speak with a political voice they could have very little political power that was of any value. Either women were citizens or not; if they were, why should they not have the right to speak in the citizen's language?

Mr. J. Stansfeld, M.P., said the papers which had been read were exceedingly interesting, and could not have been surpassed at the meeting of the other Liberal Federation. He attended as a very old and constant advocate of the right of women to the suffrage. The fact that she had the moral right, the right by virtue of her equal humanity, sufficed for him. He had sufficient faith in the law of progress, which providentially ruled the world, to entertain no fears in according what right and justice demanded. He had no hesitation in saying that the enfranchisement of women would have the effect of concentrating the minds of the public and our Legislature upon great social reforms. There were many branches of social reform upon which women knew far more than men. When he was at the head of the Local Government Board he appointed a lady a poor law inspector, and there could be no doubt that women could bring into the public service special knowledge which men did not possess, and which would be of the greatest service. The enfranchisement of women would make the whole of politics more sympathetic. There might be some people who objected to sympathetic politics, but he could tell such men that their time had gone by. Women would be of great use in the solution of the social questions that were coming up for settlement. Another thing that would follow from the enfranchisement of women was that it would tend to moralise

politics. Women would not simply have party objects; they would have faiths, which they would hold superior to interests of a party kind.

Mrs. Chas. M'Laren, Mrs. Sheldon Amos, Mrs. Sunley, and many others took part in the discussion, and at the close Miss Becker stepped forward to express her satisfaction that the resolution had been adopted.

Indeed the enthusiasm was so great and the number of ladies desirous of speaking so large, that finally speeches had to be limited to three minutes, in order to terminate at the appointed hour. As might have been expected not a single speech nor vote was given against the Resolution.

Your Committee have decided to reprint Mr. Stansfeld's speech *in extenso*, copies of which may be had on application at the office of your Society.

The Bristol Gathering.

Previous to the Manchester Conference, Miss Priestman organised an important gathering of delegates from the West of England Women's Liberal Associations. It was held under her presidency at the Victoria Rooms, Clifton, on October 24th. Delegates were present from North and South Bristol, Newport and South Monmouthshire, West Wilts, East Somerset, the Wells division of Somerset, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Redruth, Gosport, Winchester, Shaldon, South Devon and Bath. Addresses were given by Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P., Mrs. Swann, Mrs. Brine, Miss Henrietta Müller, Miss Mary Priestman, Miss Ellen Chapman and others. The following Resolution was unanimously carried:—

"*That this meeting, believing in the Liberal principle government of the people, by the people, and believing that National justice is impossible when half the Nation have no direct representation because they are women, pledges itself to the redress of this wrong, by supporting the claims of women to the Parliamentary Franchise.*"

The Northern Union of Conservative Associations.

The annual meeting of the Northern Union of Conservative Associations was held on November 15th, in the Banqueting Hall, at the County Hotel Newcastle; the President (Sir Matthew White Ridley, M.P.) in the chair.

In the course of the proceedings, Mr. J. G. Murray. (N.W. Durham Conservative Association) moved:

"*That, in the opinion of this meeting, the time has now arrived when the Parliamentary franchise should be extended to duly qualified women.*"

He thought this an opportune moment to ascertain their opinion on the question of women's suffrage. He believed the movement for women's suffrage had in its favour the majority of the present House of Commons. One noteworthy fact in connection with the history of this question was that, whereas the arguments in favour of it were formerly of a vague and sentimental character, the case was now the very reverse. The speaker next referred to the fact that landlords were often deterred from accepting women as tenants and for other business purposes through the inability of the latter to vote. Was it a sound principle, he asked, which allowed the most incorrigible criminal just emerged from prison to have a voice in the representation of the country and to deny the same privilege to women of culture and intelligence? Were women likely to exercise the Parliamentary franchise with less prudence than they showed in municipal, county council, school board, and other elections at which they are entitled to vote? They were educating women in politics, and it was to the endeavours and interest displayed by the female sex that the success of the Primrose League was to a great extent due. With these remarks he had great pleasure in moving the resolution.

Councillor G. T. Abrahams, of West Hartlepool, having seconded the resolution, it was put to the meeting, and the chairman declared it carried.

Conservative Conference at Glasgow.

A Conservative conference was held on November 5th, when a resolution was carried in favour of women's suffrage.

LECTURES AND MEETINGS.

The following have been held, in every case under important local auspices and supported by well-known local speakers.

Only the names of those persons are given who acted as a deputation from the Women's Suffrage Society. In nearly all cases Resolutions were moved, and whenever moved, were carried in favour of Enfranchisement.

Acton Liberal Club. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Oct. 21st.
Stalybridge Women's Liberal Association. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P., Oct. 22nd.
Dulwich Working Men's Liberal and Radical Clubs. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Oct. 23rd.
Hyde Women's Liberal Association. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P., Oct. 23rd.
Stockport. Mrs. Ormiston Chant, Oct. 24.
Mortlake and Barnes Liberal Club. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Oct. 30th.
Harrow Liberal Club. Mrs. Chas. Mallet, Oct. 31st.

Edmonton Conservative Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Nov. 6th.
Ashton-under-Lyne Women's Liberal Association. Mrs. Bateson, Nov. 12th.
Deptford Women's Liberal Association. Miss Constance Naden (the late) and Miss Florence Balgarnie, Nov. 12th.
Clapham Reform Club. Mrs. Benjamin Clarke, Nov. 13th.
Ipswich Women's Liberal Association. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P., Nov. 25th.
Teddington Liberal and Radical Club. Mrs. Chas. Mallet, Nov. 17th.
Cambridge Men's Liberal Association. Dr. Kate Mitchell and Miss Florence Balgarnie, Nov. 18th.
North Paddington Liberal Association. Mrs. Ashton Dilke, Nov. 19th.
Portsmouth Women's Liberal Association. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P. and Miss Florence Balgarnie, Nov. 27th.
Gosport and Alverstoke Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Nov. 28th.
Stantonbury and District Women's Liberal Association, Wolverton. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P., Nov. 30th.
Lewisham Conservative Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Nov. 30th.
Melksham Women's Liberal Association. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P., Dec. 1st.
Clapham Liberal Club. Dr. Kate Mitchell, Dec. 16th.
Ellesmere. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Dec. 6th.
Star Radical Club. Mrs. Ashton-Dilke, Dec. 8th.
Truro Men's Liberal Association. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P., and Mrs. Dungey, Jan. 10th.
Hornsey Young Men's Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Dec. 13th,
Hackney Women's Liberal Association. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P., Jan. 14th,
Guildford Women's Liberal Association. Dr. Kate Mitchell, Jan. 22nd.
Godalming Women's Liberal Association. Dr. Kate Mitchell. Jan. 23rd.
Sandbach Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Jan. 24th.
Launceston. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P. and Mrs. Dungey.
Torquay. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P.
Redruth. ,, ,,
Plymouth Women's Liberal Association. Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P., and Mrs. Dungey, Jan. 8th.

Your Secretary has also visited the following towns for the purpose of awakening fresh interest in your Society's work, Buckingham, Wolverton, Spalding, Stamford, Oakham, Peterborough, Leicester, Brighton, Hertford, Ware, St. Albans, Chatham, Rochester and Gravesend.

Amongst other meetings which deserve notice are :—

Meeting of the Franchise League in Westminster, Nov. 7th.
Annual Meeting of the Manchester Society, Nov. 20th.
Conference of the Bristol Society, Dec. 13th.
Annual Meeting of the Edinburgh Society, Dec. 30th.
Annual Meeting of the Cambridge Society, Nov. 26th.
Foundation of a Leeds Society after an address by Mrs. Fawcett, on Jan. 17th.
Weston-Super-Mare Liberal Club. Miss Sturge, Dec. 9th.
Blackpool Women's Liberal Association. Mrs. Ormiston Chant and Miss Becker, Dec. 10th.

FUTURE MEETINGS.

The following Meetings will take place, and others are in course of arrangement:

By the kind invitation of Mrs. W. S. Browne at 58, Porchester Terrace, W., address to the Paddington Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, 8 p.m. Jan. 30th.
Chelmsford Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Feb. 6th.
Accrington Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Feb. 8th.
Wolverton Women's Liberal Association, Bucks. Mrs. Bateson, Feb. 11th.
Spalding Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Feb. 12th.
West Ham Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Feb. 13th.
Woolwich Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Feb. 19th.
Westminster Women's Liberal Association, by the kind invitation of Mrs. Pearsall Smith, 44, Grosvenor Road, S.W., at 8 p.m. Addresses by Mrs. Costelloe and Miss Florence Balgarnie, Feb. 21st.
Wolverhampton Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, Feb. 24th.
St. Martin's Schoolroom, Battersea Rise. Miss Jane Cobden, 8 p.m. Feb. 25th.
Bedford Women's Suffrage Society, Corn Exchange. Mr. Justice M'Carthy, M.P., Mr. A. Lafone, M.P. and Miss Florence Balgarnie, Feb. 26th.
Birkbeck Institute. Miss Florence Balgarnie, March 10th.
Ventnor Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, April 10th.
Knighton Women's Liberal Association. Miss Florence Balgarnie, April 11th.

THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU.

Mrs. Emily Crawford, the Paris correspondent of the *Daily News*, has consented to act as English corresponding member for the International Bureau of Women, which has been formed, mainly through the instrumentality of M. Léon Richter, editor of *Les Droits des Femmes*. The initiative was taken last June during the Paris Congress of Women. It was agreed that each country there represented should elect a Paris correspondent, to form the nucleus of a bureau. The corresponding member in London is the secretary of your society, to whom all news concerning women likely to be of international interest should be sent.

OBITUARY.

Through the death of Mr. C. R. M. Talbot, the "Father of the House of Commons," the movement for Women's Suffrage has lost an old and true friend. He was indeed one of the very earliest supporters, and voted with Mr. Mill's famous amendment to the Reform Bill of 1867.

Since then Mr. Talbot has voted in 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1878, paired in 1883, and signed the Memorial addressed to the Government in 1887.

Last Autumn, Miss Constance Naden entered the ranks of those who publicly advocate the question of Women's Suffrage. As a poet and philosophical writer she gave promise of a career full of usefulness. Her first and only speech on the Suffrage was in November, at Deptford, when the impression she made was of a most favourable nature. The greater part of her life had been spent in much retirement, and none but a few intimate friends realise the true genius which inspired her. She died at the early age of thirty-one. It is she whom Mr. Gladstone's article places in the first rank of women poets. A volume of her philosophical essays is in course of publication.

RECEIPTS FOR THE QUARTER ENDING DECEMBER 31ST, 1889.

	£	s.	d.
Mrs. John Hollond	25	0	0
Mrs. Eva M'Laren	12	10	0
Mr. W. S. B. M'Laren, M.P.	12	10	0
Mrs. Ch. M'Laren	10	0	0
Miss Crosfield	2	2	0
Mrs. Theodore Fry	2	2	0
Mr. Wm. Woodall, MP.	2	2	0
Portsmouth Women's Liberal Association	1	10	6
Mrs. Wyatt Haycroft	1	1	0
Miss Anna Swanwick	1	1	0
Mrs. D. R. Thomas (Highbury)	1	1	0
Mrs. Shaw Smith	1	0	0
Mrs. Jane Tucker	1	0	0
Mrs. Ingram Walker	0	10	6
Miss Warren	0	10	6
Miss Conybeare	0	10	0
Mr. Arthur Spokes	0	10	0
Mr. Tito Pagliardini	0	10	0
Mr. Nathaniel Waterall	0	5	0
Mrs. Lawrie	0	5	0
Mrs. Larkcom Jacobs	0	5	0
Mrs. Sherbrooke	0	5	0
Mr. Chas. Anderson	0	5	0
Mrs. Frederick Mitchell	0	5	0
Mrs. Carvell Williams	0	5	0
Miss Annette Bear	0	5	0
Mrs. Sheldon-Amos	0	5	0
The Rev. J. Clifford	0	5	0
Mrs. F. A. Drew	0	3	6
Miss A C. Thomson	0	2	6
Miss Mabel Weld	0	2	6
Miss F. C. Fullager	0	2	6
Miss B. Alder	0	2	6
Miss Lucy E. Hollins	0	2	6
Miss Feugh	0	2	6
Mrs. Pearsall Smith	0	2	6
Miss Pearsall Smith	0	2	6
Miss Van Putten	0	2	6
Mrs. Costelloe	0	2	6
Mr. Costelloe	0	2	6
Mrs. Lechtie	0	2	6
Mr. Samuel A. Phillips	0	2	6
Mr. A. M. Phillips	0	2	6
Miss Clodd	0	2	6
Mr. J. Davidson	0	2	0
Miss H. Justice	0	2	0
Mr. George Holt	0	1	6
Mr. R. Anderson	0	1	6
Mr. A. Ancleff	0	1	0
Mr. A. Hubbard	0	1	0
Mr. J. Cadsby	0	1	0
Mr. Halliwell	0	1	0
Mrs. Taylor	0	1	0
Mr. Hunter	0	1	0
Mr. James Tait	0	1	0
Mr. Angus Cameron	0	1	0
Mr. W. B. Lacey	0	1	0
Mr. T. L. Coppard	0	1	0
Miss Effie Johnson	0	1	0
Mr. G. H. Aske	0	1	0
Mr. Percy Thomas	0	1	0
	£81	1	6

Balance in Bank - £176 2 8

MRS. FRANK MORRISON, *Treasurer*.

Women's Printing Society, Limited, 21B, Great College Street, Westminster.

PROFESSOR LINDSAY, D.D.

(GLASGOW UNIVERSITY,)

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

AT a Meeting in St. James' Hall, London, Professor LINDSAY said he had made it his business to know something about the condition of the poor in the great cities. Alluding to the labour laws, he said that women's labour was being crippled by laws which pressed very heavily upon them. The Factory Acts were gradually driving women out of the factories, and when they were passed the Home Secretary of the day actually refused to receive deputations of working women because they had no votes behind them; but he received deputations of working men because they had votes. It concerned the whole of them that women should have behind them that political force which was needed to make the expression of their mind go home. Women were being driven to the verge of starvation by the action of the law. They must live, but the tendency of legislation was against woman's work. What did that mean? It meant making women sink down into a life of shame. In taking up this matter he felt that he was pleading for the working women. Women would never get their rights until they had votes, so that they could bring their influence to bear upon members of Parliament.

Copies of this leaflet may be had from the Secretary, Miss Cicely Philipps, Central National Society for Women's Suffrage, 29, Parliament Street, London, S.W., at 1/0 per 100, post free.

The Bearing of Co-operative Experience

ON THE

Question of Women's Suffrage.

Being a Prize Essay by

FREDERICK ROCKELL.

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In December, 1890, *the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage,* 10, *Great College Street, Westminster, offered a prize in connection with Educational Council of the Southern Section of the Co-operative Union, for the best Essay on "The Bearing of Co-operative Experience on the Question of Women's Suffrage."*

The Prize was awarded to MR. F. ROCKELL *for the following Essay.*

The Bearing of Co-operative Experience

ON THE

Question of Women's Suffrage.

In this enquiry co-operative experience may be used (1) as data in a chain of inductive reasoning, and (2) as illustrative of the conclusions arrived at by deduction.

Proceeding first from the deductive side, the first principles must be postulated from which may be deduced the conclusions which are to be verified or disproved by the facts of Co-operative experience.

Here a secondary division arises. With Women's Suffrage, as with all other political questions, there are two main things to be considered. These are (1) Right; (2) Expediency. In order to convince democratic legislators of the necessity of conceding claims urged upon them, it is requisite that proof be given of the justice of the demands, and of the beneficial nature of the consequences which would result from their concession. Not that this always holds good. Too often, selfishness alone, or sometimes even fear, is sufficient to move modern law-makers to action, without due consideration of a right or awrong being involved. On the other hand, it is only fair to say, that there are times when the overwhelming sense of the shame of an established wrong, is of itself sufficiently potent to secure its removal, considerations of expediency being unheeded. In most cases, however, both claims are duly taken into account; and must be satisfied before the State will either wield the hammer of the iconoclast, or supply the motive-power for the shuttle of the would-be fabricator of new institutions. The question of Women's Suffrage is essentially one of these cases; for the assumed superiority of the stronger sex, and the consequent denial of equal rights and privileges, political and social, to women, are based upon such universal usage, that the idea which maintains that the admittance of women into the electorate would neither be right nor expedient, has become the customary mode of thought.

Now Right belongs to the field of Moral Ideas. Expediency is altogether un-moral in character. And in spite of the prevalence of the hedonistic philosophy (which reduces all questions of Right to matters of Expediency; the moral into the purely un-moral; and duty into the highest pleasure ;) yet it is a truth that finds general acceptance, even by the hedonists in their unphilosophical moments ; that whatever is Right and Moral is of more importance than that which is merely Expedient. It will be proceeding in the best order therefore, to give precedence to the discussion of the Right of the question.

When the American Colonists flung the chests of tea into Boston Harbour, they committed an act of defiance to the English Government; in vindication of a Right, which the Ministers of George III. attempted to flagrantly violate. The principle at stake, upon which they thus overtly joined issue with the Mother Country, was the Right to be represented in the Imperial Assembly which desired to impose taxes upon them. The Declaration of Independence followed, in the justice of which the whole of the civilised world acquiesced, while all the friends of liberty rejoiced at the triumph of the principles of which that Declaration was the embodiment.

Reduced to a bare statement the principle involved stands thus: those who pay taxes have a Right to be represented in the Assembly which imposes them and directs their expenditure. Now in syllogistic reasoning the important thing is to have an indisputable major-premiss. For however skilfully the conclusion may be deduced, it does not carry conviction unless the first principle is agreed upon; and when first principles are in question, it is a patent fact, that endless divergences of opinion usually exist. It is somewhat fortunate therefore that the fundamental axiom just laid down, obtains what is practically universal assent.* For there are few people at the present day who would withhold the acknowledgment of Right from the action taken by the American Colonists, and to acknowledge this Right is to concede the principle assumed. And even apart from this implied assent, it would be difficult, in these days of democratic tendencies, to find one bold enough to openly join issue with a principle which underlies all democratic institutions.

In determining therefore to whom the Right belongs, of being represented in the Assembly which governs either the Locality or the Country, it is necessary to shew upon whom

* Of course those who argue that taxation should be voluntary, and that all compulsory taxation is immoral, would not agree to this; but only because it did not go far enough in the direction of giving the irreducible minority, viz., the individual, complete control over his own expenditure.

taxation falls. Here again, fortunately, there is no ground for dispute; for the incidence of taxation, in our own country at least, may be easily and authoritatively ascertained. The Imperial Exchequer (to which for convenience let the enquiry be confined) derives its revenue chiefly from three sources:— (1) Customs and Excise duties, (2) Land and Property Taxes, (3) Income Tax and Death Duties. Of the above, the second and third are levied upon some women, and from the first no woman (excepting minors, criminals, lunatics and paupers) is exempt. The obvious conclusion is that Women have the Right to be represented in Parliament.

Lord Macaulay's intelligent New Zealander, who, after having viewed the ruins of St. Paul's, from a broken arch of London Bridge, might be supposed to institute an antiquarian research into the laws and customs of the people who had built such a magnificent building; would, if his researches were successful, find that in the latter end of the nineteenth century, there existed a system of government, which boasted to be of a democratic nature. In the further prosecution of his enquiries, he would find that the generally accepted definition of the term "democratic government" implied the representation in Parliament (for the purpose of raising the taxes necessary to the existence of Government), of all those who paid the taxes. This would in all probability appear to him quite natural; but it would be difficult to picture his astonishment at finding that together with the assumption of the title "Democratic Government", and the universal recognition of the above definition of the term, there existed a state of things, hopelessly incompatible with the two. On finding, indeed, that there was a class of tax-payers who outnumbered all the others; and upon whom the rights depending upon the payment of taxes, were not conferred; his first inference would presumably be, that this class of the community consisted of individuals, who in reality, if not nominally, were slaves. And just as we now, in philosophising upon ancient democracies, treat them, on account of the existence of slaves, as delusive democracies; so too, probably, would our New Zealander dismiss our pretensions to the title of a Democracy as unworthy of his better understanding.

Viewed indeed in retrospect, it seems so absurd as to be almost fictitious; but yet with the naked fact staring every one in the face, the anomaly remains almost unnoticed; and the proposal to remedy it, is met on all sides with obstruction, if not with contemptuous ridicule.

Stated in the form of a syllogism of which, as shown, both the major and minor premisses find general acceptance, the arguments so far adduced stand thus:—

All who pay taxes have a right to be represented in Parliament.

Women pay taxes.

Women have a *right* to be represented in Parliament.

One would imagine that the conclusion here deduced was so obviously true, that its mere statement would obtain for it immediate acceptance. But when a Wrong, however incongruous it may be, has once obtained the sanction of custom; history and the science of mental physiology, equally tell us that the innate conservatism of the generality of minds, inevitably produces apologists for its continued existence. The reason probably is, that long time usage, to some minds, is synonymous with Right; and while custom sheds an odour of sanctity upon abuses, righteous innovation appeals to the imaginative faculties with all the terrors of the unknown. How the abuses came in the first place to exist is another matter. Originally they may have been not abuses, but just usages; the change of circumstances having shifted the ethical base, and turned the Right into the Wrong. As Wordsworth says:

> Truth fails not; but her outward forms that bear
> The longest date do melt like frosty rime,
> That in the morning whitened hill and plain
> And is no more; drop like the tower sublime
> Of yesterday, which royally did wear
> His crown of weeds, but could not even sustain
> Some casual shout that broke the silent air,
> Or the unimaginable touch of Time.

Thus it is not surprising, that there are not wanting those who assail the conclusion deduced. To the arguments upon which that conclusion is based, it is objected, that there is no practical injustice involved in confining political power to men. It is said that the majority of women who pay taxes are married. The wife and husband are in reality one, and the husband in using his vote, as a matter of fact represents his wife. But apart from the obvious reply to this, that there are many tax-paying women who are not married, the above argument will not stand examination. Did the marriage contract bind the husband to consult his wife before making any particular use of his political power, something might be said for the assumed political one-ness of the two married units. But no such stipulation enters into the marriage vow; the bare idea even being too ridiculous to be entertained for one moment. Indeed, in matters more particularly pertaining to the marriage contract, such as the education of offspring, the husband has legal power to treat his wife's interests or preferences with absolute indifference. The truth is, that any

attempt to juggle out of the incontrovertible position that women as taxpayers have a right to a vote, is a mere attempt to fasten upon them the yoke of inferiority which they have ever had to bear; and which they are now endeavouring to cast from their shoulders.

What then can the Co-operative Movement supply in the way of illustration of the truth of the conclusion deduced? Unfortunately, all questions of Right (belonging as they do to the field of ethical theory), are of a purely abstract nature; which makes it difficult to illustrate their truth by concrete cases. For all questions of ethical dogma depend for their truth upon their relation to some higher principle; which in Deistic philosophies is represented as the Authority of God; and in the Utilitarian schemes of morals, as happiness; either of the individual or the aggregate of individuals.

All that may be done, therefore, in the way of illustration, is to show that the conception of right which the deductive process formulates, is not merely a shadowy ideal, impossible of attainment; but one which is capable of being transferred to the plane of actual practice.

If Co-operative Experience, therefore, has any lesson to teach, it must inform us whether this transference is or is not possible. And fortunately for our purpose, we find that Co-operation does exhibit, on a considerable scale, the application of the principle involved. Women, who by their investment in Co-operative Societies have an interest at stake in their welfare, do possess equal voting powers with the male members, in the election of their representatives on the Committees of Management. Thus the Co-operative Movement recognises the important moral truth: that in such matters, women have equal rights with men; and in putting the recognition of this truth into practice (thus showing it to be no mere Utopian idea) has made a great step in the direction of the political emancipation of those who are in no better position politically, than were men at such periods of our history when might was right, and monarchies and oligarchies in turn wielded sovereign power over the people.

Turning from the question of Right to that of Expediency, ground of a more debatable nature is broken. Adhering for the present to the deductive method, there are various hypotheses which demand attention; one or two of which will now be examined.

There is an old saying that "he who wears the shoe knows where it pinches," and presumably will be able to convey this information to the shoemaker better than any second person. There are many kinds of shoes and many kinds of shoemakers which may be aptly dealt with

under this simile. That with which this enquiry is concerned is the shoe political. The laws of the country are the shoe; the legislators are the shoemakers; and the shoe wearers are those who have to live under the laws.

Now one of the great arguments in favour of democracies is, that the main end of government is best secured where all those concerned have a determining voice in its policy. And this remains true in spite of the ignorance which often prevails among the majority of those having electoral powers. It might well be thought, that where any particular section of the community is ignorant; there it would be disadvantageous to give the rights of citizenship. For how can ignorant people, it might be said, decide upon debatable questions of policy, where wise men are often at fault? The answer is, that in the first place, electors are only called upon to decide general questions, matters of details being removed from their sphere of action; and secondly, that people, however ignorant they may be, generally possess an intuitive sense of what is right or wrong. And as it is the poor and ignorant classes who are mostly the victims of defective or unjust laws, this intuitive sense of right and wrong is quickened very perceptibly by the pinching of the political shoe which they wear. This is found to be the experience of countries who extend the suffrage lower and lower in the social scale; and accordingly, it may be laid down as a general axiom, that the laws of a country will be the most just, and best fitted to its social organism, where those who have to abide by the laws and those who make them, are one and the same people. Now whatever else may be said about the general question of women's rights, this much at least may be said of their duties: that as regards the law, they are equally with men supposed, *ipso jure*, not only to know the law, but to obey it. And if it is proved by the analogy of the shoe, that it is expedient that they who have to obey the law, should have the making of it; then, unless our logic is at fault, the inevitable corollary is: that expediency demands that the suffrage should be extended to women.

The same logical result may be obtained from another point of view. One of the most distressing facts of to-day, which the advance of general education has accentuated rather than softened, is the smallness of the circle which circumscribes the average woman's interest in anything of an intellectual nature. There are of course many brilliant exceptions, the number of which (owing to special causes which are at work) is tending to increase; but still, in all grades of society, the general rule holds good: that a woman's life is made up of a succession of petty interests, in which real

mental grit finds no place, and from which are excluded all those keen and subtle pleasures, which an intelligent knowledge of the world imparts to those who possess it. This is disadvantageous in more ways than one. It belittles the woman's life, making her either a mere domestic drudge or a follower of fashions; the only relief from which, excepting the domestic affections, is on the one hand, the gossip of the mother's meeting or the wash-tub; and on the other, the excitement of society scandal, and a dilettantism, tinged with the philosophy of Mrs. Grundy, which shrieks at what it is pleased to call the immorality of the fine arts.

But woman is not the only sufferer. For one of the most important functions which women are capable of performing in the world, is the exertion of a softening and an elevating influence upon man. This is in truth woman's real sphere; but its beneficial scope is much limited by the lack of education in its highest and noblest sense; which deficiency distinguishes so many women of the present day. Thus the pleasure of female society loses half its charms, and to this extent it can hardly be denied that men are the losers.

Nor is this all; for women in their maternal capacity wield enormous powers in moulding the minds of children when they are most susceptible of outside influences; and the mental and moral development of children largely depend upon the manner in which this power is used. An ignorant, superstitious, and frivolous woman will undoubtedly dispose her children towards ignorance, superstition, and frivolity; while the children of a mother possessed of culture, will in the same way, gain early in life all those benefits which come from personal contact with people of cultivated minds.

Now what is the moral of all this? How is it that women are being left behind in the intellectual evolution which is so characteristic of the age? That it is due to a variety of causes is undeniable. But that it may be traced largely to one source, is equally true. This source is the political inequality of the sexes.

The possession of political power creates an interest in its use. To intelligently use a vote, knowledge of political economy, sociology and history is of the utmost importance. If the interest in current politics thus created is a real one, it will lead, more or less, to the study of the three sciences named. Now knowledge is in some respects like salt water; for the more one drinks of it, the greater becomes the thirst, and the intelligent study of one branch of knowledge, opening up other and perhaps higher spheres of thought, it is not too much to say, that the initial step once taken, there is no limit to the progress which may be made, in acquiring that broad

acquaintance with the achievements of mind, which distinguishes the cultured from the ignorant. And it is to this possession of political power, more than to Board School Education, that we owe the fact that culture may now be found among the poor as well as among the rich.

But women are excluded from the use of this power; and hence they do not attain the intellectual capacity which its use involves; the scientific truth holding good here as elsewhere, that any part of human nature long disused, in time becomes lifeless.

The remedy is as easy as it is obvious. Let the Suffrage be extended to women; and in that extension, not only will the incentive to mental self-improvement be increased, but the legal and custom-made obstacles which at present hinder the advancement of women, intellectually and socially, will be in a fair way to be removed. Thus the expediency of giving to women the rights of citizenship is vindicated, not only from the political standpoint, but on higher grounds, *viz.*, the increase of feminine culture, which is after all of more importance than Government, the latter being but the means to this and other great ends.

Now in what manner does Co-operative Experience bear upon this question of expediency? We have already seen that Co-operation exhibits in actual working the recognition of the Right of women to equal control of affairs in which they are pecuniarily interested. It now remains to be seen what are the practical results of this recognition, with a view to ascertaining whether the beneficial tendencies which have been deduced as following from its adoption, are in accordance with the experience of the Co-operative Movement.

So far then as we know, the Co-operative Movement has yet to record a case, where failure has been due to the admission of women into the body to whom the committee of management is responsible; while the fact that many of the women members have joined themselves into a Guild for the avowed object of furthering the aims of Co-operation, and of mutually improving their own minds, shows that the possession of power creates an interest in the welfare of the institution in reference to which the power is possessed; and also induces that self-culture to which so much importance is rightly given.

It is only fair, however, to point out, that the proportion of the women who take this interest in the movement is not a very large one. And if the analogy may be relied upon, it may be inferred, that were Women's Suffrage conceded tomorrow, the immediate result would be that only a few of those to whom this power was given, would take advantage

of it. But this, instead of being an argument against it, really makes for the proposal. For one of the objections most often urged against Women's Suffrage is, that the ignorance of women, suddenly being vested with power, would produce lamentable results. But if only the more advanced women at first took advantage of this power, the objection becomes invalid. But probably this would only be a proximate result. For Co-operative Experience shows that as time goes on, and as women begin to grasp the idea of their power, they more and more begin to use it. And so with political power. From the élite of womankind, the interest of politics would spread, even to the lower orders; and thus the advantages derived from the use of this power would equally belong to women in all grades of life.

So far, the argument has been deductive, and has already occupied more space than originally intended. The enquiry, therefore, from the inductive side, will have to be considerably curtailed. Indeed, to exhibit the whole catena of data which is relied upon to prove the case for Women's Suffrage, would in any case be too large a task. It would be necessary on that account alone, to confine the argument to one link in the chain, and concentrate upon it the few remaining remarks.

Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his "Study of Sociology", has in a chapter on "Preparation in Psychology", insisted upon the necessity of taking into account, the difference between the psychological powers of the sexes, in any proposed change of the political status of women; so that if a change is made it may not be done in the dark.

Assenting to this proposition, it will be well to see what his account of the difference amounts to.

Mr. Spencer begins by affirming the existence of fundamental differences in psychological structure. "The first set of differences", he says, "is that which results from a somewhat earlier arrest of individual evolution in women than in men; necessitated by the reservation of vital power to meet the cost of reproduction". The mind, he tells us, is affected by this in two ways. This arrest of evolution decreases the general power or massiveness of mental manifestations, and induces a perceptible falling short of the powers of abstract reasoning, and the most abstract of the emotions, the sentiment of justice. Other differences arise, he points out, from the relations of men and women to their children and to one another. Of the first of these, the greater part played by the woman in the rearing of offspring induces a specialized instinct of the love of the helpless, which being primarily evolved in relation to children, affects in some degree general conduct. In the relations of men and women

to each other, he shows that the attachments of woman to men are largely determined by the manifestation in men of every kind of power, having primarily for its object the necessity of choosing husbands likely to protect them and their children. With this specific admiration of power, there goes the admiration of power in general; to which cause he ascribes the greater respect felt by women for all embodiments and symbols of authority, governmental and social.

It may easily be conceived what train of thought this would induce in the mind of one opposed to Women's Suffrage. Such a person would feel that he was using a cogent argument in pointing out that the comparative deficiency in the mental massiveness of women, to a certain extent would disqualify them from fully grasping political questions of ordinary magnitude; while the falling short in the powers of abstract reasoning, would entirely preclude the comprehension of the more subtle affairs; while to whatever extent they were lacking in a clear perception of justice, to that extent would they be liable to abuse their power. Again, our objector would argue, the mental trait which superinduces in them a very strong sentiment of pity, would engender a mischievous interference between the legitimate consequences of wrong or foolish actions and those who committed them, which would be greatly prejudicial to the real interests of the State. Finally, the susceptibility to the worship of power, would induce women to use their acquired "rights", in upholding any and all existing forms of power, whether legitimate or otherwise; tending rather to the conservation of all abuses of power, whether of Church or State, than to their overthrow.

But apart from the first of these differences (that of massiveness, and deficiency in power of abstract reasoning), which after all is merely a quantitative and not a qualitative one, the force of all the above arguments depends mainly upon the view that is taken of the real function of the State. If the State is to be, what so many desire it to be, an engine for the forcible suppression of individual liberty; if it is to be a transcendental machine for the enforcement of an arbitrary code of individual morality; if it is to be an all-powerful weapon for subtracting from the creators of wealth indefinite sums in the shape of taxation, for the purpose of giving it to those who have not created it; then indeed the deficiency of the sense of justice in women, their enlarged sentiment of pity for the helpless, and their worship of power, would render the cession to them of the Suffrage a fruitful source of danger. But if the function of the State is merely to preserve social order; to ensure to each citizen the reward of his own efforts, and the peaceable enjoyment of them; and to protect

the whole community from attacks of outside enemies; then the fact, if it is a fact, that there exist these mental differences between men and women, need cause no alarm to those who would give women political justice.

And in reference to the comparative deficiency of mental power, both general, and with respect to abstract reasoning, it must not be forgotten that its possession is not considered requisite, previous to political power being extended to men. If it were so, the last extension of the Suffrage could not have been reasonably justified, for it could hardly be maintained that agricultural labourers possess any general mental massiveness or powers of abstract reasoning.

This we shall find to be true, when the above psychological facts are transferred from the political to the co-operative arena. There, the possession of voting power, by women members, introduces no new dangers. The deficiency in the sense of justice is creative of no misuse of power, for the limits of power are well defined. Together with a subordination to the whole body of the private whims and fancies of individual members respecting the attainment of the end in view, *viz.*, the production and equitable distribution of wealth, there goes no real surrender of individual liberty; and thus the admission of women into the co-operative electorate, is productive of none of those evil consequences, which the like admission of women into the electorate of the State might produce, were democratic government to be but a new mode of despotism.

This fact, together with the general good results found to accrue from giving to women electoral power in the Co-operative Movement, is what Co-operative Experience has to offer to those in search of data from which to build up, by induction, the theory that the extension of the Suffrage to Women is a political act which the necessity of the time demands, both as due to Justice and as required by Expediency; and having furnished this clue to the co-operative link in the inductive chain, our task comes to an end.

One word, however, to Co-operators. If our arguments have been at all convincing, then it is not too much to ask that they should not be content with merely passively affording powerful arguments for the political emancipation of women; but should put the shoulder to the wheel, and use all their influence to bring about that time, as yet but a poet's dream, when all distinctions of sex, as well as of class, race, and creed, shall be sunk in that assembly spoken of by Tennyson, when

> "The war drum throbb'd no longer, and the battle flags were furled
> In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the World."

THE ADVANCE OF WOMEN

(Read at a Church Conference, 3rd July, 1884),

BY THE

Rev. J. Llewelyn Davies, M.A.

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, ST. MARYLEBONE.

We are moving in this cautious manner in extending civil responsibilities to women. Women may vote for Vestrymen, for Guardians of the Poor, for Members of School Boards. They may be Guardians and they may sit on School Boards. These rights are all freely exercised, and no one is heard to propose that women should be deprived of them. At this moment women cannot vote for Members of Parliament.

But the discussion and the division on Mr. Woodall's motion announce with sufficient plainness that this franchise also will not long be withheld. With regard to the governing of the Country, the manifest tendency of affairs is towards a state of things in which women will share alike with men. It has been a strange anomaly indeed, that a constitution which places a woman on the throne, should forbid a woman to vote for a Member of Parliament.

The sphere of practical religion and "good works" has always been thought a suitable one for women. . . . . So far as we can draw any inference at all from the action of our Lord, as recorded in the Gospels, we should reasonably conclude that he encouraged a certain freedom and independence in the conduct of women, such as would excite criticism in the present day. And this conclusion becomes far more significant when we recall the conditions of Oriental life with regard to the relations of the sexes, and the disorganised state of Jewish Society in that age. Whilst women were coming into prominence, and acting for themselves, and leaving their homes, as followers of Jesus, no hint is given that they would have been more in their places under the domestic roof, or that they ought to have left the active support of One who was a centre of surging political agitation to their husbands and brothers.

Copies of this leaflet may be had from the Secretary, Miss Gertrude Stewart, Central National Society for Women's Suffrage, 29, Parliament Street, London, S.W., at 1/0 per 100, post free.

THE DUTIES OF CITIZENSHIP.

THE PROPER UNDERSTANDING AND USE OF THE MUNICIPAL AND OTHER FRANCHISES FOR WOMEN.

A Paper read at the Annual Conference of the National Union of Women Workers, Manchester, Oct. 27th, 1896.

By Miss Morgan, of Brecon.

"Political freedom begins for women, as it began for men, with freedom in local government."—Lydia Becker.

The motto I have chosen for the opening of this paper sums up in a sentence all the thoughts, which have suggested themselves in connection with this subject. Whether we agree or not as to the justice and wisdom of women being given the Parliamentary franchise, on one point we must all agree, and that is, that there can be no training so excellent for the women, who may in the future be called upon to vote in Parliamentary elections, as the thoughtful, intelligent use of the municipal and other franchises which they already possess. At every election that takes place, in every paper that a woman marks and drops into the ballot-box, a formative influence is going on that is silently building up the character of women as citizens, and the more women can be interested in the local government of their parishes and towns, the fitter they will be for taking part in the government of their country when the time comes for them to do so.

My attention has been drawn to some very remarkable words by Mr. Toulmin Smith, which so admirably describe that freedom which is dear to the hearts of English citizens, women as well as men, that I cannot resist quoting them. He says: "True freedom consists in the continual active consciousness of the position and responsibilities of a free man, a member of the State, and a positive item in it. The free man will feel that he has something to live for beyond the attainment of mere personal ease and comfort; that he has, as member of the State, certain important and active rights and duties and responsibilities co-extensive with them in relation to his fellow-men; that he has faculties beyond the mere sensual ones—the strength of which he is bound to put forth in order to help the great works of human happiness and progress."

The oldest form of local government, that of the parish, with its privileges and responsibilities, has been very ably defined by the same writer when he says:—

"The parish is with us the institution through which the inner life of the people is developed, and in which it should be habitually exercised. The subject of the parish is not, then, a matter of mere local taxation, a question of how to get rid of troublesome burdens. In the exercise of the functions of this institution consists the truest fact of freedom; and the mode of that exercise, the jealous guardianship of those functions from encroachment, and the conscientious discharge of them constitute the test of whether free institutions truly and practically exist and are appreciated, or whether the reality has been or is being lost under vague names and declining forms . . . The parish is the truest school that can exist; it is the school of men in the active business of responsible life—it is the school for the highest moral training. Men may be educated by book-teaching, they can only become men and members of a free state, and true neighbours one to another by the practical school, which such institutions as the parish keep continually open. The true philanthropist and the real statesman will seek to keep these schools in the highest state of continual efficiency. Each of these will seek not to cramp, but to develop the activity and scope of these institutions."—*The Parish.*

The local elections at which women may now vote are those of Parish and District Councils, Poor Law Guardians, County Councils, Town Councils, London Vestries, and School Boards, and through the limitations of time will not allow me to deal fully with each of these as I should like to do, I must, in alluding to their powers, briefly emphasise the fact, that the carrying out the duties of each of these bodies affects the welfare of women as closely as that of men, and that a very solemn responsibility rests upon us as women to use our votes aright at every election.

Parish Councils perform the duties hitherto belonging to vestries, with the exception of specially ecclesiastical duties. They also hire land for allotments, and have power to carry out what are known as Adoptive Acts: viz., The Lighting and Watching Acts, 1833; The Baths and Washhouses Act, 1833; The Burials Act, 1852 and 1885; Public Improvements Act, 1860; and the Public Libraries Act, 1892.

District Councils combine the duties of the Sanitary Authorities and Highway Boards, and, in rural districts, the District Councillors are also Poor Law Guardians. They perform sundry duties which were carried out by Justices of the Peace, viz., licensing pawnbrokers, gang-masters, dealers in game, and persons having charge of infants under the Infant Life Protection Act.

Poor Law Guardians administer the Poor Law locally, are responsible for the good management of the workhouse and its inmates, and give out-door relief.

County Councils have many and varied duties, amongst the most important being the assessing and levying of country rates and police rates, and the application and expenditure thereof, also the borrowing of money.

They license places for music, dancing, and stage-plays, and are entrusted with the provision, maintenance, and management of pauper lunatic asylums, and the establishment of reformatories. They have also the administration of the fund granted by the Local Taxation Act of 1890, with a view especially to further technical education. Since

1891 there has been a rapid extension of technical teaching for boys and girls in connection with County Councils. To name those subjects more especially connected with women's work, grants have been made in a great many counties for dairy-work, cookery, laundry work, horticulture, domestic economy, and bee-keeping.

Town Councils appoint the police and regulate the markets. They must see that the town is properly lighted, paved, cleaned, supplied with gas and water. Further, the Corporation has powers, under the Artisans' Dwellings Act, to buy lands for building proper dwellings for the people. Under the Free Libraries Act it can establish free libraries, museums, schools of art, and open spaces for the recreation of the people may all come under its jurisdiction.

The *London Vestries* are the Sanitary Authorities for their respective areas. They also superintend the lighting, paving, watering, and cleansing of the streets. They control common lodging houses, and can suppress houses for improper purposes. They manage, either directly or through Commissioners whom they appoint, the public libraries, the cemeteries, and the baths and wash-houses. They can acquire and manage open spaces. Certain charities are under the control of the Vestry, managed by Trustees whom it appoints. The Vestry has the construction and management of public lavatory accommodation. As regards workshops, it enforces the sanitary regulations embodied in the Factory and Workshop Acts. The London Vestries deal with areas in which the population is as great as that of a large provincial town.

School Boards deal with the elementary education of boys and girls.

The enumeration of even a few of the duties of these public bodies shows us that the health and comfort, and even the moral welfare of our towns and villages, is largely dependent on good government; and such government can only be attained by choosing men and women of the highest character and ability to carry it out. The ratepayers have it in their choice, by the exercise of their votes, to decide whether they will seek for high-minded, public-spirited members to represent them on the various councils and boards, or leave their municipal

independence to drift away from them, and their towns and villages to stagnate for lack of improvements.

Surely these considerations appeal as strongly to women as to men, and all women, who think over their duties as citizens either from a personal, a domestic, or a public standpoint, must deeply feel the responsibility and the privilege of making use of their right to vote.

I would deprecate party politics being made the paramount influence in local elections. Whilst fully recognising the value and help of party organisation from an electioneering point of view, I think the standard of local representation will be lowered not raised (as the introduction of women into the conflict should raise it) if character and ability are not put before any mere party qualification in the choice of a candidate.

It is a subject for rejoicing to know, that every year women are awakening more and more to a sense of their responsibility as citizens, and that the result which was anticipated by some, *i.e.*, that women would not take the trouble to vote, being utterly indifferent to the issues at stake, has *not* been realised.

It would be extremely interesting to have a return of the women who voted at the elections, which followed the Local Government Act of 1894, but nothing short of a Parliamentary return could procure such figures ; all that is possible is to record some experiences from different parts of the country. Writing from Bath, Mr. S. Hayward, who has had long experience in electoral matters, says: "From inquiries I have made, I gather that the women voters in the rural parishes took an intelligent interest in the election of parish councillors, and especially that the poorer class appeared to pay more attention to the social and moral character of the candidates than to mere party considerations, and this independently of class. In Bath we have found a general disposition to ignore party considerations in the choice of lady guardians even amongst active political workers."

Very similar experience has been furnished from Bristol by Mr. W. H. Elkins, who had good opportunity of knowing the course of the

elections in that city. He writes that in Redland ward, where there was a contest, fully one-third of the votes polled were those of women, and as there were 450 women on the register out of a total of 1,620, this shows a higher percentage amongst the women voters than the men. In those wards of Clifton which were contested, the proportion of women is said to have been still higher. A correspondent in a rural part of Cornwall remarked that the women who were on the register nearly all voted, but that they were so few. Thus in the parish where she herself resided there was but one.

In a Sussex parish, out of nineteen women on the register, twelve came to the poll, and in five rural parishes of the Tunbridge Wells Union, in which there were contests, it appears that the women voted in rather a larger proportion than the men; *i.e.*, out of a total of 165 women on the register 114 (or 69 per cent.) voted. Out of a total of 976 men on the register 514 (or 67 per cent.) voted. Stray facts like these could no doubt be multiplied, and we should find that, take it all in all, the women of the rural districts did not ignore the new opportunities that had come to them.

I will now quote the opinion of competent judges as to the extent and manner in which women have used their votes in towns, and as types I will take Cardiff, which has the lowest percentage of women voters of any town in the kingdom, and Bath, which has one of the highest, Cardiff having a percentage of nine, and Bath of twenty-five.

Miss Sanders, of Cardiff, writes: "My father (Mr. Alderman Sanders) wishes me to say, that he thinks few men have a wider experience of municipal contests than he has had, which experience extends over thirty years. It may be perfectly true that some women vote as they are told, but not the majority. It is equally true that many men vote as they are told, but on the whole he is convinced, that the majority of women voters use their suffrage with a higher and nobler purpose than do the majority of the other sex."

The next letter is from Mr. S. Hayward, of Bath, who has before been quoted: "An experience of thirty years in municipal elections in Bath (where the women voters comprise 1,700 out of 7,000) enables me

confidently to contradict the assertion 'that the great majority of female voters have the strongest dislike for independence' (a statement that had recently been made in the *Speaker*). The municipal elections here have been fought generally on political grounds (I think unfortunately), and hence both male and female voters have been influenced in various ways; but I have found that the women voters have generally attached more importance than the men to the personal moral character and social usefulness of a candidate, and certainly have shown more independence than the majority of the lower class of male voter."

I will conclude with the words of one whose whole brave, beautiful life has been a protest in favour of the freedom of women, political and otherwise,—I allude to Miss Frances Power Cobbe. She says: *"We now turn directly to consider how stands the duty of women in England as regards entrance into public life and development of public spirit. What ought we to do at present as concerns all public work wherein it is possible for us to obtain a share? The question seems to answer itself in its mere statement. We are bound to do all we can to promote the virtue and happiness of our fellow men and women, and, therefore, we must accept and seize every instrument of power, every vote, every influence which we can obtain to enable us to promote virtue and happiness. . . . . We know that the individual power of one vote at any election seems rarely to effect any appreciable difference; but this need not trouble us, for little or great, if we can obtain any influence at all, we ought to seek for it, and the multiplication of the votes of women bent on securing conscientious candidates would soon make them not only appreciable, but weighty . . . . we must come to these public duties—whenever we may be permitted to fulfil them—in the most conscientious and disinterested spirit, and determined to perform them excellently well. . . . . This, after all, is public spirit—in one shape called patriotism, in another philanthropy—the extension of our sympathies beyond the narrow bounds of our homes; the disinterested enthusiasm for every good and sacred cause. All the world has recognised, from the earliest times, how good and noble and wholesome a thing it is for men to have their breasts filled with such

* "*Duties of Women*."

public spirit; and we look upon them when they exhibit it as glorified thereby. Is it not just as ennobling a thing for a woman's soul to be likewise filled with these large and generous and unselfish emotions? . . . . with indignation against wrongs and injustices and perfidies, and with the ardent longing to bring about some great step of progress, some sorely needed reform?"

GWENLLIAN E. F. MORGAN,

Poor Law Guardian.

These Leaflets can be obtained at 5d. a dozen, or 3s. a hundred, postage extra, from the Office of the Women's Local Government Society, 4, Sanctuary, Westminster Secretary—Miss Lindsay.

THE POLITICAL EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

BY

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The POLITICAL EMANCIPATION of WOMEN.

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Among the many political questions that struggle for a hearing amid the din and confusion caused by the misgovernment of Ireland, and that steadily make their way towards the front rank, there is none of more importance, considering the issues it involves, than the enfranchisement of women. Its career has been in some respects unique, for it has more entirely escaped becoming a Party question than any other of equal importance, and there is no subject upon which the Division Lobby presents a more curious picture, for the Women's Suffrage Bill has always drawn its strongest supporters, as well as received its chief opponents, from both political parties. This has been at once its weakness and its strength: its weakness, because it is almost necessary for one of the great Parties in the State to take up a measure in order to force it through Parliament; its strength, because Members of the House of Commons and the country at large are able to make up their minds on its merits without party prejudice. To a subject like Women's Suffrage this has been a great advantage. Coming as it did for the first time on to the political stage as a practical question twenty years ago, when Mr. John Stuart Mill moved his amendment to the Reform Bill of 1867, and when it had never been seriously considered by more than a few advanced thinkers, it was in the highest degree desirable that the country should consider it calmly, and, above all, that women should be asked freely to express their wishes, without considering the effect of their future votes on Liberal or Tory Governments. That process has gone steadily on for twenty years, and no impartial observer will deny that the change in women's views has been enormous. For while apathy—the apathy which is always attendant on ignorance and political degradation—was at first a strongly

marked feature, it is now almost impossible to take a score of women promiscuously, in any rank of life, and not to find that the majority of them both feel some interest in politics, and desire to possess a vote. It has, however, been too readily assumed that the wishes of women are decisive in the matter. It is clear that if duly qualified women, women who possess all the qualifications that entitle men to vote, desire to be removed from classification with lunatics, criminals, and infants, and to be enrolled as citizens, they are entitled to have their demands granted. But it is equally clear that, even if they do not desire it, the State is entitled to make them assume the responsibility of citizenship if it be proved that it is for the welfare of the State that they should be thus burdened. That doctrine is universally admitted in the case of men. Upon it rests the law o conscription and compulsory military service on the Continent. It is the basis of compulsory education, and, indeed, of all taxation, and thus women are included in its scope. It is the basis of the selection of juries, and of many appointments, notably those of High Sheriff and Member of Parliament, which a man may not resign if they are thrust upon him. It is one of the strongest contentions of those who advocate the enfranchisement of women that it would be for the benefit of the State. Perhaps it is a truism to say that when a great injustice is being done to a large number of persons the whole body politic must suffer; but that is not the sense in which the argument is here applied. The contention is that it is desirable to have as the basis of representative government the largest possible number of "capable citizens," to make the law such that no one is permanently and inevitably excluded from the franchise, that all by their own exertions or their own will may enter the ranks of citizenship; and it is also desirable that Parliament should be fully representative of every phase of opinion and every class of thought in the country. In these days of Democratic Government we should lengthen our cords and strengthen our stakes, making all feel that they have a voice, or that they may have one, in the destiny of their country. That women look at things from a different standpoint to men

will be admitted, and few will deny that their judgments, or, as some like to say, their perceptions, are acute. It is a loss to society that it should not have the benefit of this ability reflected in Parliament, to aid in the discussion of the vast number of social subjects, all of which affect women as keenly as men. It is also open to men to argue that for their own benefit they are justified in urging women to vote. For the sake of the welfare of the race women should be as highly developed as possible, not in one way at the expense of another, as has been in times past, but equally in every way. Tennyson has well asked of woman, "if she be small, slight natured, miserable, how can men grow?" Not a very high standard to take, perhaps, but one in which there is much truth; and when it is seen from the history of every country that its intelligence increases in proportion as its franchise is lowered—that is to say, that education and intelligence spread among the masses when the franchise is given to them, in a way unknown otherwise—we may justly hope that with the possession of the suffrage woman's sphere will extend, her interests will widen, her intellect become more powerful, and men, as much as women, will ultimately benefit by the change.

But the words "woman's sphere" recall memories of bygone days, of arguments, to use a title of courtesy, which are now no more, and of sturdy though somewhat coarse opponents who have left the political arena, dreading perhaps the coming day when women's votes would consign them to compulsory retirement. Bouverie, Scourfield, Beresford Hope, Newdegate, Leatham, and many more champions of a failing cause have had their well-known stock arguments cut from under their feet by the mere lapse of time and by the experience of the country, and have been unable to find others to take their place. Of all these, the cry that politics were not within the sphere of woman was the favourite and most trusted. But who could use it now? Year by year the whole country seems more given up to politics; elections succeed each other with greater rapidity, and the intervals between them are spent in preparation. This is inevitable. So long as the great political parties were Whigs

and Tories, with men like Palmerston at the head, and with a restricted franchise, political warfare was a game, except when some great agitation like that of the Anti-Corn Law League arose. But now when we have five million electors, when questions going to the root of our system of government are vital, when the old doctrines of the rights of property are assailed, when men may no longer "do what they like with their own," and when State Socialism is increasingly aggressive, the advocates of each side call to their ranks every one who will help. Men have discovered that part of woman's sphere is to help them to get into Parliament by cajoling the electors or by canvassing them, according as it is looked at from one side or the other. It is true that to go to the polling-booth would be unwomanly, if the candidates are seeking Parliamentary honours, though quite right and natural if they only aspire to be town councillors. It is true that women are not fit to judge between two candidates, and give a vote to one of them, at a Parliamentary election, which may possibly only come once in seven years, yet they are well qualified to choose among twenty or more candidates at a School Board election, and vote perhaps for fifteen of them every third year. It is true that they will be neglecting their home duties if they go to vote, at long intervals perhaps, for members of Parliament, but their homes do not suffer when they vote every year for town councillors. It is true they must not attend election meetings for fear they will become excited and coarse like men presumably are; but it is quite ladylike to devote endless time and energy in forming Primrose Lodges, or to go in large numbers to meetings of Women's Liberal Associations. In the one case some titled lady is sure to be present to grace the proceedings with her charms; in the other the wife of some Radical candidate will probably attend, having been sent by her husband, who is strongly opposed to Women's Suffrage, because he is frightened by the Primrose League, and thinks all women will vote Tory. Such is the self-contradictory position which opponents of Women's Suffrage are obliged to take up. They accept the present position of women, they acquiesce in the extension of

the local franchises to women ratepayers, and make no effort to restrain women from various forms of political and philanthropic public life. It is true that some few still lament the concession of the municipal franchise, and, to prove the greatness of the error, relate with evident delight stories of how sundry women can only be brought to the poll by even the most energetic male canvassers after they have been treated to liberal doses of rum in their tea. That the said male canvasser, the superior person belonging to that sex that is specially endowed by Providence with all the qualities necessary to enable him to govern, should be guilty of both a moral and legal offence in thus treating the women, does not occur to any one. At the worst, it is but a slight excess of electioneering zeal. But the women! They must be utterly degraded to accept the rum, and nothing could more clearly show that they and all their sex are unfit for the franchise!

When the School Board franchise is considered, no objections are heard, and few even object to women sitting upon such Boards and on Boards of Guardians. The education of children and the care of the poor are so obviously within woman's sphere that criticism is silenced, and thus a great field of public usefulness is, by common consent, opened to women.

The fact is, "the game is up." It is useless any longer to contend against woman entering political life. She is in it already, partly because she has chosen to enter it. partly because men saw she would be a useful ally, and invited her to join them; partly also—and this is a nobler reason—because many men believed it was right she should take her proper position in the world, both for her own sake and for that of the country. The various steps by which the present position has been won are too numerous to detail here. The reign of Queen Victoria and the progress of the emancipation of women began together, and have flourished side by side. It was inevitable, when a woman sat upon the throne, that the thoughts of other women should turn towards a higher sphere of usefulness than that previously known; while the spread of education, the development of railways, and the increase of wealth all tended in the

same direction. The public work of women began appropriately with the Anti-Slavery Agitation, when William Wilberforce then prophesied that the step thus taken by them would lead to their own emancipation. The Temperance cause opened another avenue for their energies, and as both of these agitations were considered philanthropic rather than political, it was ultimately decided that women were usefully employed in them. The Anti-Corn Law League next appealed to them, and though their help in it was largely in the direction of raising funds by means of bazaars, &c., the amount of interest they felt in the work, and the assistance they rendered indirectly, were great. But it was not until two great questions arose, one of them certainly not of their own seeking, that women generally claimed admittance into public life, and took their place on the platform as advocates of what they felt to be just, and assailants of what they knew to be wrong. The struggle for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts was an ordeal such as men have never been obliged to undergo. It involved not merely that women should speak at public meetings, which was a great innovation, but that they should discuss the most painful of all subjects, upon which up to that time even men had never dared to open their mouths. Yet so nobly did the women bear their part all through those terrible years of trial, that they roused a spirit of indignation which swept away the Acts, but never by word or deed did they deservedly incur reproach themselves.

Those who more especially devoted themselves to the other question of the Suffrage had a task only one degree less difficult. If the former were abused, the latter were ridiculed, and both were denounced as unwomanly. They survived each form of attack. As the old saying puts it—

> "A viper bit a Capadocian's hide,
> But 'twas the viper, not the man, that died."

The revilers and scoffers have now almost disappeared; the one cause has completely triumphed, the other has gained the concession of the principle contended for, and only awaits its final application.

So much is this felt to be the case that women have ceased to

concentrate their efforts upon the direct point of the Suffrage, and, while the numbers in favour of it are increasing daily in both political parties, they are largely devoting their energies to ordinary politics, feeling possibly that by proving their interest in and their knowledge of the questions of the day, they are adding a powerful argument to those that already exist in favour of their enfranchisement.

It is often forgotten that in this respect the women of Ireland set the example. When the Land League was proclaimed by the Government, and in consequence ceased to act, its place was taken by the Ladies' Land League, which carried on its operations with much vigour, and helped to support those families who suffered from the severe operation of the Coercion Act. The people of Ireland undoubtedly owe a debt of gratitude to their countrywomen for their action at that time ; a debt which they can only repay by giving them the franchise, for they proved themselves able at a time of emergency to take up the work of national organization which men had been forced to relinquish.

The Tory ladies were next in the field, with the exception of the Birmingham Women's Liberal Association and a similar one at Bristol, which are of comparatively old standing. The character of the debt which the country owes to the Primrose League need not be discussed here. Opinions probably will vary as to the merits of that singular but highly successful organization ; but, looking at it impartially, few will deny that women owe it a debt of gratitude. It interested a vast number of Conservative women in politics, and it has almost converted the Tory party to a belief in Women's Suffrage. It has brought before them the fact that an enormous number of women who have a very large stake in the country are unrepresented, it has shown them that women are wonderful electioneerers, and it has effectually prevented any of them repeating their old stock arguments about the folly of women meddling in politics. So great indeed is the devotion of the Party to the Dames, that almost every great Tory meeting is called under their auspices, and at the few exceptions they are honoured with seats on the

platform. Few Dames, however, yet speak in public. The fact remains that their power is most effectively exercised over individuals in the absence of witnesses by means which so stirred the indignation of Sir Henry James, that he threatened to bring in a Bill to prevent them bewitching the electors by their charms.

The method by which Liberal women have resolved to compete is characteristic of the side they espouse. They form associations of Liberal women with avowed Liberal objects, and also with the intention of helping the cause of women. They know that "the woman's cause is man's, they rise or fall together," and that while they are anxious to help the general aims of the Liberal Party, they are also, and perhaps primarily, anxious to educate women and fit them for their coming enfranchisement. And who can doubt for a moment that while they are educating they are also spreading the desire and demand for a vote. The first question that must arise in the mind of every woman as soon as she begins to take an interest in politics is, Why have I not got a vote? If she is a woman of independent means or of high education, she will ask why she is considered inferior to the men whom she employs in her stable and her garden, or to those whose mental power and learning are as a child's compared to her own. If she is a poor woman, maintaining herself by toil and industry, she will ask why she is considered inferior, it may be to her own brother, or neighbour, who is perhaps dissolute and supported by his wife, and who at the best is just earning weekly wages like herself. Such questions cannot be repressed, and there is only one answer—namely, that there is no reason which will stand a moment's examination, and that the distinction is the survival of an ancient prejudice.

Is it then worth while contending any longer against the inevitable? The subject has been discussed fully by the country, and all active opposition has died away. The real fears of many have been allayed by the gradual advances that have been conceded. It is interesting to refer to the early debates on this measure, and to note how every alarmist prophecy has been rendered false by time and experience. It is true that the prophecies have not been put to the final test by the grant of the

Parliamentary franchise, but they did not merely relate to it. They foretold neglected homes, unsexed women, alienated husbands, and even a revolt against marriage, if women became interested in politics and were contaminated with the filth and mire of elections. So far there are no signs of these evils approaching; women become more and more interested in elections, and one local vote after another is granted. Yet the sex remains as before, and human nature is unchanged. Even attendance at the polling booth has done women no harm, and elections become more orderly as the ballot is more fully recognised. In a remarkable speech delivered by Mr. Gladstone in the debate on the Women's Suffrage Bill in 1871, this fear of the demoralizing effect of attendance at the polling-booth seems to have been the chief difficulty in his mind. With his usual foresight and with his strong sense of justice he told the House that the question of the recognition of women's rights was, after all, merely a question of degree. He approved of the grant of the Municipal and School Board votes. He admitted the existence of all the ancient local franchises conferring the right both to vote and act, and he said that it was a question whether or not they should go further. The principle he evidently held was conceded, and he added: "I do go so far as to admit that my hon. friend (Mr. Jacob Bright) has a presumptive case for some change in the law." He declared that when poor women had to support themselves they approached the task under greater difficulties than attached to men, that in various important particulars women obtain much less than justice, and that this was indirectly due to the state of the law. As an instance of this he cited the case of women turned out of farms because they had no vote—a grievance more common formerly than now—and of the inequality of the law of divorce between the sexes. And he concluded by affirming that the man would be a real benefactor to his country who could arrange a safe and well-adjusted alteration of the law as to political power, and obtain a more just arrangement of the provisions of other laws bearing on the condition and welfare of women.

The only objection which Mr. Gladstone urged, or indeed mentioned, was that the grant of the suffrage would demand the personal attendance of women and involve them in the general proceedings of elections. This, he said, "appears to me to be an objection of the greatest force." But surely time has removed that objection. Elections are very different from what they were in 1871, before the Ballot Act was passed. Women are thoroughly accustomed to give personal attendance at the booth, and the "general proceedings of elections" interest them as much as though they were voters. No one would more readily admit this now than the distinguished speaker, and he would feel that his fears on that score were allayed.

What then prevents the Liberal party from taking up this question, and completing their great measure of reform? Women have entered the political world with the consent, and at last with the assistance, of both parties. They are accustomed to voting at local elections and suffer no harm thereby. Their claim to the franchise is on exactly the same grounds as that of the county householders, which has just been conceded. There is, in fact, not the vestige of a logical argument against the proposal. Why then do not all Liberals support it.

The melancholy truth must be told. It is because they fear the majority of women will vote for the Tories. Over and over again this is heard in private, and no one who has the slightest acquaintance with public feelings will deny that this, and this only, is the reason why they forsake their principles when it is a question of doing justice to women. To the honour of Mr. Gladstone be it said that he is free from such a humiliation. In the speech already referred to he said—

> "In the first place, I would set aside altogether the question whether the adoption of such a measure as this is likely to act in any given sense upon the fortunes of one political party or another. It would be what I may call *a sin against first principles* to permit ourselves to be influenced either one way or the other by any feeling we might entertain on such a point, and therefore into that part of the subject I will not for one moment undertake to enquire."

That is the doctrine that might be expected from the Leader of the Liberal Party. It would be well if his followers understood

the principles of Liberalism as clearly as their chief. After charging the Tories, that they opposed the enfranchisement of the agricultural labourers, because they were likely to vote Liberal, and condemning such intolerance in the strongest terms, those very Liberals now oppose Women's Suffrage because they think women will vote Tory! Such utter absence of principle does indeed degrade public life, and shows that those who are guilty of it refuse to do what they admit to be just for fear of losing votes. "Be just, and fear not!" used to be the motto of Liberals. It is indeed acted upon by many in reference to women. There are large numbers of Liberals who, while they fear that women are Conservative, still advocate their enfranchisement because it is just. It is not the rank and file of the Party, nor its great Leader, who are false to their principles. It is the men in high position in the counsels of the Party, and not a few unofficial members of Parliament, who thus "sin against first principles," and who by their conduct are tending to bring about the very state of things they fear. That they can retard the enfranchisement of women by more than a few years in this democratic age they can scarcely hope. But what they can do is to force women to look to the Tory Party for their freedom. Every one admits the tendency of new voters to support the Party that enfranchised them, and when women see year after year that the Liberal leaders give them the cold shoulder, and, without any reason that will bear stating, refuse to assist them to gain the suffrage, they inevitably will turn elsewhere, and are already receiving encouragement which will meet with its due reward at a future time. If there are good logical reasons which convince a Liberal that women ought not to vote, by all means let him state them and stick to them. He should oppose their enfranchisement, though it drove every woman into the enemy's camp. But when it is the case that the only real objection is the fear that they will turn the scale in favour of Tory candidates, then such Liberals are unworthy of their name, and will bring down upon their Party a well-deserved retribution.

CHRISTIAN WOMEN AS CITIZENS.

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CHRISTIAN WOMEN AS CITIZENS.

IT seems to me of all things most suitable that the question of the duties of women as citizens should be discussed at a Conference of Christian Women, for we owe it to Christianity that it is possible for women to be looked upon as citizens at all.

We all know what the position of women was in the ancient heathen world, and also among the Jews, and what an entire revolution has been wrought in that position by Christianity. To quote the eloquent words of the Bishop of Durham, in a sermon preached last June to the Associates of the Girls' Friendly Society—"The gospel found woman lowered and depressed—deposed from her proper social position. The man had suffered not less but more than the woman by this humiliation. Jew and Gentile had conspired together in an unconscious conspiracy to bring about this result. The Hebrew rabbi and the Greek philosopher had alike gone astray. It is a recorded saying of a famous Jewish Doctor, that 'The words of the law were better burned than committed to a woman.' It is the opinion ascribed to a famous Athenian statesman, that a woman had then achieved her highest glory when her name was least heard among men for virtue or for reward. A moral resurrection was needed for womanhood. It might seem to the looker-on like social death, from which there was no awakening. But it was only a suspension of her proper faculties and opportunities,—a long sleep, from which revival must come soon or late. It was for Him, and Him alone, who is the vanquisher of death, who has the Keys of Hades, to open the doors of her sepulchral prison, to resuscitate

her dormant life, and to restore her to her rightful place in society. When all hope was gone, He took her by the hand and bade her arise; and at the sound of His voice and the touch of His hand she arose and walked—and the world was astonished with a great astonishment."

It is therefore needless to waste time in endeavouring to prove to an assemblage of Christian women that women as well as men are citizens of the country in which they live, and have, as citizens, duties to perform. What those duties may be, how far they are the same as those of men, how far they may differ from them, is another question, but that these duties and responsibilities exist, none will now deny. Christianity, which taught women that they had souls to be saved, awoke their consciences to recognise their responsibilities in every relation of life.

I would maintain in the first place that Christian women as citizens are bound to take a thoughtful and intelligent interest in the affairs of their country, and to assist in the formation of public opinion about them. "Who are you," said Queen Mary to John Knox—"who presume to take to do with the affairs of my kingdom?" "A subject born within the same, Madam," said he. That answer struck the key-note of modern religious democracy; in it the great Reformer expressed the feeling that has animated so many religious and political reformers since—the feeling that each member of a nation is solemnly responsible before God for what that nation does, or what its rulers do in its name. It is this deep sense of national responsibility that I so earnestly desire should be felt by all Christian women. In the present age of newspapers and public meetings there is hardly any educated woman who does not both form and express an opinion on the political and social questions of the day, but I fear that very many do not remember their responsibility in so doing. They content themselves with lightly repeating the talk they hear around them, without thoughtfully investigating the subjects for themselves. We do not realize that our vague talk with a chance visitor, or a neighbour at a dinner table, has anything to do with the mysterious

thing called public opinion. As an illustration of the fact that it has, everyone who reads the annual debates in the House of Commons on the question of Woman's Suffrage must remember that one argument invariably brought forward is, that all the ladies that some member knows declare that they don't want votes, or that the other day he took a lady into dinner and she assured him *she* didn't want a vote, and so what was perhaps the careless or half-jesting speech of one woman is taken as a serious indication of the opinion of women in general.

It is surely to this haste and thoughtlessness in forming opinions on public questions that we must attribute the strange fact—almost the only thing that makes me doubt whether the present growing preponderance of women in public affairs be wholly for good—that so many women, at least of the upper classes, when some difficult question arises in foreign affairs, join with such vindictive eagerness in the clamour for war. Ruskin, speaking on this subject, tells women, with that paradoxical exaggeration with which he often drives home a truth, that if war broke all the china on their drawing room tables, no war in civilized countries would last a week. Surely no woman who faced public questions with the same serious sense of duty and responsibility that she brings to the consideration of her own private duties, could lightly raise her voice to urge her country towards that which causes such untold suffering, especially to other women and their children.

There are in the second place many more definite ways in which Christian women have of late years been shewing their sense of their responsibility as citizens. For nearly twelve years now women have been members of School Boards all over the country, and have done much hard work, and noble service to the cause of education, especially, as was natural, to that of the education of girls.

Again, it is only necessary to mention the names of Miss Nightingale and the late Mrs. Nassau Senior, to prove what services women may render to their country in connection with the nursing of the sick and the care of the poor.

It is still more recently that women have become members of Boards of Guardians, or as we call them in Scotland, Parochial Boards—and in that direction also much good has already been done.

Of course there are comparatively few women who have the capacity, the strength, and the freedom from other claims necessary for such work as this. But in the present state of things the task of these few is often made much harder than it need be by the feeling that every woman who undertakes the duties of a public position carries, so to speak, her whole sex upon her shoulders. When a man who is a member of a public board makes a mistake or omits a duty, people blame *him*, but they never think of blaming the whole male sex; whereas if a woman in such a position fails in the slightest degree to come up to the expectations formed of her, everyone at once cries out—See what comes of putting a woman in such and such a post. I am sorry to say that women themselves are often the first to raise this cry, and I would appeal to all that vast majority of women who, like myself, are not called to be members of boards or to occupy any other public position, to shew at least some fairness, consideration, and common gratitude, to the women who work so hard for us and for others while we sit at home at ease and criticise them. Let us try to remember, what so many noble women who undertake these public duties do most deeply feel, that School Board or Parochial Board duty, or any other kind of public activity, may be undertaken from as high motives, as deep a sense of Christian duty as any mission to the heathen at home and abroad—let us remember that in these ways as well as in many others, Christian women are working for the one Master whose we all are, and whom we all desire to serve.

Another class of public duties in which a much larger number of women take part is the exercise of the various franchises which women householders now possess. These are, in Scotland, the power of voting for the members of the School Board, the Parochial Board, and since 1882, of the Town Council.

I wish here to impress on all those Christian women who are interested in measures of social reform, that

they have in this women's vote an engine of which they do not yet know the full power, and which they have hardly yet began to use. I refer especially to the municipal vote. In Scotland at least the power of the women householders has, as far as I know, only been used on the licensing question, and that only to a very small extent. Rothesay was the first place in Scotland to set the example in this direction. The proportion of women householders there is very large, and their voting power has been from the first organized in the interests of temperance, so that a candidate for the Rothesay Town Council has hardly any chance of success unless he is sound on the licensing question.

We had an interesting example of the use of the women's vote in our recent election for the Glasgow Town Council. In one of the wards of the city, very shortly before the election, a publicans' candidate, himself a publican, was started, avowedly with the object of shewing that the recent action of the Magistrates in refusing licenses did not meet with the approval of the people. This came to the knowledge of some members of our local Women's Suffrage Association, and they felt at once that this was a case where every effort should be made to bring the women's vote to bear. There were only a few days to spare before the election—not time enough to form any regular organisation—but a meeting of the women voters was held, and was addressed by the anti-publican candidate, and by several ladies connected with the Suffrage Association and the Temperance cause. On the day of election four devoted women gave their whole time and energy to bringing out, visiting and assisting the women voters, many of whom, respectable aged women, said they would never have known how to go about it, or ventured to come to the poll, if they had not been assisted and encouraged by the ladies. The ward is in a district which absolutely swarms with public houses, and in one corner of which alone it is said that £47,000 a year is spent in intoxicating drink. So that the licensing question was one which came home to every woman in it.

The result of the contest was that the publican's

candidate was defeated by 2,408 votes to 870. I do not say that this was entirely owing to the womens' vote, as there are only 899 women voters in the ward altogether, but there is no doubt that the completeness of the defeat, a defeat which will make it almost impossible for any man to come forward again openly in the publicans' interest, was owing to the women; and the successful candidate, in a letter thanking the ladies for their exertions, expressed his opinion that the women householders of Glasgow have, if they choose to exercise it, the nomination of the Town Council in their own hands. The different parties in city politics are in many cases so evenly balanced, that a "solid vote" from the women householders would be sufficient to turn the scale between two rival candidates.

I would urge the members of Women's Temperance Associations to make it one of their chief objects to use the Women's Vote in the interests of Temperance, so that by next election there may be a complete organization of women householders in every ward in the city, prepared either to support that candidate for the Town Council whose views on the licensing question meet their approval, or, if no candidate comes forward with satisfactory views on the point, to start one; and I think I may undertake to say that the Women's Suffrage Association will give them every assistance in their power.

It is natural that the licensing question should be the first to call out women's energies in this field, because of the wide-spread and terrible suffering inflicted on women by drink, but there are many other social questions which only need to be brought before women voters to elicit a strong and hearty action on the right side. I refer to such subjects as the proper regulation of the streets—the employment of children—all sanitary questions, and regulations as to landlord and tenant.

All who are engaged in Preventive and Reformatory work; all who are striving in any way to raise the outcast classes, the problem of whose condition presses heavily on every Christian heart, know how much help may be given to their work by good laws and efficient administration. It is quite true that we cannot make

men virtuous by Act of Parliament, but we can, alas, do a great deal to make them vicious, and it is idle to go on tinkering away at evil results, when the laws, and legalised practices, which cause the evils, are untouched.

These social questions affect women quite as much as they do men, perhaps even more, and I would urge all who are interested in social reform to consider what a powerful factor the vote of the women householders can be, as far as municipal legislation is concerned, and to think earnestly over the best ways of making use of it. For it seems to me that a few hours spent in laying social questions before women voters, and in shewing them how to use their voting power in procuring useful social legislation, may often do more lasting good than many months of labour expended in trying to mend social wreckage.

But the municipal franchise is incomplete without the Parliamentary franchise. To shew how closely the two are connected, take an instance from the licensing question. The women's vote may in many towns be strong enough to enable Temperance reformers to return a Town Council who will greatly reduce the number of licenses for selling intoxicating drink. But the election of the people's representatives may be completely neutralized, as we saw in Glasgow lately, by the action of the Justices of the Peace, an irresponsible body of men, subject to no popular control. All Temperance reformers feel strongly that this state of things cannot be allowed to go on,—that in some way or other the people of a town or district must be allowed to have the regulation of the drink traffic in their own hands. Women feel this quite as strongly as men. But this is a question which can only be decided by Parliament—a question of what is called Imperial politics, and one therefore on which no woman can be allowed to have a voice.

It is the same with all other social questions. Town Councils and Local Boards can only go a certain length in dealing with these questions, and then comes a point where Parliament must step in. Then also comes a point where the women ratepayers, who, equally with

the men ratepayers have to bear the cost of pauperism and crime; on whom as individuals social evils press harder than they do on men; who have up to this point been doing their best, equally with the men, to remedy these evils, perhaps even taking the lead in doing so, must all at once suddenly become silent and powerlesss. Surely the mere statement of such an unreasonable distinction is sufficient argument against it.

In conclusion, I would ask all educated Christian women to look this whole question of citizenship, its duties and responsibilities, fairly in the face; and above all to consider it, not as it affects themselves alone, but as it touches the working-class women, who form, of course, the immense majority of women ratepayers, and who would be chiefly affected by the extension of the Parliamentary franchise to women.

One constantly hears it said, when this question of the suffrage is brought forward, that women can do far more by influence than they could by votes if they had them. This is undoubtedly true of educated women. It is equally true of educated men. But what should we say of the man who, because he could make his opinions known, and influence his countrymen, by speech or writing, should therefore deny a vote to the working man who sees in it his only means of making his voice heard on national questions? If *we* want to get wrongs remedied, reforms introduced, bad laws abolished, good laws created, we can write, or we can speak about it; or if we do not wish for so much publicity, we know Members of Parliament, or men who write in magazines and newspapers, and we can use our influence on them. But what of the working-class woman? If she with great difficulty, expense, and loss of time, joins a deputation to a Member of Parliament or of the Government (and that is the only way in which women of her class can hope to influence legislation which touches their lives in many cases so intimately) as likely as not she is refused a hearing, and sometimes frankly on the ground of her possessing no vote, and so having no means of enforcing her opinion. I never realized what this question really

meant till I heard it brought before a meeting of working women; then, by that strange electric sympathy that only comes of personal contact one felt—one could not help reading in their faces and their whole demeanour—that this question of the franchise, which to most of us is only a subject for discussion in an idle hour, is to them a subject of vital importance, and that because it is their only means of expression on questions which affect them more seriously and nearly than any legislation can affect us.

I think everyone who has been present at such a meeting of working women will confirm my impression as to their feeling. And if this is so, if those hard-working sisters of ours feel that the Parliamentary franchise would put into their hands a power at present denied them of influencing public opinion and the opinion of our legislators on such subjects as the laws affecting women's labour, the laws for the protection of young girls, the licensing laws, the police legislation of towns, and many other similar questions, must we not feel that our education, our leisure, our power of speech or writing, our influence over others, were not given us just to make our own lives so comfortable that we can say, "I have always had all the rights I ever wanted," but that we may use them on behalf of those who are less favoured than we are; making ourselves their voice, the expression of their desires, and so helping to put into their hands the power of helping themselves.

Surely so to bear one another's burdens is to fulfil the Law of Christ.

ANNA LINDSAY.

LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE UNION OF WOMEN'S LIBERAL ASSOCIATIONS.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT—

Mrs. JACOB BRIGHT

To the Council assembled at the Teneriffe Street Hall, Bury New Road, Manchester, on June 8th, 1898.

FRIENDS,

When five years ago I accepted the great honour you conferred upon me—the Presidency of our Union, I did so on the distinct understanding that Women's Suffrage should be the chief plank in our Platform. By a unanimous vote you then declared in favour of this great and much needed Reform. Unfortunately we are not all agreed as to the best means of enforcing the Programme, which we unanimously demand. I venture, therefore, most respectfully to lay before you the views which are the result of a long life, devoted to work for the improvement of the position of our sex.

A Resolution has been sent up for your consideration by our friends from Southport affirming the opinion that

"No Women's Liberal Association should work for the return to Parliament of a candidate who is opposed to Women's Suffrage, feeling convinced that this great measure of justice can only be obtained by sending to the House of Commons those candidates who are in favour of it."

I desire, very emphatically, to support this Resolution, and I do so, not only in the interests of women, but also in the interests of the Liberal Party, which we all desire to strengthen, but whose Leaders at the present time appear to be strangely indifferent, if not hostile, to the first principle of the Liberal Creed.

Those who really want a thing, want any honest means by which it can be had.

The questions before us are—

(1) How are we to get a Suffrage Bill passed through Parliament unless members of Parliament will consent to vote for it?

I wish you could realise as I do, that the House of Commons never wants to add to the number of its constituency. They have never voted any extension of the Suffrage, except as the result of strong outside pressure.

What pressure then can we bring to bear upon them? Let us consider what we have already done.

For 30 years we have held innumerable public meetings, and endless petitions asking for the right to vote. We have invaded the lobbies of the House of Commons and implored the votes of the Members for our Bills. Since the Liberal Party invited our help at elections, we have been most assiduous in working for their candidates, even when those candidates have openly expressed their contempt for our claims to sex representation. More than this. Although comparatively poor ourselves, and our own Associations needing every penny we could afford, we have never refused our aid to Men's Liberal Associations, either in money or hard work.

We get up bazaars to pay their debts, to decorate their clubs, to buy new billiard tables for them. In fact, we exhaust ourselves in showing the utmost sympathy, not only for what they call "Liberalism," but in regard to the mere selfish comforts and indulgences of a somewhat anti-domestic nature.

(2) What has been the result of all this sympathy, favour and generosity?

The answer is given in the last debate in the House of Commons on Women's Suffrage.

They deny that you care anything about the Suffrage.

They say that only a small and noisy clique are asking for it. Are they so very much to blame in taking this view? After all they can only judge you as they would judge men acting as you do. No men with a deep earnest conviction that a certain reform was necessary, would deliberately work for candidates to vote against it. So long as we pursue this course we must not be surprised to be told we "don't want votes."

There is only one way by which you can obtain votes. You *must* convince the Government and the opposition that you mean to have them. Ask any one of the Members of Parliament, who have charged themselves with the task of trying to get votes for women, what is his opinion on this question. Every one of them will tell you frankly that so long as candidates can count on your electoral services, without any pledge given in return, your cause is hopeless. It is hopeless, because *they do not believe* that if you really cared to have the vote you would send them to the House to oppose it.

I urge you, therefore, as your President, gravely to consider the position in which we are placed. It is a small thing to ask of the Men's Liberal Associations in your localities that they shall refrain from presenting you with candidates opposed to your views on this all important qustion. It is not the granting of any ordinary measure of Reform that we demand. The Right to Vote means the right to political existence. Those who deny to you political existence have no right to the use of your hearts and brains and energies to assist them in political warfare. It is an insult that they should make such a claim. You will help the Liberal Party, not injure it, by compelling its Leaders to face its own first principles.

Your faithful President and Servant,

URSULA M. BRIGHT,

AIX-LES-BAINS,

FRANCE.

May 16*th*, 1898.

Pam

SPEECH

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

1892.

THE RIGHT HON. A. J. BALFOUR, M.P.

PUBLISHED BY THE CENTRAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE, LONDON,
25, VICTORIA STREET, S.W.

The First Lord of the Treasury (Mr. A. J. Balfour, Manchester, E.) : I should not have thought it necessary or entirely for the convenience of the debate to have intervened if it were not that I find myself in opposition to the greater number of friends of mine who sit on these benches, and with whom I am in the habit of acting in the closest agreement on all political matters; and knowing, also, that the opinions I am about to express are not shared by a large number of gentlemen who sit on this side of the House, I am unwilling to give a vote without very briefly stating some of the reasons which influence me in taking that course. The debate has been an extremely able and interesting one, and the burden of the attack upon the Bill introduced by the hon. member for South Islington has been borne by two gentlemen sitting on the other side of the House, the right hon. gentleman who just sat down, and the hon. member for Fife. The right hon. gentleman the member for Bury, though he made a very able and interesting speech, laboured under two or three disadvantages. He laboured, amongst other things, under the disadvantage of having replied to a speech which he had not heard, and he attacked my hon. friend who moved the second reading of this Bill on grounds which he never advanced at all. He supposed that this Bill was introduced in order to produce absolute equality and symmetry in the position of men and women in regard to politics. My hon. friend would have been guilty of the greatest absurdity if he had advanced arguments of that kind in support of a Bill which, on the very face of it, does not profess to produce that equality. And many of those who are going to support this Bill do not support it on any ground of abstract right or equality, or on any abstract right at all. We support it for practical reasons which I will endeavour shortly to state to the House. Another argument put forward by the member for Bury was, if he will permit me to say so, fundamentally inconsistent with the arguments advanced by the member for Fife. The right hon. gentleman drew a picture of what the condition of England would be when eleven million women had a vote, and only ten million men had a vote. He said—

> "You will then be under the subjection of women. Women will control the policy of this country, and we shall be a nation of women and children."

That implies that the women are all going to vote on one side and the men on the other, and that women would outvote the men. In other words, it pre-supposes that there is a class distinction and cleavage

between women and men in matters political which would put all the women on one side and all the men on the other. That is altogether and wholly inconsistent with the argument of the member for Fife, who told us that to consider this question as one of class distinction was altogether to misconceive the conditions of modern society. Turning from the right hon. gentleman to the learned gentleman behind him (Mr. Asquith), he gave us a very good Tory speech of the old tune upon the question of Reform Bills in general, and, in fact, there has been an unexpected vein of Toryism, or, at all events, what is described as Toryism by Liberal critics, in the speeches of gentlemen who sit on the opposite benches on this question. As the member for Dover (Mr. Wyndham) has pointed out, had the words "agricultural labourer" been substituted for "women," some of those speeches were such as might have been heard from the small knot of gentlemen who were opposed to the Reform Bill of 1885, and precisely the same arguments have been used with respect to the incompetence of the class to be admitted, and as to the interests of that class having been hitherto fully considered. These are arguments with which we are all familiar, and have been familiar from time immemorial, the only difference being that they have much less justification in the present case than, I think, they had on previous Reform Bills. The hon. and learned gentleman mentioned three points in which this particular alteration of the franchise differed from any previous alteration of the franchise that had ever been proposed. He said that in every previous case the class to be enfranchised had shown their very great anxiety to obtain the franchise, and that in this case no such anxiety had been shown. I differ from the hon. and learned gentleman. I think those who wished to be enfranchised have used the only methods they could use in the matter. That is to say, they have expressed their desire to obtain the vote on platforms and by public meetings, and by whatever other means were open to them. The hon. gentleman appears to think that there was a widespread desire on the part of agricultural labourers to claim the franchise in 1885. I do not believe the desire existed, and I am sure it was never demonstrated. I am sure it could not be demonstrated; there were no means of demonstrating it except the means which have been used in the present case—platform speeches, public meetings, petitions, votes, and resolutions. Then, Sir, the second point on which the hon. gentleman says this Reform Bill differs from every other Reform Bill is that the class to be enfranchised on this occasion are not capable of performing the duties of active citizenship as the classes which were previously enfranchised had been. What duties? So far as I know, the main one to which the hon. gentleman alluded, is that of fighting for their country. The duty cannot be performed with efficiency by gentlemen over 60 years of age. At all events, I am not aware that the severest conscription in any country requires any person over 60

years of age to serve under any contingency whatever, and yet I do not think the hon. and learned gentleman desires to disfranchise them. The *posse comitatus* does not go out and fight the enemy; the enemy is fought by the disciplined forces of the country, and the chief duty of the ordinary citizen consists not in shouldering a rifle and going off to the frontier; it consists in paying the bill. That is a duty which the people desired to be enfranchised by this Bill can perform; it is a duty they are obliged to perform; and the mere fact that they cannot enrol themselves in volunteer corps does not appear to be an adequate reason for refusing them some control over the policy by which the foreign relations of our country are conducted and means of defence are to be secured. The third argument of the hon. and learned gentleman was that in the case of every previous Reform Bill there had been a grievance of the class to be enfranchised, which required to be redressed, and which could not, and would not, be redressed until the franchise was given to them, and he pointed out with great force that in connection with each of the great Reform Bills the grievances of the enfranchised class came to the front. But when did they come to the front? Did they come to the front before the enfranchised class received the vote or after it? The hon and learned gentleman has only to consider the list of cases he has himself given, and he will discover that it was only after the vote was conferred that it was discovered that this House really had a function to perform in modifying legislation in this country in the interests of the new class of voters. Now, Sir, leaving the speech of the hon. and learned gentleman, and referring to the general course of the debate, there is one argument which has been used which I desire directly to traverse. We have been told that to encourage women to take an active part in politics is degrading to the sex, and that received the assent of an hon. friend of mine below the gangway. It has received the assent of almost every speaker to-day. I should think myself grossly inconsistent and most ungrateful if I supported that argument in this House, for I have myself taken the chair at Primrose League Meetings, and urged to the best of my ability the women of this country to take a share in politics, and to do their best in their various localities to support the principles which I believe to be sound in the interests of the country. After that, to come down to the House, and say I have asked these women to do that which degrades them appears to me to be most absurd. I do not know much about these matters, but I understand that there are other associations of the kind of which women are members, and I have heard of a Liberal-Unionist Women's Association; I do not know if it has given my right hon. and learned friend the member for Bury (Sir H. James) that valuable assistance they are always ready to give. There is also, I think, a Women's Liberal Federation. I daresay the learned member for Fife (Mr. Asquith) has taken part in its meetings.

Mr. Asquith: Never.

Mr. A. J. Balfour: The House will understand that I do not wish to introduce personal questions at all, but I think I may take it that every section in this House is only too glad to use the services of women when they think they can profit by them, and it does not lie in the mouths of any of us to say that taking part in framing the policy of the Empire is degrading to the sex. In any other department of human thought than politics such an argument would be described by no milder word than "cant." Cant it undoubtedly is. The argument which appealed most, I am convinced, to those who oppose this Bill is not an objection of this character, but the conviction—the ill-founded conviction, I think—that it must necessarily carry with it, as what they call a logical consequence, the result that women must have a seat in this House, in the Cabinet, and should in all respects, so far as public offices are concerned, be placed on an equality with men. I do not believe a word of that argument. I can quite agree that it is very difficult to stop in such a course—to fix an arbitrary point and say there you will stop—if the arguments for going further are precisely those which made you travel thus far. The point, therefore, for us to consider is, Can the arguments that are brought forward in favour of this Bill be also brought forward in favour of women having a seat in this House? No, Sir, they cannot. There is no fundamental distinction between giving women the right to vote in municipal affairs and giving them the right to vote in Imperial affairs, and yet, though there is no distinction, you have resisted the change for 20 years, and according to the hon member for Fife you are going to resist it for 20 years more. How easy it would be to resist a change which involved a new departure—a new principle! Everybody must assent to the proposition of the hon. gentleman the member for Flintshire (Mr. S. Smith) that women cannot engage on an equality with men in a large number of professions. They cannot; and I quite agree that the profession of politics is one of these. In my opinion women could not with advantage to themselves, or to the community, take part in the labours of a great deliberative assembly like this That is a reason for not giving them a seat in this House, but is it a reason for not giving them an opportunity of expressing an opinion and giving a vote every four or five years? I do not know what the average duration of Parliament has been during the last 100 years, but I think in the future it will probably not be so long. If you want to prevent further progress you ought to stop at a point where defence is possible, but at the present point logical defence is not possible. Therefore, those who are greatly moved by logical consistency should, I think, move on till they come to a point where further change could be successfully resisted. The debate has now almost reached its natural termination, and all I will say is that the matter which surprises me

in this debate is the position taken up by hon. gentlemen opposite. I understand that part of their programme is a great alteration of the franchise, in spite of what fell from the hon. member for Aberdeen (Mr. Bryce). I understand one plank of the Newcastle platform was one man one vote. When that is brought forward I believe we shall have all the old flesh and-blood arguments urged again, all the old arguments for political liberty, and the whole train of commonplaces again thrust before us for our acceptance, by which each successive change in the franchise has been accepted, and yet the very gentlemen who say they are going to bring forward that programme at this moment absolutely refuse to admit the validity of a single one of these arguments when they are directed towards enfranchising not the least worthy class of the community, but what I believe to be one of the worthiest classes. You will give a vote to a man who contributes nothing to taxation but what he pays on his beer, while you refuse enfranchisement to a woman because she is a woman, whatever her contribution to the State may be. She has sufficient ability to look after lighting and paving, but is not so fitted to look after the interests of the Empire as a man who cannot point out on the map the parts of the world of which that Empire is composed. I think from all I can hear that this Bill is not likely to be successful on this occasion; but, depend upon it, if any further alteration of the franchise is brought forward as a practical measure, this question will again arise, menacing and ripe for solution, and it will not be possible for this House to set it aside as a mere speculative plan advocated by a body of faddists. Then you will have to deal with the problem of woman suffrage, and to deal with it in a complete fashion.

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THE

POLITICAL CLAIMS

OF

WOMEN.

BY

JULIA WEDGWOOD.

Published by the London National Society for Women's Suffrage.

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POLITICAL CLAIMS OF WOMEN.

By JULIA WEDGWOOD.

THE attempt to remove the political disabilities of women has now reached a stage through which every measure of national reform has to pass, and beyond which progress is extremely difficult. The grounds on which this removal is urged have been stated, enforced, and illustrated, again and again, till they have acquired a familiarity which deadens the attention and tends to mislead the judgment. But nothing is more certain than that words which we have learnt to associate with weariness often convey important truth. There are times when those who speak must reiterate, and those who hear must have patience with, statements of principle and of fact which, being obvious to all who think and observe, have been often made before. Indeed, it is the strong point of our case that they have been often made before. Our opponents have been so busy answering arguments which are not used, that they have not attempted to answer the arguments which are. They have thus imposed upon us a two-fold task. We have to say both what we do want and what we do not want, and the attempt at justifying actual claims which the arguments of our own side have made familiar is complicated by the necessity of disavowing possible claims which the attack of the opposite side have made conspicuous. Yet our demand is a very simple one.

We demand that the test imposed as a qualification for exercising the full rights of a citizen shall be applicable to every English subject; that those who do not vote shall be such as either abstain voluntarily or have not satisfied the conditions of the law. We claim that such of us as do a man's work shall do it with a man's advantages, so far as these can be secured by Acts of Parliament, and urge that if Parliament cannot confer the strong arm and the powerful frame, so much the more is it bound to shelter those who have to compete with the strong-armed in the difficult struggle for life from the shade of inferiority which attaches to all whom the State refuses to recognize as citizens. We want theories on this subject to be verified, like theories on any other, by the experience of life. Our demands rest not on any theory, but on the facts that a class of unrepresented workers has not the same advantages as one which is represented, and that more than 3,000,000 women are ill-educated and ill-paid workers. These women have to support themselves, and those dependent on them; the workhouse is not more agreeable to them than to men, and

their means of avoiding it are fewer. They are excluded from some trades and professions by the jealousy of men, from others by their want of physical strength, a requisite in many kinds of business where its necessity is not obvious; while the very fact of their not having a vote makes it difficult for them to keep a farm or a shop in their own hands. The persons who, in the face of all these difficulties, satisfy a certain money-test must possess rather more thrift and industry than the persons who satisfy that test without any of these difficulties; and we urge that this test should not be prevented from working where it would work most efficaciously. The class from which we, the opponents of Women's Political Disabilities, seek to remove the slur which such disabilities cast on mature human beings, is not one which we have done anything to create. We have not decided that one woman out of every three should remain unmarried, and that a majority of these women should have to earn their bread. These are facts, not opinions. The question whether the sheltered home or the busy world is a woman's ideal sphere has no bearing upon them. If there ever was a time when you might have regarded women as exceptional creatures, relieved by men from the burdens of life, and surrendering to them its graver responsibilities and some of its liberty, you cannot do so now, when more than a tenth of the nation have these burdens forced upon them. We urge that you should not force any set of persons to unite the disadvantages of both sexes.

Certain difficulties felt by thoughtful men to stand in the way of the proposed change are no doubt worthy of serious attention. They urge that important as is the welfare of half the human race, the welfare of the whole is yet more so, and they fear this might be imperilled by giving political power to persons so little instructed as most women. They fear that members might be returned to Parliament, for instance, hampered with some pledge extorted by women which men would never submit to see carried out. Our reasonable opponents know, too, that a part of the office of Parliament is imperial, and consider that, however much may be said for the influence of women on the domestic affairs of a nation, there is something questionable in allowing those to have any voice in the career of a nation, who, in a national crisis, can give no physical help. These grounds for hesitation are valid against some demands which we do not make. We are not asking that women should be represented *as women*. There has been much vague talk as if this were the case, but the truth is that the very arguments which prove that you ought not to *dis*franchise a ratepayer because she is a woman, prove also that you ought not to *en*franchise any person because she is a woman; if privilege and responsibility cannot be withheld upon the ground of sex, neither can they be demanded on that ground. If the day ever comes when such a claim is made, the future opponents of Woman's Suffrage will find no answer so convincing as the arguments of the present advocates of Women's Suffrage. They can then reply, in the words of the supporter of the Bill of 1872, that, "There is not a male and female rate of taxation. Parliament does not give votes either to men or women, it applies a certain test, and gives votes to all who can submit to that test." It is a strange confusion to suppose that any application of the principle which these words embody can ever pass into the principle which they oppose. What possible extensions of the demand that all taxpayers should be represented can include the further demand that persons who are not taxpayers should be represented? In Mr. Bright's first speech on introducing his Bill, he gave some specimens (founded on the tests of women admitted to the municipal vote) of the proportions of male and female electors if his Bill became law. From these it appears

that at Bath, which is the high water-mark of female ascendency, they would vote in the proportion of one to three (1 woman to 3·8 men); while at Walsall, the opposite end of the scale, the proportion would be one woman to twenty-two men. Thirteen per cent. is said to be the probable increase on the whole. Even if we suppose this addition to add to the electorate a compact homogeneous body, its influence need not surely alarm the most timid. We cannot concede that this would be true; women are not of one mind any more than men are; but, even supposing it true, it would not be dangerous.

Not on the present conditions of voting, it is conceded, but we are told that the present electoral test is a mere temporary stage in a rapid downward journey, the ultimate goal of which is universal suffrage. It is true that any movement in the suffrage will be downwards, and equally true that women form the majority of the nation; and in combining these two facts some thoughtful and liberal men feel a natural anxiety at the prospect of the balance of power lying with the sex physically unfitted to wield it. But surely this kind of anticipatory policy is not accepted in any region where men are really interested. To consider the burdens which we leave posterity no choice about bearing is our bounden duty, but it seems a futile precaution to abstain from any measure because our descendants may carry out the principle to inconvenient lengths. They will only extend the franchise at their own will. The electoral area is not expanded by any irresistible law; its extension no doubt is the tendency of our time; but this is the result not of any physical necessity, but simply of the wishes and expectations of human beings. Anything which changes those wishes and expectations will change the result. "Is it to be said," asked Sir Henry James, "that the man who sets the stone rolling at the hill-top is not to look to its effects in the valley?" To render this question pertinent, you must suppose the hill-side to be made up of ledges from which the stone can only be set rolling afresh by human agency, in which case surely the only thing to consider is whether the stone is wanted on the ledge below us. If the time ever comes when it will be proposed to include the adult male population in the electorate, the question is not at all settled beforehand by us, that the whole adult female population shall be included also. We do not decide for our descendants or for our future selves, that any set of persons should be admitted to the poll irrespectively of all tests whatever. We only say, when a certain test has been set up, do not cut off from its operation those to whom its fulfilment is the greatest testimony.

The whole view on which this anxiety is based is that women are much more alike than men are. There would be nothing to dread in their influence if it were supposed to be subject to the same variety of conditions that men's is, but it is considered that there is a certain feminine view of things which is dangerous, apart from its being erroneous, because it is inevitably one-sided. And no doubt this is true, so far that women seem to men more alike than men do to each other. But, then, so do men seem more alike to women than women do to each other. Each sex knows the other from a particular point of view, and members of each sex are apt to confuse the identity of their point of view with some monotony in its objects. Women seem more alike than men *to men*, for the same reason that Frenchmen seem more alike than Englishmen *to Englishmen*. The spectator from without will always discern more resemblance than one from within. No doubt the weak have common fears, and any admission of female influence would embody this element. But this is not what men are afraid of. The most contemptuous of our opponents would surely be glad to ascertain, and at least consider, all claim for protection that might

be made by women. This, we admit, would be a common element in the addition to the electorate we are seeking to make. But we urge that any supposed common element beyond this is an imagination which those who point out must justify by argument. Sir Henry James, whose speech against the change demanded was considered the strongest, in 1875, said, "The effect of this Bill would be to drive women to consider subjects connected, I will not say with sentiment, but, at all events, not always with good government. Were female franchise introduced into France the question affecting the elections in every department of the country would be whether there should be war with Italy to restore the temporal power of the pope." If the line of argument here suggested, in a somewhat elliptical form, and not quite consistent with its context, may be followed out, Sir Henry James appears to have meant that the influence of women would be injurious in enforcing some measure which would be for England what the re-establishment of the temporal power of the pope would be to France. Such an argument can only be met with the assertion of individual experience, not worth much, certainly, but worth more than an assertion which has nothing whatever to do with experience. Take the disestablishment of the Church as the nearest English parallel to Sir Henry James's instance, and consider the opinion bearing on it of those whom this Bill would enfranchise. If a single experience, neither short, nor peculiar, nor narrow of women's views may be regarded as a specimen of an average experience, it may be said that the women endowed with votes by this Bill would be just as keen on one side as on the other. A few would be very keen on both sides. A great many would be perfectly indifferent. Those who are not indifferent would be, perhaps, more keen, blinder to collateral issues, more bitter against compromise, than men would be, but all this just as much on one side as the other. The fear which influences those who would feel no other objection to female suffrage—that of largely increasing the power of the clergy—is the result rather of considering typical women and typical clergy in the abstract, than of experience among women as they are, at all events, of such women as would be enfranchised by admitting all those who satisfy the present electoral test.

No doubt clergymen have certain interests in common with women which no other men have, and perhaps there is as a result a certain feminine element in their characters, when much affected by their profession, which there is not in other men. But it argues a strange ignorance of human nature to think that this similarity gives influence. Women are as little under the influence of feminine men as men are under the influence of masculine women. If you can make a rule as to circumstances and characters so various, you may say that in both cases human beings are attracted by contrast.

A truer answer would be given by the mere computation of the female householders in a single acquaintance who would take any important step under clerical influence, if it were remembered that ladies would form an insignificant proportion of this class. Women who work are very much more like men who work than people fancy who know women, as most gentlemen do know them, as social equals. It is from considering only these kinds of women, we suspect, that so much is thought about the influence of the clergy, or that such fears are expressed as that the influence of female voters would be absolutely hostile to the real interests of women in such cases as the Married Women's Property Bill. The influence of ladies possibly might be so. But lower down in the social scale you would find a very different kind of view of the subject from that taken in drawing-rooms.

People are apt, in making up their minds on any subject of social interest, not to think of the men and women they know, whom there is always a curious but explicable tendency to classify as exceptions, but of some abstract type of the character supposed, and fiction is a large source of this kind of general opinion. The intriguing priest and the beneficent pastor are stock characters, and few people take the trouble to ask themselves how often they have seen them realized. When a type of this kind has become current, it acquires an authority of its own, the trouble of investigating its correspondence with fact seems superfluous, and the result of such investigation paradoxical, although, in truth, such types become prevalent through their vividness simply, and not through any faithfulness to the world of reality. But no one should let his opinions be moulded on them; he should consider, not whether women as they are painted in fiction or defined in treatises are under the influence of the clergy, but whether the actual women he knows—the shopkeeper, the schoolmistress, the lodging-house keeper, the writer in magazines, the painter of second-rate pictures—all the commonplace women of his acquaintance who earn their bread, are so. It will be an exceptional experience in which these elements compose a constituency in which clerical influence is an important element.

There is in this matter another source of confusion: people think of a clergyman's influence on the poor and on women together. On the needy classes (who, in London, hardly vote at all) a clergyman has a very definite influence, no doubt. He is the channel through which material help reaches them, and it would be easy for him to use his influence, made up in indistinguishable proportions of gratitude and interest, to get their actual or possible pensioners to vote for Mr. A. or Mr. B., if it were worth while, and if he chose to take the enormous trouble and run the considerable risk. But with this matter we have nothing to do; it is one where men would be concerned much more than women.

The objections felt by thoughtful men to our demand occupy a curiously small proportion in the whole bulk of argument against the measure we advocate. We find it said, as a ground for rejecting the demand of a quarter of a million persons, that women do not want the suffrage, that it will be a burden to them, that it would take them out of their sphere, that they have enough to do and to think of already. If it is asked what they have to do and to think of we are told their vocation is "to make life endurable." A measure justified on the ground that a large body of persons have to struggle for their own livelihood is opposed on the ground that these persons have enough to do in adorning the lives of others. Of course, in saying this Mr. Scourfield was thinking exclusively of the women who belong to his own class. The view is not universal even with regard to that class, but when a theory is irrelevant, it is waste of time to inquire whether it is true. It is about as good an argument against the proposed change to assert that it will make the position of rich women less comfortable as it would have been against the last Reform Bill to pretend that it would make the profession of barrister or physician less profitable. It is not an excusable fallacy when one to whom the nation has delegated the office of law-making talks as if the world were made up of ladies and gentlemen, and the shallowest and most frivolous of speakers would not venture to do so when the interests of men were at stake. A statesman ought to be able to see clearly and say boldly that, in considering a Bill which concerns a seventh of the nation, he may leave that small portion of it which belongs to good society out of account. If all women were in the position of the women whose supposed duty it is to "make life endurable," Parliament would not have heard of any Bill for doing away with woman's

disabilities. It is waste of time to argue whether even those women would not be the better for being made citizens of. Our whole case rests on the fact that a great many women have to work for their living, and that these women have the greatest difficulty, first, in getting an education that will enable them to do any work, and, secondly, in finding work from which they are not practically excluded by men. "I scarcely ever see," said the Prime Minister, in the debate of 1871, "I scarcely ever see in the hands of a woman an employment that ought more naturally to be in the hands of a man; but I constantly see in the hands of a man employment which might be more beneficially and economically in the hands of a woman." Take another illustration of the truth here stated. There were, in 1861, about 22,000 female farmers in England and Wales, being one eleventh part of the whole number. Now, that farming is a business for which women have no inherent disqualification is evident to any one who will consider how much of a farmer's duty consists in that careful inspection of details which is considered a woman's strong point, and is abundantly illustrated by experience. Almost every one who knows much of country life has some instance of a farm well-managed by a woman to bring forward. A single instance of the case, given in Mr. Bright's speech, 1873, may be given here; it is contained in the following extract from the pages of a journal not devoted to women's rights, the *Field*:—"It may be said, What business have women with farming? In answer to this query the report of the competition for the 100-guineas prize for the best-managed farm in the central districts of England, offered by the Royal Agricultural Society, may be referred to. Twenty-one farms competed for the honour. It was awarded to the tenant of Ash Grove Farm, near Ardley, Bicester, as showing the best example of good general management, productiveness, suitability of live stock, and general cultivation, with a view to profit. The farm is one of 890 acres; 1000 sheep and 70 cattle are wintered annually. The judges said the farm was an exceedingly good example of a well-managed farm," and accordingly granted the 100-guinea prize, but the society which gave it refused to accede to the tenant thus honourably distinguished the important advantages of membership, for the simple fact that this person was a woman. This is not the only instance that might be quoted of the disadvantages of women that have to earn their bread. The obstruction placed in the way of women in the watchmaking trade, for instance, would afford an example of a kind of difficulty which affects a larger number of individuals. But the case of farmers ought specially to be considered in this connection, because here the want of a vote has a directly injurious influence on the person concerned. In *all* cases it is an indirect disadvantage to a worker not also to be a citizen, but in the case of farmers it is actually a menace to the continued existence of their livelihood. It will hardly be said that a landowner to whom political influence is either indifferent or inaccessible is a common spectacle. No matter whether it ought to be so, the question is as to what *is*, and while it remains an object with the landholder that his tenant should have a vote, and a woman has none, so long one of the trades in which women are best fitted to excel will be closed to them. It is facts like these which contain the justification of our demand. Is it not childish to answer a claim thus supported by the assertion that "woman is the silver lining which gilds the cloud of man's existence?" (Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen, 1872.)

But we are told that in seeking to escape the shadow of inferiority, thrown by political disability, we are really imperilling the shelter of acknowledged weakness. "The extension of the franchise to self-dependent women," said Mr. Beresford-Hope, in the debate of 1871, "might

seriously endanger their hard-earned competence by forcing them into the arena of political excitement, where they would be exposed to the animosities, the bickerings, and the resentments which are so unhappily inherent in the tough work of electioneering." Now, no one has ever justified the refusal of the franchise on the ground that it would be an injury to the claimant, when the claimant was a man. And no obvious difference of man and woman explains this different method of meeting their claims. If an election riot were the ideal condition of a new member taking his seat, indeed, there might be something to say for it, but even then we should say, let us take our share of the blows if we choose to do so. We do not care to argue the question as to the advantage of our claim to ourselves. That is our own concern. It is not for one set of mature human beings to decide what is or is not for the advantage of another. If we are often mistaken about our own vocation we are still more often mistaken about other people's, and whatever may be the right place for women, that is a subject on which women are less likely to be wrong than men.

But women do take this view of their vocation, it is said. The anxiety of the *Times*, that women shall not be dragged "from their drawing-rooms" to the polling-booths, is echoed by the whole acquaintance of more than one Member of Parliament, and one of the speakers read, in 1871, a letter from a lady friend who was "strongly opposed to the extension of the franchise to women," and who considered herself "exactly in a position to express opinions which might be regarded as the exponent of those of her countrywomen." That is, we should suppose, this lady had mingled with classes below her own; she knew the desires of the poor on the subject, and of that intermediate class which is more difficult to get at than the poor? Not at all. Extraordinary as it seems, this lady, who "has an immense circle of acquaintance," and is intimate with Members of Parliament, supposes herself to be a type of the class we seek to enfranchise. The delusion need not be dwelt on after what has been said; certainly the writer of that letter was the type of a class which would not have the smallest difficulty in defending itself from the importunity of candidates. However, to take a parallel case, what would have been thought, in 1829, of an opponent of the Bill for removing Catholic Disabilities, who read out a letter from a Roman Catholic, asserting that, considering the gain to the spiritual life of shelter from the temptations of worldly ambition, he regarded the proposed change in the law as a burden against which he protested? Would such an argument have been thought worthy of any more arduous refutation, than the assertion that it would be hard to force an important body of men to remain unrepresented because among them were some who wanted sense?

A Member of Parliament may continue for a long time to ask the lady he takes down to dinner whether she wants the franchise before he gets an affirmative answer. The class in whose interest we demand it is as much out of the reach of men of position as if each party belonged to a different nation. No Member of Parliament would allow his daughter to marry without settlements. It is one of the many advantages of money that it can obtain security for money. The classes who have wealth can get their wealth secured to son or daughter. But those to whom such money as they possess is far more necessary have no means of making the possession of this money by their weaker members sure. The efforts hitherto made have failed in securing immunity to anything but the earnings of married women; a magistrate consulted by a poor woman as to the possibility of keeping a little furniture belonging to her out of the hands of her drunken husband had no better advice to give her than to leave him

secretly and carry it off. And is it considered that the women to whom these things happen are indifferent to them? To suppose that any one can gauge the opinion of those who have experience of the ills needing legislative interference at a dinner party is foolish. If the persons whose wishes were concerned were men, any one would be ashamed of bringing the views of good society into the discussion. The evidence of women's wishes on this question must not be looked for in drawing-rooms. But surely no evidence which would be deemed sufficient to prove that any other class wanted the franchise is wanting in the case of women. Petitions have been presented, signed by about 400,000 persons, one or two of the signatures implying a great deal more than the wish of an individual. These signatures, it is said, have been obtained by "systematic agitation." But systematic agitation is not an entity. It is only a short and somewhat contemptuous way of saying that a few persons have cared very much about an object. Now, we consider that so moderate a demand as that persons otherwise qualified to vote should not be prevented from doing so on account of sex needs the minimum of justification. If voting were to be made obligatory it would be right, before any extension of the franchise, to ascertain the proportions of those who wished to have it, and those who wished to be without it; but there is no such necessity when these latter persons have the remedy in their own hands, and at the utmost their inconvenience will consist in the necessity of giving a decided negative. We are asking for permission to do something which no one will be forced to do. And as for the graces and refinements of life, we believe that they will survive when the women who lose the shelter accorded to weakness cease to be debarred from the independence conceded to strength. But supposing that we are mistaken in this; supposing that we must purchase the greater good by the lesser, we should say—let these things go. It would be a pity that ladies should lead less graceful lives in drawing-rooms, but it would be worth while, if it led to other women leading less miserable lives elsewhere.

The tone of opposition to our demand has sensibly changed during the nine years that have elapsed since it found its first spokesman in John Mill. The quotations made above are mainly taken from the earlier debates in Parliament, and those very words would not now, perhaps, be used in argument against our claim. But, though we mark this change with satisfaction, it is as true of the last debates as of the first, that in order to have made them relevant the question before the House ought to have been, not should a certain class be enfranchised, but should it exist. Almost everything true that has been said on the side we oppose is an argument not against women having votes, but against women having to earn their bread. Sir Henry James, for instance, dwelt emphatically on the physical weakness of women. He quoted Shakespeare's tamed shrew, in the speech where she rebukes one who by many will be thought to hold a more rational theory of a wife's duty, with the query—

> "Why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth,
> *Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,*
> But that our soft condition and our hearts
> Should well agree with our external parts?"

and the quotation was met with cheers, as if submission to kindly protection were the alternative of those women on whose behalf we make our claim! These women are all *obliged* to "take the position of men." They are not asking for independence, they have that already. They have no choice about being independent. I wish it were possible to make one of those gentlemen whose words are quoted here realize the position of a widow left

ill off. She bitterly realizes the truth of *Katharine's* words, she knows well that her body is "unapt to toil and trouble in the world," but she finds the difficulties and hindrances which nature has set in her way suddenly increased by others which till then, perhaps, she had not realized. She finds that a change has come over the feelings with which her claims are met by all but the generous. A promise to her means something less than it did. She can no longer expect that inconvenient engagements will be kept to her, tradespeople and inferiors generally look upon her as some one to be taken advantage of, and she finds every arrangement, every effort she has to make, rendered more arduous by the difference there is between the sense of justice that men have to men and to women. Parliament cannot at once change this, but it can refuse to sanction the different estimate which the vulgar take of the struggling woman and the struggling man. It can declare that in the eye of the Legislature no inferiority shall be recognized within the circle of those who fulfil the requirements it makes a test of citizenship.

In doing this Parliament commits itself to no further principle. If it is an exceptional thing that women have to earn their bread, then, speaking broadly, we may say that the withdrawal of women's disabilities would only emancipate exceptional women, for the heiresses and widows whom this measure would include are in number insignificant. We should naturally expect that if sex were not allowed to form a reason for disfranchisement, neither would marriage, and that the true theory of this subject—that the property test should be carried out without any exceptions, but those of lunacy and crime—would be ultimately embodied in Legislation. But as in normal cases a wife is by the necessities of nature cut off from those exertions of which the vote is in a rough way the symbol, she would be cut off from a vote in the same manner. Property is a rough and meagre test, no doubt, of the qualifications we desire in a voter, but no better has yet been devised, and on the whole it would be a little less rough and meagre in the case of women than men.

Some of the fears which stand in our way can only be regarded as an extravagant compliment to their object. It was said, for instance, that if women were admitted to vote, they must be admitted to sit in Parliament, as if all that was wanted to create female members of Parliament was an Act of Parliament rendering women eligible! Surely, if any one realized that all that an Act of Parliament could do was to confer on men the right to choose a woman to represent them, he would see that such a fear was a most extravagant compliment to women. No advocate of woman's cause would venture on so arrogant an anticipation of ascendency.

Most of us have no anticipation of any approach to such a result. The desire for Female Franchise is compatible with every variety of opinion about the intellectual superiority of men. In the days when it was possible, by any stretch of imagination, to regard the Electorate as the intellectual aristocracy of England, the admission of the least instructed, and, possibly the least intelligent, part of the community might have been a questionable step. 1832 and 1867 have made that view impossible, and an elaborate arrangement for enabling persons to record their votes who cannot sign their names has made it absurd. Political ascendency has now gone over to the ignorant, and one-half the people can no longer be excluded from representation on the ground of their ignorance. In urging their admission, we disavow all enthusiastic hopes. Indeed, the only fear with which we regard the proposed measure is that its effect should be at first imperceptible. If it be asked how, with this avowal, we can still urge it, we reply that in doing so we make an appeal to those who can look into the future. We are convinced that all other

measures for the benefit of women would find a new atmosphere and a new soil to grow in when once women were made citizens, and that till that time comes all such measures will form part of a mere patchwork. While men deal with the question as one of affording *protection* to women, the protection they concede will be at once inadequate and enfeebling. It is not till they learn to see that what we demand is *justice*, that they will satisfy those claims which, even from their own point of view, they would allow to be the appropriate demands of the weak.

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THE DEBATE,

1892,

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

SPECIAL REPORT.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

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A

BILL

TO

Extend the Parliamentary Franchise to Women.

A.D. 1892

BE it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1. This Act may be cited as the Parliamentary Franchise (Women) Act, 1892. Short title.

2. Every woman who— Extension of parliamentary franchise.

(1) In Great Britain is registered or entitled to be registered as an elector for any town council or county council; or

(2) In Ireland is a ratepayer entitled to vote at an election for guardians of the poor;

shall be entitled to be registered as a parliamentary elector, and when registered to vote at any parliamentary election for the county, borough, or division wherein the qualifying property is situate.

(Prepared and brought in by Sir Albert Rollit, Sir A. Borthwick, Viscount Wolmer, Mr. W. M'Laren, Mr. Penrose FitzGerald, Mr. T. D. Sullivan, Mr. T. W. Russell, Mr. Burt and Mr. Ernest Spencer.)

April 27th, 1892.

PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISE EXTENSION (WOMEN) BILL.—No. 36.)*

SECOND READING.

Order for Second Reading read.

Sir ALBERT KAYE ROLLIT (Islington, S.): The subject of the Bill of which I now move the second reading is no new one to the House of Commons. For upwards of a quarter of a century it has been debated upon Bills and resolutions. This gives the House the advantage of familiarity with the question; but it has some disadvantage for myself, since it forces upon me a too conscious contrast with those more able men who have on previous occasions introduced this matter to the House of Commons, the benefit of whose assistance I am glad, in many cases, to have to-day. All I can hope to do is to contribute some municipal experience, which, however, may be useful, since the the Bill is based on municipal precedents and example, which have been too much ignored in previous debates. (Hear, hear.) One new aspect is, indeed, given to the question by the Open Letter which has been addressed to the hon. member opposite (Mr. S. Smith) by the right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian (Mr. W. E. Gladstone). I realise that such a communication is naturally very forcible, and I shall of course treat it with respect; but if I may make one criticism upon it, it is that I think it does not discuss the proposal from the standpoint from which it is now made, but seems to be based rather upon communications of a similar character addressed to the newspapers, and also, I think, to a constituent, by the hon. member for Flint (Mr. S. Smith), and to be a reflection of his opinions rather than a discussion of the principles of the present proposal. (Hear, hear.) But, at any rate, that Pamphlet has had one benefit. If this subject—which I cannot conceive—has not, as the writer argues, already received sufficient public attention, the letter has itself secured it. (Hear, hear). There is another, and even a greater advantage attaching to the Pamphlet, in that it invites, and sets the example of, a more serious discussion of the subject, and I trust the tone and language of the letter will not in this respect be lost sight of. (Hear, hear.) I have said the subject is not new to the House of Commons, but I am glad to-day to be free from one reproach which has, on former occasions, been addressed to those who have stood in my present position—namely, that the Bill has been brought before one and the same Parliament session after session. Now, it may be said that the measure has not been before this Parliament at all; and when I recall the fact that in the last Parliament the Bill had the advantage of the advocacy of the hon. member for Hanley (Mr. Woodall), and passed the House without a division, I think I am justified in bespeaking for it to-day more

* This report is chiefly taken from the Parliamentary Reports—authorised edition.

statesmanlike consideration. (Hear, hear.) A further change in the position is that the Bill has quite a new form. So much so, that one of my correspondents—who have been numerous and sometimes humorous—(laughter)—has referred to it, in ladylike language, as a "modest Bill." (Laughter.) I have carefully read the debates and the criticisms passed upon former measures; and, if I may venture to say so, I think those discussions and criticisms have generally been of a too high-pitched and abstract character, and I do not recognise them as applicable to the proposal in its present practical shape. (Hear, hear.) They seem to me—those criticisms—to have exaggerated and distorted both the object of the proposal and the objections to it; and I repeat that even in the case of the recent Letter to which I have referred, the new basis of our proposals seem to have been overlooked, and the same old ground to have been taken once again, viz., that, in the words of the hon. member opposite, this is a proposal "revolutionary in character," and "a reversal of the order of nature," that it is "such a change as has never been made since the Creation," and is now "put forward for the first time in the world's history." (Laughter.) And all these expressions are actually addressed to the proposal to confer upon duly qualified and capable women citizens a vote in Parliamentary elections which they have long exercised, and exercised with advantage, in relation to municipal government! It is the old case of the roof coming down because a few cobwebs are to be swept away! (Laughter.) Revolutionary! Why, Sir, this proposal is not even an innovation; for, if I remember my history correctly, the franchise, both parliamentary and municipal, was possessed by women in former times on identically the same lines as those I suggest to-day—at any rate it was so exercised by women from time to time in the election of knights of the shire for Yorkshire and elsewhere. (Hear, hear.) If I wanted to found myself on good constitutional and ancient authority, I would remind the House that this was so in the days of the Plantagenets, and certainly of the Tudors, and that ought to be good enough for hon. gentlemen on this side of the House. (Laughter.) Then, on the other hand, to influence hon. gentlemen opposite, I might say that this state of affairs was put an end to by judge-made law; and, having in mind expressions of opinion upon judge-made law during the recent debate upon the Law of Conspiracy, I commend that fact to the consideration of such hon. gentlemen. (Laughter.) It is also a coincidence that may strike both sides of the House that, while this judge-made law emanated from a member for Liskeard (Coke), we shall to-day have the advantage of the aid of another member for Liskeard (Mr. Courtney) in favour of its restitution. (Hear, hear.) And, if this privilege of voting by women was extinguished because of its disuse, I must remind the House that the cessation was due to the association of the vote with services in kind, and that those services have since been commuted to a money payment, with the result, —which meets the oft-repeated physical force argument,—that qualified

women do just as much for the Army as most men—namely, help to pay for it. (Applause.) But these criticisms, however forcibly they may have applied to former measures, can have no application to this Bill, which aims, as I say, at a practical—and the only present practicable—solution of the question, and which is based distinctly on the natural, and ultimately inevitable, development of our applied principles of representative government. If I may quote the highest political authority for this, I should use the words of Sir Henry Maine, who, in his *Early History of Institutions*, says—

> "The civilised societies of the West, in steadily enlarging the personal and proprietary independence of women, and even in granting to them political privileges, are only carrying out still further a law of development which they have been obeying for many centuries."

May I now remind the House that this is an age of successive and successful franchises,—successive notwithstanding the same arguments as are now used, viz., that the votes are not wanted, that the unenfranchised classes are indirectly represented, and that their enfranchisement will lead us no one knows where,—and successful, especially, in securing attention to, and proper precedence in the consideration of, the interests of the classes on whom the votes have been conferred? (Applause.) And so we hope this extension will secure proper regard for the interests of those who are now unrepresented among the electorate. (Hear, hear.) It was once said by the right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian, speaking of a large class of men, "They have no votes, and so may be safely neglected." I heartily accept this expression as applicable to those with which this measure deals. And illustrations of such neglect are not wanting. The middle-class Parliament formed in 1832 did nothing for popular education, or very little; but the election of the Household Suffrage Parliament of 1867 was followed by the passing of the Education Act of 1870 and the Labour Statutes of 1875, which have so materially improved the conditions of life of the labouring classes. So, too, the gift of the County Franchise has been quickly followed by the Allotments Acts and by the Bills which are at the present time before the House for discussion, one of which is to confer upon labourers in the rural districts the advantage of acquiring small holdings. (Hear, hear.) Thus has enfranchisement, whatever else may be said for or against it, been followed by remedial legislation,—yet qualified women have no vote and therefore no such security (hear, hear). Again, enfranchisement has hitherto proceeded on two great main lines:—the possession of qualifying property and contribution to taxation. Time was when taxation without representation was spoken of as tyranny. That was then the tyranny of Kings, but the tyranny is not the less if it is the tyranny of a multitude; it is then but a multiplied tyranny. (Applause.) On the ground of representation with taxation, therefore, these votes are asked for. For the principle upon which the franchise

has been extended is the possession of evidence of citizenship; mere manhood is not sufficient; a man must have, even in the minor cases of the lodger and service votes, a house of some description and contribute, directly or indirectly, to the payment of rates and taxes. (Hear, hear.) Whether a different principle may be adopted in the future we cannot say. The basis of the franchise, now, is the household and some contribution to the national burdens, and, upon that basis, we claim the extension of it to duly qualified women. (Applause.) Manhood suffrage may, or may not, come; that is a matter, after all, only of opinion; speculations based upon it are irrelevant to the present question; and we must leave their solution to future Parliaments. (Hear, hear.) We must not, as I think the hon. member for Flint (Mr. S. Smith) suggests, treat future Parliaments as automatic machines to carry out the behests of the Parliament of to-day. We must have sufficient faith in future Parliaments to know that they will act rightly and with the advantage of a knowledge of the circumstances and conditions of their time; that they will do what is just and expedient, as we do what is just and expedient to-day. We cannot bind future Parliaments; we cannot phophecy what they may do; we must do our duty by giving the franchise where it is right and due, and we must rely on future Parliaments doing their duty in protecting that privilege, and in the maintenance of good government, not carrying the principle to illogical and improper conclusions. (Hear, hear.) We must not, therefore. on the faith of any such speculative assumptions, refuse to fulfil the franchise of citizenship by admitting to it qualified and capable women citizens; we must not decline to do right because others may seek to do wrong; we must do our duty in the conviction that our successors will do theirs and no more than theirs (cheers); and indeed, judging from the present state of local electoral law, the fear is, not that Parliaments will push matters to too logical conclusions, but that they may be only too well trusted to retain any number of illogicalities and anomalies. (Laughter.) Yet, we are told that this proposal to confer the franchise on qualified women is, to use the word of my hon. friend, "revolutionary." We are asked when and where was such a change ever made; and the practice in former debates has been to quote instances where such a franchise has been conferred. It has been asserted that there has been a partial exercise of such a suffrage in Italy, and reference has also been made to Denmark, and to the existence of the female franchise in the territory of Wyoming and other places. I will not dwell on these instances, though I may mention that Wyoming is now a State, that the user of the female franchise has the approval of high official authority, and that the right to vote there carries with it the right to hold any public office in the United States. But I pass to an illustration nearer home. I have a letter from a member of The States of Guernsey, and my correspondent mentions

that a Bill has recently passed the island Parliament, and is now law, giving a vote to women householders—who pay rates and taxes as householders—on the very lines of this Bill. Women, my correspondent adds, are not eligible for any office, nor can they be members of the States. There you have the principles, in both respects, upon which this Bill is based; but the right to vote carries with it no right to hold office or to sit in Parliament. (Hear, hear.) The measure, I am imformed, works very well in Guernsey. I might also refer to the case of the Isle of Man, where female freeholders have a similar franchise. The Colonial Confederation Scheme of Sir Harry Parkes contemplated such an extension of the suffrage, and some colonies, including South Australia, have nearly passed such a measure. It is suggested to me, for instance, that in New Zealand the proposal was only defeated by the votes of two Maoris. I mention this because my hon. friend opposite has imaginatively pictured the battle of our eleven millions of women against our ten millions of men, and the defeat of the latter; and if that be possible, one may also imagine Macaulay's New Zealander contemplating from London Bridge not the last man—but the last woman. (Loud laughter.) I do not rely, however, on these instances or on these illustrations as arguments; we have for our safe guidance ample practical experience in the United Kingdom, in our own municipal and county council elections; and, seeing the development of our constitution, I would ask where should we look for such a completed franchise if not to our own country, the home of representative institutions, from which, as such, this franchise is asked for qualified women,—so much, and no more, and for such and such only? (Loud cheers.) Next, much has been said of the manner in which this proposal has been advocated, and I am not concerned to defend all those methods. But the arguments of our opponents are too often contradictions in terms. (Hear, hear.) If women press for this extension, then "they are agitators, and their demand should not be complied with;" if they do not agitate, then "they are indifferent to the subject." If many petitions are presented, then "they are got up by organisation;" if the petitions are few, then "you see women do not want this extension." If the platform is occupied, then "there is reason to fear the invasion of Parliament by the advocates of female suffrage;" if the platform is not resorted to, then "there is no popular feeling in favour of the proposal." (Laughter and cheers.) The allegation that it is not wanted has invariably been urged against the extension of the franchise to any class. It is based on the fallacy of universality. It is not true to say that women do not want the franchise, though some may be indifferent or opposed to it. The only true proposition is, as in most other cases, that many do and some don't wish for votes, and the exercise of the franchise will be optional —there is no obligation to use the vote or to follow the example set by those who think it gives the proper protection of their own interests,

and those who do desire it ought not to be debarred from it for the sake of those who need not exercise it. (Hear, hear.) With regard to the methods by which the present proposal has been advocated, all I can say is I have taken no part in any agitation. I have attended no meetings on the subject; happily, not one of those held last night, the proceedings of which I thoroughly disapprove. (Hear, hear.) Very many petitions have been presented—some, no doubt, open to the criticisms which can always be directed against this form of expression of opinion. These petitions have emanated frequently from bodies of people, and are signed officially by presidents and others, who represent very large constituencies. They have been signed by those who belong to all classes, and very many of whom are obviously in humble positions. (Hear, hear.) Resolutions have, at one time or another, been passed by the great political organisations of both parties, at Leeds, at Birmingham, and elsewhere; and though it may be said that women should not take part in political campaigns, they have been urged to do so by the leaders of both parties; their assistance has been welcome, and most of us, unlike some others, are grateful for it. (Cheers.) Petitions have been presented from some 160 branches of the Women's Liberal Federation, some of them this morning. The attitude of the press towards the proposal has in London been critical but just, and not unfavourable in many cases; the provincial press has been eminently favourable, especially in Scotland, and I do not hesitate to say that from the provincial press we get a good index of the public opinion of the country and of its probable development. (Hear, hear.) This, therefore, is a constitutional concession constitutionally asked. (Hear, hear.) And, though I have incidentally referred to parties, let me say, as emphatically as possible, that this is in no sense a party matter, as the names attached to the Bill conclusively show. The tendency of the influence of women voters will, it is to be hoped, be to modify party feeling, which, however necessary under our existing system, is, in my opinion, too often a disfigurement of our national life; and I hope for the time when it will be more generally felt that he does best for his party who does his best for the State. (Oh.) On the other hand, woman's interests must not be sacrificed to party exigency; and I trust that they may be the hope of each party, the prey of neither, and the sport of none. (Cheers.) I gladly leave this part of my remarks for the moment in order to tell the House how the Bill carries out the principles under which it is introduced, for it appears there is much misapprehension in some minds as to what the Bill does and as to what it does not do—It enacts that—

> "Every woman who in Great Britian is registered or entitled to be registered as an elector for a town council or county council, or who in Ireland is a ratepayer entitled to vote in the election of guardians of the poor, shall be entitled to be registered as a Parliamentary elector, and when registered to vote at any Parliamentary election for the county, borough, or division wherein the qualifying property is situate."

These words "qualifying property" follow the Municipal Corporations Act of 1882, and this is the basis of the existing female franchise. What, then, will be the effect of accepting this? And what will be the results—not by mere prophecy, but by necessary inference? In England and Scotland, under the municipal corporations and county councils electors Acts, every inhabitant occupier—that is, every householder who for twelve months has been rated and has paid rates—is qualified for, and entitled to, the franchise; and the effect will be to give just the same, no less and no more, to a woman who is similarly qualified, subject to two exceptions which I will deal with in a moment. In Ireland, where there is not yet a Local Government Act, but where we hope that, under the auspices of one party or the other, there soon will be, it will then be easy to apply the same principle for conferring the franchise on women, and I think the Local Government Bill for Ireland contains that provision. Meanwhile, the closest analogous Statute which includes women voters, viz., the Poor Law Act for Ireland (1 and 2 Vic., c. 56), has been taken as giving the nearest approach to the franchise to be conferred on women in this country, and it will thus be given to all those who are duly qualified as ratepayers, or (if no rate has been laid) as county cesspayers, to vote for the election of guardians of the poor. The Bill, if passed, would thus add about a million to the electorate, as against some 300,000 to 400,000 under previous Bills—a million of women who have had a long experience in the exercise of the franchise. (Hear, hear.) And if it be said by my hon. friend opposite that this will be a large number as opposed to men who are similarly qualified, let me tell the House that they will only be a seventh or an eighth of the constituencies, subject, moreover, to a large deduction for those who are said not to wish for the franchise and who presumably will not vote. In the event, therefore, of such a pitched battle as he anticipates the forces will be pretty unequally matched, with all the advantage to mankind of some millions and also of his leadership on that side. (Laughter.) A million will be added and no more. And now what will the Bill not do, for I have heard attributed to it a great deal which is not within its purview. It will not "disfranchise" a single person—it is an enabling, not a disabling Bill; it accepts the existing Parliamentary lines, the lines of experience and usage under the municipal, educational, and other franchise Acts. It leaves the franchise law exactly as it is, and follows those parliamentary lines under which the woman suffrage has hitherto been wisely and safely exercised. (Hear, hear.) At present married women are not registered as voters for municipal elections, nor can they vote for school boards. If, therefore, it be said there is an inconsistency and an anomaly in that this Bill does not confer the vote upon married women, it is an anomaly which is the creation of Parliament itself. If it be said, as it has been said by the right hon. gentleman (Mr. Gladstone), that this proposal

is "halting and inconsistent," then I reply that the halting and inconsistency are the halting and inconsistency of Parliament and of the Governments of the right hon. gentleman which conferred the municipal franchise in 1869 and 1882, thus creating and training a special class, and qualifying its members for further similar privileges, any undue excess of which may well be left to future Parliaments, which will be governed, like ourselves, by practical considerations. (Hear, hear.) May I also point out that the criticisms upon the non-inclusion of married women are generally put in a somewhat illogical way? It is said, first, that the principle of including women in the franchise is objectionable; but, again, it is said, "If you include married women a great objection to the measure will be removed." In fact, the argument is, first, that we should not include any women; and, secondly, that we should include more than we do. (Laughter.) This is too often the reasoning not of sincere friends, but of enemies—sowing tares and tempting us to go further in the hope that we may fare worse. (Laughter.) There is no inconsistency on our part; we accept the position as Parliament has made it, and we are quite willing, if Parliament thinks fit hereafter to consider the assimilation of the municipal and Parliamentary franchise, to leave that open for future legislation. (Hear, hear.) By an historical accident the municipal and Parliamentary registers slightly differ in some few respects. Among these, the municipal register does not include married women or lodgers, and the municipal register is taken as the basis of this Bill, because of the experience of its working, which offers a strong argument in our support, for we can say that those who have had the municipal franchise have exercised it with such advantage that they are entitled also to the parliamentary suffrage. (Hear, hear.) We accept the present law and existing experience as a basis, and it has at least this advantage, in that it enables us to avoid the rocks on which previous measures have struck, to escape such differences as those as to the duplication of votes, or differences and discord in the home, the creation of faggot votes, and the like, by accepting the law just as it is, and by not touching such matters of controversy. (Cheers.) In Scotland, again, the law gives the vote to married women who are living, as the expression is, "not in family with their husbands," and we take the law of Scotland as we find it and as indicating what is in accordance with the general opinion and experience of Scotland; and a similar observation may be made in regard to the enfranchisement of the female trader, whether living with her husband or not, under the custom of the City of London. As I have said, the underlying principle of the Bill is that it accepts and utilises the law as it stands, whether by statute or custom, for a still further development of the franchise. That being so, we are able to say the Bill goes past the differences which have hitherto divided the House, and we escape criticisms which are not applicable to the present measure, however they may have applied to

previous proposals. (Cheers.) We also claim that we proceed on the old constitutional principle of advancing step by step, so often resorted to in the legislation of this country, and which, if it has produced some anomalies, is at least a safe system. (Hear, hear.) What Parliament may hereafter do is a wholly different matter; but if we look at the manifold complexities and illogicalities in Acts conferring local franchises, it cannot fairly be said that the apparent anomaly here presents an obstacle to this measure. Similarly, in relation to women lodgers the Bill follows the lines of experience and of least resistance; it does what is at present practicable and possible; and though, as in the case of married women, we concede that much, very much, may be said on each side, as also that many arguments which have been used are based on mere assumptions, still the facts remain and justify us that the municipal and other registers on which we are proceeding do not include married women or lodgers, that the Bill enfranchises large numbers of women, that it gives additional security for the consideration of the interests of all women, from the woman's own point of view, and that other points may well await what would undoubtedly be a public advantage—namely, the unification of the municipal and Parliamentary registers. (Cheers.) In former debates local experience of a parochial character was chiefly resorted to in support of the claims of women, such as the right to vote for overseers, and better, the right to vote for local boards, and still better, the right to vote for school boards and to serve on school boards. I mention the boards of guardians and school boards to point out that when Parliament intended to confer the right to sit and serve, as well as to vote in elections, Parliament has had the courage to give that sanction by Statute. (Hear, hear.) But recourse to parochial elections is now comparatively unnecessary. The Statute of 1869, passed under the Government of the right hon. gentleman (Mr. W. E. Gladstone), gave the right to women to vote at municipal elections, or I should rather say, that right was then revived, for it had previously existed, and was ignored by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835. In previous debates it has been said that this right of women to vote at municipal elections was given by accident—"by a slip"—"when the House was asleep at three o'clock in the morning," and, said a former member for Huddersfield, "You will not catch us napping a second time." (Laughter.) This means, if anything, that the opponents of the Parliamentary suffrage for women would, if they had the opportunity, oppose municipal suffrage for women, and would on the same grounds—grounds of prophecy which have been falsified by experience—deprive the country of the advantage which that Act of 1869 is generally admitted to have conceded. This shews that they are not very prescient guides. (Hear, hear.) The provision was, in fact, discussed in the Lords in 1869, and had the able advocacy of Lord Cairns, and, I think, the Home Secretary. Lord Aberdare spoke for it even in the Commons, and it was advisedly accepted. The Municipal Corporations

Act of 1882, having incorporated the same provision, adopted and conceded the principle, while practice has approved it, and if there is to be any debate now it can only be as to the application of the principle—not to the principle itself—of the right of women to vote. (Hear, hear.) Experience, now for a quarter of a century, completely supports the way in which that franchise has been exercised, aud municipal elections have been generally conducted in a manner highly creditable to all concerned, including women. Indeed, any misbehaviour has been, so far as the cases disclose, only on the part of the men. (Laughter.) If there had been any objection, either on principle or in practice, to women's votes in municipalities certainly my connection, as president, with the Municipal Corporations Association would have brought such arguments to my knowledge. (Hear, hear.) But experience rebuts nearly every one of the speculations of my hon. friend opposite. The proportion of women voters in municipal elections is from 15 to 17 per cent., made up of women of all classes, and two-thirds or three-fourths of whom are women occupying houses rated below £20. Let me refer to a letter I have received from the neighbourhood of Huddersfield. My correspondent says:—

> "Many women in this neighbourhood would be enfranchised by such an Act as you propose, and especially widows of respectable working men, who have made such provision for them that they continue to rent the houses they occupied during their husbands' lifetime." (Hear, hear.)

This is important testimony to the fact that this proposal will not enfranchise an exclusive class; that it will include a large body of working women, and I have many other similar letters. (Hear, hear.) Then, much has been said as to the desire or otherwise of women to exercise this franchise, and the answer is, from practice and statistics, that women do exercise the suffrage now at municipal elections in about the same proportion as men, and that the exercise of the vote by women is increasing, especially in Scotland, which is strongly in favour of the present proposal. (Hear, hear.) Moreover, women do not vote in that solid mass which has been suggested, but, on the contrary, the votes are very materially divided. The recent county council elections, for instance, show that such is the case. And the reason is that women are associated with all the relations of life, and that with this extension there would be no transfer of voting power from one class to another, such as has accompanied previous enlargements of the franchise. (Hear, hear.) Then there is the argument from disorder and from the supposed difficulty in women recording their votes at Parliamentary elections. But where can be the difficulty in women, once in some four or five years, doing that which, in municipal elections, they do annually, viz., placing a voting paper in the ballot box? Municipal elections have, in fact, been conducted very much on political lines; political considerations enter largely into them; and if there is question of disorder, I should look for that disorder in those small boroughs

where strong party and personal feeling frequently run high, and yet where women are able to record their franchise without any difficulty whatever, and add an element of courtesy to such contests. (Hear, hear.) But the fact is that, so far from having an unfeminine tendency, this Bill will enable the quiet and unassuming women to vote, as distinguished from the more active aspirants to the platform, the former, but not the latter, being now excluded from all political influence. (Hear, hear.) I refer to the exercise of the municipal franchise for one purpose more, and only for one purpose—that is to say, that the municipal vote has not been followed by any general or practical demand for seats in town councils or claims to public office. (Hear, hear.) I should be far from endorsing any such claims, and have declined to present them to this House. There is a distinct and legally recognised difference between the right to vote and the right to sit in a deliberative assembly; the disqualification for the latter has been decided to exist as to women, and it has long subsisted in the case of the clergy and the Civil Service, so I deny the inference that because the right to vote is accorded it must be followed by the right to sit or to hold office. (Cheers.) With regard to the right to vote, I may point out to the House that it is one that has been exercised under the conditions I have mentioned without difficulty; and I do not know that there has been any real complaint as to the manner in which the constitutional privilege of the municipal franchise has been exercised by women. I believe the late Mr. Beresford Hope and the former member for Huddersfield said, now many years ago, "it has not been a success," and one of them added that it had been "a mistake." But I quote the right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian (Mr. W. E. Gladstone), who has said "they have exercised the franchise without detriment and with great advantage." (Cheers.) And yet the same right hon. gentleman has just published that this municipal experience is, after all, but a "plausible shadow"! It is coupled by him subordinately with the right to enter the Universities, with the right to intellectual culture; and yet the fact is ignored that women have taken an active and useful and unpretentious part in the public affairs of the country and in the localities, and have earned the appreciative expressions of the right hon. gentleman himself. (Hear, hear.) Shadows! It is the criticism which is shadowy, and under the light of experience it is shown to have no substance. (Cheers.) There is just one other subject to which I should like to refer, and that is this: that there has been in fact an actual neglect of the just requirements of women in dealing with the subjects in which they are interested. (Hear, hear.) I notice that one statesman (Mr. W. E. Gladstone) has said, and I think he has said with great truth, that—

> "Men have often been the most unfaithful guardians of women's rights to social and moral equality."

But it is contended that these grievances have been remedied, and no

doubt a great deal has been done for the protection of women and so for the benefit of the nation; for instance, in regard to the conditions of their labour in mines and at the loom. (Cheers.) Nevertheless, a former able advocate of women's suffrage, the right hon. gentleman the member for Wolverhampton (Mr. H. H. Fowler), said at Wolverhampton only the other night what is certainly true, that—

> "The need for reform is as great to-day as ever, and every day develops new claims."

And I should like to call attention to one or two matters in which this concession on the part of Parliament is eminently necessary for the benefit and improvement of the position of women. In relation to their Property, the right to which is absolute even in such a country as Russia, much has been done; but it took a quarter of a century's fighting to do it, and there are anomalies which still remain to be removed. (Hear, hear.) No doubt Parliament has been rather generous; in some respects even too gallant, for it has given women their property and left men their debts. (Loud laughter.) Perhaps more prudent administration in this House—perhaps the expression of the wishes of women from their own point of view—may lead us to be a little more cautious in relation to legislation of that description. (Hear, hear.) In regard to the Guardianship of children and the protection of The Home something has been done; but the Bill in relation to the former was greatly modified in its passage through the House, and there is still room for much improvement. (Hear, hear.) In Education men have taken most and the best of the endowments, and have left little for women. There, again, there have been improvements, but there is still much to do in opening the older Universities, in establishing new ones—as in London—in the work of University extension, in supplying the dearth of teachers—for if we want our education to be great we must make our educators great—(hear, hear), and in technical and industrial training for the army of women who have to earn their own livings and fight their own battle in life. (Cheers.) Yet women, despite difficulty and disability, have shown themselves highly capable in all the records of human thought and achievement. The percentage of rejections at the first examination of the University of London, which is close and severe, shews that women fulfil the test quite as well as men competitors; and therefore I need no longer, seeing what has been accomplished, point to those great exceptional cases, which have been sneered at, but which have been the triumphs of the few for the benefit of the many, and which have opened the door for the vast numbers that have followed in their wake. (Loud cheers.) Then the Laws of Divorce, which were discussed here only last night, are still unequal, and women's views could be expressed upon them with advantage. (Hear, hear.) There is, too, the perennial question of the Deceased Wife's Sister, and, intermingled with her, the deceased husband's brother. We hear much of the one, but little of the other. (Laughter.)

Breach of Promise of Marriage has been proposed to be abolished, but women's petitions have been presented against it. Surely one of their direct representatives might be allowed to express his views upon that subject. (Hear, hear.) In relation to the great question of the Land, the House, perhaps, hardly realises how many cultivators are in the unfortunate position of having lost their husbands, and are yet carrying on their farms, employing numbers of labourers who have votes, while they, though more qualified in every respect, have none, simply and only because they are women! Few know how many women are farmers and graziers—some 20,000—and few, perhaps, realise that the agricultural interest loses through this cause something like 140,000 votes. (Hear, hear.) On questions affecting The Home, from which springs the nation; on questions as to the Sanitation of the house and workshop; the improvement of the social condition of the people in relation to Vaccination, and Sanitary matters; as to the administration of the Poor Laws, the Housing of the poor, and as to Pensions in old age; as to the *Status* of women in relation to industry and trade; as to the Hours of work in factories and shops; as to the legislation which must follow the result of the Royal Commissions on Labour, and on Sweating, in which women are very deeply interested; and as to the Payment of Members of Parliament, to which they will have to contribute, but upon which they are not to be heard; on all these and many other questions, women have not, but ought to have, a voice through their representatives in Parliament. (Loud cheers.) Surely these are considerations which should appeal strongly to this House and induce it to accord the vote which we ask it to confer upon women. (Hear, hear.) It may be said, finally, as has been said by my hon. friend opposite, that this vote is beyond the sphere of women's intelligence and beyond the range of her knowledge of Imperial, as distinguished from municipal, politics. I reply that there is really no inherent distinction and no true difference as between the two cases; and the sphere of eachis becoming yearly more intermixed, owing to extensions of local government, to devolution, and to transfers of powers, which is the tendency of the age. (Hear, hear.) The frequent resort, too, to the permissive principle in Acts of Parliament and so to local option, constantly gives to localities the quasi-right of legislation; and, indeed, it may almost be said now, as was said by Cicero, that administration is quite as important and quite as difficult as legislation. So important as this is the duty which you have entrusted to women! yet you refuse them, when equally qualified, scarcely a higher function. (Hear, hear.) And so, also, the objection on the score of range of knowledge is no less a fallacy. In former debates it was usual to meet it by saying that women are not less informed than the agricultural labourer, or the illiterate voter, for whom you have taken such pains that he may record his valuable vote. (Laughter.) But, in truth, we need not go so far afield as that agriculturist. It is sufficient to ask

who in this House is qualified to undergo any such test as that upon which it is sought to exclude women from the franchise. (Hear, hear) Who of us is, or ever can be, versed in the whole range of modern politics? However we may flatter ourselves, most of such matters are really determined by the few experts on each, experts which the House delights to listen to, and, upon some such social subjects as I have specified women are the experts of experts. (Loud cheers.) And if they help us in these, or some of them, we can well spare them from "scientific frontiers" and the Eastern Question, and from juries and the army, and the police force—which one honourable member cited as a disqualification. (Laughter.) It is not necessary that women should know—it is not possible that they—or we—or anyone—can know the whole range of politics at the present time. What we ask is only that they should be permitted to choose some representative, who would be able to consider these matters, and record their views on their behalf. Yet my hon. friend opposite seriously proposes to apply to women a fancy franchise test which is even higher than any applied to mankind. He says, "What do they know about Fair Trade?" Of course they are "fair"-traders if they are in trade at all. (Laughter.) He asks, "What do they know about proportional representation?" Why, who knows anything about proportional representation?—except the right hon. member for Liskeard (Mr. Courtney). (Loud laughter.) He says "they will be socialistic and vote for eight-hours' Bills." Well many men are doing the same, though women have probably the longer hours of the two, and are yet comparatively silent. (Hear, hear.) How, he asks, can women understand the mysteries of bi-metallism? Why, that is a subject no man can understand. (Loud laughter.) That is the sort of test the hon. member for Flintshire (Mr. S. Smith) proposes by his letters to apply to women! I think that is carrying the argument much too far and reduces it to an absurdity. (Hear, hear.) What women can, and do, understand better than men can understand for them is their own interests, which is the chief justification of a wide suffrage. (Cheers.) There are also some subjects to the solution of which they can contribute, perhaps, more than any others—namely, a practical view of those social questions, mostly the subjects of the day, in which their experience would be most useful, while, without it, Parliament is not fully competent to solve such problems. (Hear, hear.) I am sure I have trespassed far too long upon the attention of the House in endeavouring to show what I feel, viz., that this is a very proper and safe development of the principle of the franchise, based on safe experience, and itself a corollary of our household suffrage, which, in order best to meet a demand for manhood suffrage, we ought to srengthen by inclusion rather than weaken by exclusiveness. (Cheers.) And I ask this on behalf of qualified women, for reasons which may be stated finally in a very few words. They are: That it will be an advantage to Women, to

Parliament, and to the State—to women themselves by securing the expression of their views from their own standpoint, and through those who may be entrusted with the safeguarding of their interests, for political influence is the only guarantee of legislative justice. (Cheers.) It will, we are convinced, also improve the social and economical position of women, and so in the end lessen undue and unfair competition with men. (Hear, hear.) It will raise, as we believe, the general moral and intellectual tone of society, and even conduce to a more advanced position than that which women, by their own efforts, have already occupied. We believe, too, that it will be of advantage to Parliament, because it is undesirable that this House, which loses by disabilities, and which should always be adapted to new social and industrial conditions, should fail in the expression of the views of any large portion of the community, or in the representation of the thought and industry of any part of the population. (Cheers.) And lastly, we acknowledge that, after all, the object of legislation should be—as we believe would be the achievement of this Bill—good government. We believe that if we give the vote to women it will contribute to that good government; and, at least, that it will save them from misgovernment. (Hear, hear.) And, in that belief, and agreeing, as we do, with Lord Beaconsfield, that "the exclusion of the votes of women has been injurious to the best interests of the country," we offer the remedy of this Bill,—which, though it may not do all that is desired by some, will certainly accomplish much for many,—and confidently ask Parliament to sanction that which we believe to be justified by considerations of justice, experience, and expediency. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. S. Smith (Flintshire): In rising to move the rejection of this Bill, I wish to pay my tribute of respect to my hon. colleague. I have listened with great interest to his speech, and I think I may say with truth that I never heard the case of women put forward in a more fair and reasonable manner. I wish also to say that I entertain a very deep respect for the purity of the motives of those who are the leaders in this movement. I believe they have a deep and earnest desire to raise the position of women, and that they believe the franchise to be the most potent instrument for so doing. This movement represents a great amount of genuine philanthropy, and has secured the support of many of the best men and women of the country. It deserves to be treated with great respect, not only from the purity of their motives, but for the great ability of its advocates; and I hope that I shall use no arguments against it which are not both honest and respectful to my opponents. I conceive that no issue of equal importance has been submitted to Parliament in our time. This measure, if passed, will carry consequences far-reaching and momentous—consequences which none here can adequately realise. I readily admit there is weight in the arguments in favour of the measure; but I hope to convince the House that there is still

greater weight in the arguments against it. I will make the admission that the Bill now before us gives the irreducible minimum of women's demands; it professes only to give the Parliamentary franchise to those women who already possess it for municipal and county councils. It excludes lodgers and the service franchise. The hon. gentleman says that it will enfranchise one million voters. I thought, from such investigation as I have been able to make, that the number it would enfranchise would lie between 800,000 and 900,000.

Sir A. Rollit: That is, strictly, more accurate.

Mr. S. Smith: I am glad of that explanation. It professes to give the Parliamentary franchise to 800,000 or 900,000 female householders in the United Kingdom, who are nearly all spinsters or widows; and I will allow that, if this concession would finally settle the question, there is much to be said for it. No doubt it seems rather illogical to give the franchise for local government and not for Imperial purposes, but I remind those who think this to be conclusive, that the admission of women to local franchises was very much the result of an accident. It was never properly discussed in this House, and no one foresaw at the time how it would be used as a lever to obtain Parliamentary franchise. Had this been foreseen, I doubt whether this women's local franchise would have been given, or this agitation have attained its present proportions. There is, however, an enormous difference between the two franchises. The local franchise is a very limited one, and for objects strictly defined by Act of Parliament; then, the local franchise may be altered or cancelled as Parliament thinks right. Besides, local bodies possess merely administrative and no law-making powers, but the Imperial Parliament possesses absolute authority over the lives and property of all within the realm, and indirectly governs 300 millions of people outside the United Kingdom. No legislative body that I know of possesses such unlimited powers as the British Parliament. The Legislature in the United States is bound and limited by the written Constitution; and if it act *ultra vires* can be called to account by the Supreme Court, and its decisions nullified. All the Legislatures in the British Colonies are more or less restrained by statutory obligations, but the British Parliament is as absolute as the Czar of all the Russias, and nothing but the practical good sense of the people prevents it becoming an instrument of tyranny. But the electors are the makers of Parliament; therefore, in the last resort they wield this tremendous power, and no nation was ever so dependent upon a practised and trained electorate. The case for Parliamentary franchise is, therefore, altogether different from that of a local one, and must be justified by far more weighty arguments. The attention of the House should be called to the fact that the previous female franchise Bills introduced were altogether different to this one; they claimed that—

> "For all purposes of, and incidental to, the voting for members to serve in Parliament, women shall have the same rights as men, and all enactments relating to or concerned in such elections shall be construed accordingly."

Another Bill goes even further. It claims that—

> "No person shall be disqualified from being elected to, or from filling or holding, any office or position merely by reason that such person is a woman, or being a woman, is under coverture."

That is to say, women are to be eligible to sit in Parliament, to hold office under the Crown as Ministers of State, to become judges, bishops, or even Commanders of the Forces. Now, I want to know whether the advocates of female suffrage, in this House or out of it, have abandoned these claims in favour of the more moderate proposals of the Bill now before us? I believe that, with one voice, all the leaders of this agitation will claim absolute equality as between men and women; this is the goal at which they are aiming, and nothing less will satisfy them. Most of those who will vote for this Bill intend at the first opportunity to widen it so as to equalise the franchise as between men and women; and should Parliament pass this Bill, what will be our position at the first general election at which women vote? The country will be overrun with female orators inciting women to remove the stigma placed on their sex; the 800,000 or 900,000 female electors will be urged to vote only for those candidates who will promise to put men and women on an equal footing; they will be told that we make marriage a disqualification, and so insult all married women; and it will be found that hardly a candidate will refuse the pledge, for in almost every constituency the large female vote will turn the scale. There is not one trained politician in this House who does not know that the grant of the franchise claimed by this Bill will necessitate in the following Parliament the further grant of absolute political equality as between men and women. That must mean before very long universal suffrage of both men and women. Those who read the signs of the times know well that manhood suffrage must arrive here as it has done everywhere else. I do not wish to see it. I believe that most members here do not wish to see it; yet it will come by the force of the Zeitgeist—that spirit of the age which carries all before it; and as sure as it comes will womanhood suffrage come along with it; and the world will see the first instance in history of a great empire ruled by women, for, as everyone knows, women largely preponderate in number. It may be estimated that when allowance is made for the far larger number of men who are from home—as soldiers, sailors, and in other capacities—the available woman vote under universal suffrage will exceed that of men by about one million, or ten per cent. No one who has watched this agitation can doubt that women will then claim and enforce their right to sit in Parliament, and we shall then see not only the Mrs. Fawcetts and the Miss Cobdens of the future, but the Mrs. Besants and the Miss Helen Taylors sitting on these benches. I cannot comprehend the mental altitude of those who say we should only look at

the first step we take, and shut our eyes to its inevitable consequences; as well might a man drive a coach down a steep incline with a precipice at the bottom, and say that he had no business to consider the precipice. I insist that the House should view this question as a whole, and not be deceived into swallowing in separate doses what it would reject if given as a single draught. Consider the vastness of the change that is proposed. Our electorate at present consists of about six millions of men, nearly all householders and heads of families; it will ultimately become, if this Bill passes into law, twenty millions of persons, of which increased numbers between nine and ten millions will be men and between ten and eleven millions women. What will be the qualifications of this large mass? When were such responsible duties entrusted to such an incompetent body? Never since the world began. Many of the men are ignorant enough, and the risks run from nine or ten millions of male electors would not be small; but if you add ten or eleven millions of women, it would be overwhelming. Men, as a rule, gain a rough experience of the world; they mix in workshops and clubs, and discuss the politics of the day, and in a rough sort of way make up their minds on the current topics. Nearly all of them read newspapers and attend public meetings, but how few women have either the taste or opportunity of doing this? How few women take an interest in politics, or read speeches, or attend meetings? It is doubtful whether out of the ten or eleven millions of adult women even one million ever read a political speech, or care the least about politics. What are the vast majority of these women? Several millions of them are wives and mothers; the great majority of them are wives of working men, struggling with families of small children from early morning till late at night, utterly unable to study the complicated questions which come before Parliament. What they do read is mostly the religious serial, or the cheap novel, and it is impossible for them to frequent clubs and public meetings without ruin to their children. Of the women who are not married the vast majority are domestic servants, shop girls, factory girls, sempstresses, barmaids, &c., and I ask this House what knowledge of politics do they possess? If a census could be taken of their reading, I verily believe that not one in ten would be found ever to read a speech or care a rush about politics. The clever political women who really study politics are a mere handful, perhaps not one per cent. of the whole women of this country, and for their sakes we are asked to revolutionise our Government. In arguing this question we have to deal with women in the mass as with men in the mass. It is no valid argument to say that it is a shame to deny the franchise to a clever intelligent lady, and give it to her coachman or her butler. That is not the question before us. The real question is whether women as a whole are as fit to exercise the franchise as men as a whole, and I deny that they are, or can ever be. But we are told that political education follows the gift of the franchise, and that just as the agri-

cultural labourer is learning politics because he now can vote, so his wife and daughters will equally learn as soon as they get the vote. I hold that this is one of those half truths more dangerous than whole errors. Men, as a class, naturally take to politics when they get a chance; but women will not, because the bent of their minds is different. They live—that is, the great bulk of them do—by the heart more than the head, and the enfranchised servant girl will continue to prefer the novelette to the *Times* or the *Daily News*. There are certain professions and occupations that women can never fill so well as men. They never will make soldiers, or sailors, or policemen, or judges, or clergymen, though there are occasionally women who can do all those things; and they will never become politicians, because their minds recoil from it. I claim in support of my views the great father of modern Radicalism, Jeremy Bentham. That illustrious philosopher, whose writings have coloured the entire legislation of this century, decides against giving the franchise to women. The House would probably like to hear his acute estimate of the relative capacity of the sexes; a more just estimate could not be given of their respective characteristics—

> "The sensibility of women seems to be greater than that of men. Their health is more delicate. They are generally inferior in strength of body, knowledge, the intellectual faculties, and firmness of soul. Their moral and religious sensibility is more lively; sympathies and antipathies have a greater empire over them. The religion of a woman more easily deviates towards superstition—that is, towards minute observances. Her affections for her own children are stronger during their whole life, and especially during their early youth. Women are more compassionate for the sufferings of those they see; and the very pains they take to relieve them form a new bond of attachment. But their benevolence is locked up in a narrower circle, and is less governed by the principle of utility. It is rare that they embrace in their affections the well-being of their country much less that of mankind; and the interest which they take in a party depends almost always upon some private sympathy. There enters into all their attachments and antipathies more of caprice and imagination; while men have more regard to personal interests or public utility. Their habitual amusements are more quiet and sedentary. On the whole, woman is better fitted for the family, and man for matters out of doors. The domestic economy is best placed in the hands of the women; the principal management of affairs in those of the men."

What is this but an expansion of Milton's well-known lines—

> "For contemplation he and valour form'd;
> For softness she, and sweet attractive grace;
> He for God only, she for God in him"?

Our opponents do us the great injustice of thinking that we underrate women's powers, and disparage their character. So far from that I freely admit that women possess a finer organisation than men—they are more affectionate and unselfish, and, generally speaking, more moral and religious; but I hold that if we wish to preserve these beautiful traits of character, we must not unsex them.

We must not force them into an unnatural competition with men, and endanger the real virtues they possess in pursuit of Utopias. Let me remind the House that this agitation in its essence contemplates not merely political equality, but absolute equality between the sexes in all the relations of life. Some of the leaders of this movement take strong objections to the existing marriage law and the relation of the sexes as laid down in Scripture and upheld by all branches of the Church. Mrs. Fawcett, in a manifesto she has recently issued, repudiates the authority of St. Paul on this question. She says—

> "Much, therefore, of St. Paul's teaching about the position of women and other social matters is not accepted by any Christian Church as a practical guide for conduct at the present time."

Many of the leaders of this movement resent the marriage service of the Church of England where the woman responds in the affirmative to the following question:—

> "Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live?"

This form of service is based upon the most express statements of Holy Scripture. From begining to end the Bible teaches in the most explicit form the subordination of woman to man, specially in the marriage state.

> "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the Head of the Church."

is the uniform language of Scripture, repeated in one form or another hundreds of times. Could a greater calamity befall the human race than to undermine this sacred institution? I much doubt that with female franchise will arise an agitation for substituting perfect equality as between husband and wife, and, should that be successful, a time of social chaos would ensue. Since the time of John Stuart Mill, who repudiated the marriage law of the New Testament, an agitation has arisen for what is called the emancipation of women. I look with dread upon this movement. It is at bottom directed against those organic laws for the guidance of the sexes which the Creator has laid down. Europe has had one instance of the effects of the emancipation of women from those natural restraints which God and nature have placed upon them. In the most corrupt times of the Roman empire there was a movement for absolute equality between the sexes, and all laws were repealed which recognised any superiority on the part of man. Will the House allow me to quote an extract from the great historian Gibbon, showing the effects of this legislation?

> "When the Roman matrons became the equal and voluntary companions of their lords, a new jurisprudence was introduced, that marriage like other partnerships, might be dissolved by the abdication of one of the associates. In three centuries of prosperity and corruption this principle was enlarged to frequent practice and pernicious abuse. Passion, interest, or caprice suggested daily motives for the dissolution of a marriage; a word, a sign, a message, a letter, the mandate of a freedman declared the separation; the most tender of human connections was degraded to a transient society of profit or pleasure."

Under this state of things it was not unusual for a wife to have twenty husbands in succession, and a husband as many wives. I must express my deepest conviction that it is perilous in the last degree to tamper with those Divine laws which govern the relations of the sexes. Out of this movement for absolute political equality between men and women may develop at a later date another movement to replace the marriage law of Christianity by one giving absolute equality to the wife; and I much fear that experiments may be tried which will not tend to the welfare of mankind. No one can doubt that John Stuart Mill aimed at something of this kind, and he may be said to be the father of this movement for women's suffrage. It may be granted that the great majority of those who are moving in this matter have not at present the slightest wish for such changes, but my argument is that they are feeding a movement which contains them in its bosom, and out of which they will ultimately grow. Another argument to be considered is this, and I appeal to hon. gentlemen in this House who are historians. I see the Leader of the House in his place, and as I know he is one who studies human nature very closely, I wish to lay before the right hon. gentleman the circumstance that universal history is opposed to the movement; no free country in the world has ever tried the experiment. I am not one of those who decry the formula *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*. They take a tremendous responsibility who deride the universal experience of mankind. The mover of this Bill faintly shadowed some attempt in the historical past in which women were allowed to vote. I have never come across it, and I imagine it never assumed importance. My hon. friend (Sir A. Rollit) has made a great deal of one little experiment tried in that remote territory called Wyoming. As regards Wyoming, I admit the testimony is conflicting, and I quite admit that there are some who give a good account of its operation. But I am going to ask the House to listen to the opinion of the hon. member for Aberdeen. This newly formed State on the outskirts of civilisation does duty at every women's franchise meeting. It got female franchise by an accident when its population—now 60,000, or about one-thousandth part the population of the United States—was a few thousands, yet none of the other forty-three States in the Union have followed its example, or seem likely to do so. It stands alone. As to its working there my hon. friend (Mr. Bryce), in his standard book on the American Commonwealth, the best and ablest ever written, says—

> "As regards Wyoming alone the experiment has been longest at work

both as regards full suffrage and jury service. The balance of such evidence as I could collect seems to be unfavourable."

He quotes from one of his most trustworthy authorities, as follows:—

"After the first excitement is over it is impossible to get respectable women out to vote except every two or three years on some purely emotional question, like prohibition or other temperance legislation. The effect on family life seems to be nil, certainly not bad, but, after a year or two, it is found that the women of the worst classes are those that most regularly go to the polls."

As to the general feeling of the United States on the subject, Mr. Bryce writes—

"There is a widespread apprehension that to bring women into politics might lower their social position, diminish men's deference for them, harden and roughen them, and, as it is expressed, 'brush the bloom off the flowers.' This feeling is at least as strong among women as among men. Of the many American ladies whose opinion I inquired, the enormous majority expressed themselves hostile."

The House will allow that the United States is the most democratic Republic in existence; the one where human rights are most fully acknowledged; yet it is undoubted that its judgment is quite against women's suffrage; and the same is true of all other existing Republics—such, for instance, as France and Switzerland. Yet in all those countries the problems of life are far simpler than with us. They could make experiments with much less danger. No country ever had so complicated a system of government as ours, with such prodigious duties and responsibilities cast upon it; and surely common-sense would indicate that we should not be the first to turn upside down the experience of humanity for thousands of years. If this revolutionary change is to take place, let it be tried by some other countries first, and let us profit by their experience. One strange feature of this movement is that it is most favoured by the Conservative party. (No.) My hon. friend says "No," but I think the voting to-day will show that I am right. The Conservative party once made what was called "a leap in the dark," but that leap is nothing compared to this. One would think that all their traditions were opposed to such leaps in the dark. The motive which probably influences them is the belief that women are more Conservative than men. This may be true as regards the upper classes, and perhaps as regards the majority of the women householders; but let me ask hon. gentlemen opposite if by their means the upper tier of women, if I may use the expression, are enfranchised, and add to the strength of their party, how long would it be till the Liberal party sought a counterpoise by emancipating a lower stratum? My own belief is that neither of our great historical parties will derive strength from the enfranchisement of women. If I might venture a poediction, there are two movements which will be powerfully reinforced by female suffrage, the one is Clericalism and the other

Socialism. In Roman Catholic countries womanhood suffrage would mean the undisputed sway of the priests. In France, Italy, and I think I may say the Catholic part of Ireland, the women would vote as their father confessors directed them, and the Pope's supremacy would be made absolute, not merely in the realm of religion, but in that of politics as well. Is that a result which members of this House, even of the Roman Catholic communion, would regard with satisfaction? In Ireland you would give undisputed control to the priests.

Mr. T. W. Russell (Tyrone, S.): They have got it now.

Mr. S. Smith: I would ask the hon. member for Tyrone (Mr. T. W. Russell), whether three-quarters of Ireland would not be completely under the sway of the Roman Catholic priests?

Mr. T. W. Russell: Just as now with the men—absolutely.

Mr. S. Smith: As to that, I do not agree with my hon. friend at all. In Protestant countries, like Great Britain, clerical influence would be less; still it would be considerable. This cannot recommend female suffrage to the Liberal and Radical sections of the House; but it may not dismay the Conservative party. Let me, however, point out that in England, at least, womanhood suffrage would emancipate masses of women utterly impervious to clerical influences, but very amenable to the politics of John Burns, Ben Tillett, and Mrs. Besant. The programme of the Fabian Society would have immense charms for millions of sempstresses, factory girls, domestic servants, and working men's wives. It is entirely a matter of speculation; but I cannot help thinking that we should see representatives of the strongest opinions sent to this House under such a suffrage. A Socialist party led by Ben Tillett and Mrs. Besant would not add to the dignity of this House, or make the government of our vast Empire an easy matter. In many political questions the truth may be said to lie at the bottom of a well. The superficial fallacy is far more attractive than the sound deductions of experience. Long controversies, like Free Trade, have been settled by hard and close argument protracted for a generation. How do you know that those settlements may not be reversed when submitted again to the verdict of a preponderating female vote, intensely and hopelessly ignorant of the issues involved? No one could be certain that a single result of centuries of experience, whether political, financial, or commercial, could stand the test of so entire a revolution of political power. Everything would be thrown afresh into the melting pot, and no human being could predict what would emerge from the chaldron. But my main objection to this and all similar Bills is my dread of its effects on the home life of the nation. I hope the House will weigh well the pregnant words of the right hon. member for Midlothian—

"I am not without the fear lest, beginning with the State, we should eventually be found to have intruded into what is yet more fundamental

and more sacred, the precinct of the family; and should dislocate or injuriously modify the relations of domestic life."

I believe those words are perfectly true, and they weigh more with me than all other objections combined. A peaceful and pure home life is the true foundation of all national well-being. That happy home life can only be found when wives and mothers make the family the centre of their being. All that tends to draw them from this is pernicious. The outside attractions are already too strong in this restless age. Why add to them enormously by pushing women into the maelstrom of politics? Already there is a dangerous disinclination to marriage among young men. The decline in the marriage rate is an ominous feature of the times. For the decade ending 1860 it was 16·9 per thousand annually, for the decade ending 1890 it was only 14·9, being a decline of twelve and a-half per cent. I much fear that under womanhood suffrage a still further decline will occur. Most men hate a noisy turbulent home life; they do not wish wives that claim equality, and fight for their rights. A silent distaste for marriage might be one of the results of what is falsely called the emancipation of women. I say that it is falsely so called, for it is really a diversion of women from their natural sphere of wifehood and motherhood. I believe the ultimate effect of pushing them in the maelstrom of politics will be to produce an increasing silent distaste for married life, with all the enormous evils accompanying it. I must apologise for having detained the House so long, and wish to say, in conclusion, that the vast majority of the women of this country do not want the franchise, or care one pin about it; the active spirits of this movement are a mere handfull; and it would be a strange thing, as Mr. Gladstone well shows in his weighty letter on this subject, were we to confer a franchise which most of the recipients did not value. Those women who care for politics are already free to exercise their gifts in every way they choose, except going to the poll. In no country are women accorded greater liberty than here; nowhere do they use the press and the platform more freely. Some of them have splendid gifts; and no one grudges them a sphere for their use; but why should they insist upon forcing the franchise on their unwilling sisters? A clever woman can wield a thousand times more influence by speech and writings than by a vote. Remember, that when once given it will be difficult for any woman to abstain; she will be canvassed incessantly, and get no peace till she pledges herself. And elections will be far more frequent in the future than in the past. In the United States they are, and it will be the same here as democracy progresses. Fancy a wife receiving a crowd of canvassers in her husband's absence, and probably going with her political associates to one meeting, and her husband to another. How long would domestic life stand such a strain? I ask the House to pause before taking this terrible leap in the dark. It is the most revolutionary proposal of our time. If it prove a mistake it

will be irretrievable; once given it cannot be reversed. In my judgment, it will be the commencement of national decline. In any case, it is a desperate experiment. We have too much at stake to make rash experiments. We are trustees for the greatest Empire the world ever saw, and we cannot afford to sap its foundations by reckless innovations. I beg to move the Bill be read this day six months.

Sir W. B. Barttelot (Sussex, North-West), in seconding the amendment, said: Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a few remarks upon perhaps the most important question that could possibly be brought before the House of Commons. I give all those who may advocate this measure every credit for the feelings which they may possess, believing, as they do, that they are simply going to do justice to the women of this country. But I must point out, and point out most distinctly, that before even those who are most anxious for the passing of this measure can arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, far more trouble should be taken to find out what the views and opinions of women are with regard to this question. My hon. friend the member for South Islington (Sir A. Rollit) introduced this Bill in a most moderate and fair speech, bringing forward all those arguments which lay within his reach, and stating many things which are no doubt absolutely correct, but at the same time leaving out a great number of things that he should have introduced. I will ask the House whether, supposing this Bill, which is called a moderate measure, is passed into law, they think they are going to stop there; and whether, having started the ball rolling, they will not find it increases its pace; and whether, before very long, we shall not only have all the widows and spinsters with votes, but whether we shall not find married women asking to have votes also, especially those with property? And when we get there, what will be the next thing? We have a right to look ahead, and not be guided by present circumstances alone. Our bounden duty is to see what the eventual consequences of a measure of this kind will be. Manhood suffrage may, and very likely will, be given at some future time, and we shall then find, in the case of this Bill being passed, that womanhood suffrage cannot be neglected. The result would be more women voters than men voters, and I should like to ask the House what the position of this great country would be if placed in that peculiar position? Well, Sir, I for one, feel strongly on this question. I have talked to many ladies about it. I may also say I have taken part in nearly every division upon the question. I am sorry to see that my right hon. and learned friend the member for Bury (Sir H. James) has gone out, because I was going to say that I have never listened to speeches that have impressed me more than the speeches of my right hon. and learned friend. He has clearly pointed out that there is something far beyond what is contained in this small Bill now before us, and the difficulties and responsibilities of citizenship which a woman will acquire if she gets the franchise. What I

should like to ask the House is, How can she perform all the duties and bear all the responsibilities men are called upon to undertake? I will venture to say that such can never be the case. Another thing I should like to point out is that those who feel that woman, having got the franchise, would not advocate coming into this House, are miserably mistaken, and even you, Mr. Speaker, might have an opponent in a lady, supposing women were admitted to this House. And I will venture to say that we should infinitely prefer to have one with your sound judgment and unbiased mind, and one whom we can most thoroughly trust. Although there may be some women masculine in all their ways, yet the majority of women—those loving and sympathetic women whom we all so much respect and admire—we have to protect, and I, for one, will not place upon them a burden they are unfit and unable to bear. I have said that womanhood suffrage will be asked for if manhood suffrage is given. Look at the meeting held last night. A resolution was put forward there calling what is proposed to be granted by the Bill now before the House class legislation, and asking that it should be extended and that every woman should have a vote. Well, so long as I feel I am in the right, and that I am acting in the best interests of the country, I will never pander to these views from whomsoever they may come, and whatever form the Bill introducing them may take. I am afraid I am speaking strongly upon this question, but my excuse is that I feel strongly upon it. I am not going to detain the House at any great length, but I may say that I read with the greatest interest the letter of the right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian (Mr. W. E. Gladstone), and I will take the liberty of reading one particular paragraph of that letter, because I think it is one we should bear in mind in considering this great question. The right hon. gentleman says—

> "There are very special reasons for circumspection in this particular case. There has never, within my knowledge, been a case in which the franchise has been extended to a large body of persons generally indifferent about receiving it. But here, in addition to a widespread indifference, there is on the part of large numbers of women who have considered the matter for themselves the most positive objection and strong disapprobation. Is it not clear to every unbiased mind that before forcing on them what they conceive to be a fundamental change in their whole social function, that is to say, in their Providential calling, at least it should be ascertained that the womanly mind of the country, at present so largely strange to the subject, is in overwhelming proportion, and with deliberate purpose, set upon securing it?"

I will venture to say that my hon. friend (Mr. S. Smith) who moved the rejection of this Bill was absolutely correct in stating that a large proportion of the women of this country are against receiving the franchise. Well, let us look for a moment at one point which has never been mentioned, but which I hope will be carefully considered. You are going to put women in antagonism with men. That is a very

serious question to be borne in mind. You are going to put them in a relation of life which we have been taught should never exist. They are going to be put in the position of men, and very likely, if the wife is of a different opinion from her husband, the most unpleasant consequences may ensue in that particular family. In this House you shut the ladies up with a grill before them, and do not allow them to look at you if it can be helped, in order that your attention should not be distracted. Do you suppose for a moment that if the ladies got the vote they would not claim to be in the other gallery, and indeed in every part of the House where strangers are now allowed to sit? These are small considerations for the moment, but they are considerations that deserve serious thought. But, Sir, there is something much more important than this. I should like to ask the House whether they think women would be the most fitting persons to manage this great Empire in times of danger, of anxiety, of panic, and of trouble of all sorts. Well, I will only say that, as far as I can judge, it would be most unwise, and a terrible thing to place them in that position. The real question before us does not require to be elaborated by me. It has been well elaborated by my hon. friend who moved the rejection of this Bill. It will be unfair of me to go too much into this question, as there are many who wish to speak upon it, but there are three considerations which I think I might mention. The first is the social question, and I will venture to say this is the most important matter for every member of this House to consider. Whether it will be for the happiness of women to have all the privileges some are asking for is not for me to say. But this much I will say: What would you think of a woman—and we all know there are women of that class—who would leave their families and all they hold most dear and sacred and go into the public arena, and make speeches, and take part in questions about which, perhaps, they know little or nothing? The second consideration is the Parliamentary question. That I certainly need not go into; but, believe me, they will never be satisfied if they do not have all the privileges we men now enjoy as members of this House. But there is something beyond that, and that is the great constitutional question; and looking at that question as a whole, I say what can be more unwise than to place the future destinies of this country in their hands? The hon. Member (Mr. S. Smith) has said that with womanhood suffrage and manhood suffrage there would be 10,500,000 women with votes, as against only 9,500,000 of men voters. I will ask the House to consider what position this country would be in if at any great crisis, with, perhaps, peace and war trembling in the balance, we had to depend upon the vote of the women of this country. Well, Sir, I will not go any further into this question. I should like, however, to say that, taking women as a whole, we all know and acknowledge the useful work they are doing from one end of England to the other. Talking of that useful work, I am reminded of a story which I think I

may mention, the lady being in favour of the Bill. A very pretty widow lady wrote to a member of this House, and she said—

> "I cannot sit down and knit, and I do not like visiting the poor. I must do something, and, I think, therefore, your Bill will be a great help to me; and I should like to enter into that sort of life if this Bill will give me the opportunity."

That, I believe, is not the view of the large majority of the women of this country. They have other duties to perform, and they know it, and they perform them to the satisfaction of those to whom they are united. All I can say is that if you pass this Bill you will place women in a position for which they are unfitted, and I believe the effect would be most mischievous to women themselves.

Amendment proposed, to leave out the word "now," and at the end of the question to add the words "upon this day six months."—(*Mr. S. Smith.*)

Question proposed, "That the word 'now' stand part of the question."

Mr. Woodall (Hanley): Those who, like myself, have had any responsibility for the Parliamentary conduct of this question, must feel that great service has been rendered to it to-day by the very admirable manner in which it has been presented to the House by the hon. member for South Islington (Sir A. Rollit). I offer him that acknowledgment the more readily, because, as he knows perfectly well, I have myself felt that after the disastrous defeat last session, and because of the fact that this moribund Parliament is on the eve of dissolution, the raising of the question at the present moment is so inopportune that I declined to take the responsibility of it. But as the question has been raised I shall have no hesitation in following my hon. friend into the lobby in support of the second reading. We are confronted by an extraordinary combination of forces against this Bill, and I cannot but feel that this is an acknowledgment of the meritorious position which has been reached, and as a testimony for which, perhaps, we ought to be most grateful that we have passed out of the region of abstract discussion, and that the question is now recognised by all parties concerned as a measure of practical politics. We have been reminded to-day of divisions and dissensions in the ranks of the supporters of woman suffrage, and reference has been more than once made to a particular meeting last night. I regret exceedingly that anything should have occurred to give force to the argument of dissension; but if we recollect previous movements for the enfranchisement of the people, I think it will be remembered that they have all been accompanied by trouble of a similar kind. Those of us who can remember the struggles for household suffrage, know how we were then hampered, and our task made infinitely more difficult by the more extreme advocates of universal suffrage. I regard the Bill now before the House as excellently devised; amongst other reasons, from the fact that it is

another step towards a universal register. In the making up of an ordinary register women are left on for local purposes, and subsequently eliminated from the register for Parliamentary purposes; and I say that in that respect, as in many others, my hon. friend has been happy in the form in which he has drafted this Bill. We have listened to an extremely interesting speech from the hon. member for Flintshire (Mr. S. Smith), in the course of which he protested that it was unwise to prophesy; but surely no speech has ever been delivered in this House which was so full of prophecy and of dolorous prediction, and three times he warned us against taking a leap in the dark. As I listened to him it appeared as if he had been living for some time past upon the literature of the discussions on former measures of enfranchisement. The measure conferring the franchise upon the working men in the boroughs was opposed on both sides of the House. It was opposed on one side by the extreme friends of manhood suffrage because it did not go far enough; and by those who feared the measure and disliked it, it was opposed in the same sense in which my hon. friend has spoken to-day as an indication of the danger of the thin edge of the wedge, as a step in the direction of manhood suffrage, from which I think we are as far off to-day as we were then. In the speech of the hon. baronet who preceded me the arguments against this measure were stated with great force; but I am bound to say, with all respect, that none of these arguments are new. We are told, for instance, that many women would protest against a measure which would expose them to some inconvenience. My hon. friend reminded the House that in the discussion with regard to the abolition of slavery it was contended that the negroes themselves did not desire the liberty which it was proposed to give them; and I think I can recollect the fact that when the proposals were made to confer the franchise upon the agricultural labourers we were assured over and over again that the franchise was undesirable and undesired by them. But we say that there are a large number of women who do desire it, who have petitioned for it, and have given every conceivable testimony of the earnestness of their desire; and why should they be denied that which we insist is right, because a certain number of others, to whom the privilege will be given, are indifferent or hostile? The women in whose interests we are speaking to-day might very well plead that they are not excused from any of the obligations of citizenship which they are capable of performing. We are warned not to intrude upon the delicacy and purity and refinement of women's lives. But when these arguments are used, it should be remembered how very large a proportion of women citizens have to struggle for their maintenance, to work for their livelihood, to labour under conditions of extreme hardship; they work even in factories, and they are forming associations and combinations very much as men do for the bettering of their condition and improvement of their remuneration. I was astonished to

hear the terms in which my hon. friend spoke in his reference to Mrs. Fawcett, who combated the assertion that what St. Paul wrote in his own day is of equal force now, and whose chief contention was against the apparent preference of the Apostle for celibacy as more honourable than marriage. I wish it were not inconvenient to submit some of the passages Mrs. Fawcett wrote; but perhaps it is sufficient that attention has been called to one of the most admirable and able arguments ever put forward on this question, and I venture to think that Mrs. Fawcett's contention is much stronger and much more practical than that of my hon. friend. Amongst other things, St. Paul would not suffer women to teach. We have a large army of women workers who are invaluable in our educational work. We find that women are handicapped in every form of industry, in the matter of wages and remuneration. We find their access to the professions impeded by unfair conditions. They have been deprived and defrauded of their fair share of educational privileges and emoluments; and, in truth, what the right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian (Mr. W. E. Gladstone) said twenty years ago is nearly as true to-day, that Parliament has dealt with women with less than justice. One of the advantages of the motion now before the House is that it proposes to confer the franchise upon a class of electors who have gone through an apprenticeship. They certainly cannot be considered inexperienced, and yet I may recall the fact to the House that when we extended the franchise to the Irish cottiers and the agricultural labourers we gave the vote to a class who had had no experience at all in local voting. But here, on the other hand, we have the advantage of a trained electorate who have been in the habit for a number of years of going steadily, even annually, to the poll, and who probably know the way of marking their paper as well as any of their male friends. The right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian, in a speech he made in 1870 or 1871, admitted that if the ballot should be adopted by Parliament it would remove one of the most serious difficulties in the way of women taking part in popular elections. I venture to think that our experience of the Ballot Act is that it has introduced a quieter method of taking votes, and that it has fulfilled the expectations which were formed of it. The irony of the situation is that while so many hon. members hesitate to confer the vote upon women they are willing to have them associated with them in the rough work of political contests, acting on electoral committees, undertaking the work of canvassing, and persuading men how they are to vote, and in the course of which women have displayed the very highest kind of political acumen, almost amounting to that of professional experts. I shall be very sorry to find, in such a division as that we shall take to-day, the members of my own political party less strong in support of this measure than those who sit on the other side of the House. It has always been to the great honour of the Liberal party to have initiated measures of enfranchisement; and recalling as we do the

enormous advances which have been made in that direction, I confess it is a great dissapointment that we have not the advantage of the concurrence and vote of the member for Midlothian Some of my friends seem to be alarmed at the zeal with which certain hon. gentlemen opposite are supporting this particular measure of enfranchisement. I can only say, however, that I cannot reproach hon. gentlemen opposite who may not be in the abstract in favour of the measure for supporting what they think may give them a tactical advantage, any more than I can approve hon. members behind me who believe in the justice of the claim, but hesitate to grant it because it may possibly work against them. We admit that a considerable number of the women who would be enfranchised under this Bill have not yet been trained in practical politics; they are still in that respect only the equals of a very large number of the early voters, and in a large degree also of those who have been most recently enfranchised. I should like to ask those hon. members who say that women do not desire a vote what has been the experience of the use made by women of the vote in municipal affairs? We find that they vote in something like the same proportion as the male voters. Some of my friends fear that the votes of women would be given against them; but cases can be quoted in many parts of the country where the Parliamentary representative, for whom the women do not vote, is Conservative, whilst the local councils are largely Liberal. When one comes to analyse the great programme of Liberal measures on which the Liberal party is now addressing itself to the country, I cannot but feel that many of those measures of social reform, such as the improvement of the dwellings of the poor, temperance reform, education, and the incidence of taxation, are questions which appeal directly to women; and we shall have in them, when the time comes, invaluable allies in forwarding the progress of these measures. We are asking for this Bill for women themselves, not only in order that they may profit by it as the industrial classes and the agricultural labourers have done by the redressing of their grievances through possessing the franchise, but also we claim it for them because it would be an advantage to the whole community and to the best interests of humanity.

Mr. Bryce (Aberdeen, S.): I am very reluctant to address the House, but the question is one of so much gravity that I feel bound to state the reasons for the opinions that I hold. Those opinions are far from being hostile to the claims of women to the fullest social equality and the freest entrance into all professions and occupations. Perhaps the House will permit me, in order to justify my own position, to say that it is more than 25 years since I began to work in the cause of women's education. I laboured for some years on behalf of the Married Women's Property Act; I had charge for three years of the Bill which ultimately became an Act for extending the rights of women to the guardianship of their children, and I have always

advocated the claims of women to a much larger share of educational endowment in connection with schools and Universities. I should like to say that I do not at all associate myself with a good many of the arguments which are used against this measure, and I will say that I think the question whether the same number of women attain to as high intellectual excellence as men has nothing to do with the matter. I believe the intellectual capabilities of women are amply sufficient to put them for purposes of elections on a level with men. I am far from denying that there are many women fit for the franchise. Again, I desire altogether to repudiate the nction that this question cannot be viewed apart from party consequences. If women have the franchise it must be given them as a measure of justice, irrespective of whether they will vote for Liberals or Tories. We must deal with this question rather more from the political than from the social point of view. It is the political interests of the country that we have to study. My first objection to the proposal is that women do not want the franchise. I am well aware that there are a good many ladies, active politicians, who do desire it. Some of them desire it because they think it will further political or social objects they have at heart—the cause of temperance for instance. Others go further, and look upon it as a step towards complete equality in all things. One lady went so far in conversation with a friend of mine as to say that what we want is to get rid of the English idea of a home. That is a very extreme expression, and I have no doubt goes far beyond the ideas of the advocates of this measure. But, as far as our own observation goes, I think the women who desire the franchise are a very small minority of the women of the country. We know that petitions have been presented in favour of this measure, but how many women would be entitled to the franchise? We are dealing now with the enfranchisement of all the women of England, which is more than is contemplated by this measure. At present I suppose there are about eleven millions of women of mature age in this country who would be entitled to the franchise if we came down to womanhood suffrage. What proportion of these have petitioned this House? The percentage could hardly be expressed without going into decimal fractions. Let us take our own personal knowledge, because that is, after all, the only test we can apply to the matter. Let any hon. member ask himself, out of those ladies whom he knows, how many are in favour of receiving the franchise, and I do not think he will find the number to be more than one in five; and I appeal in aid of my argument to the very remarkable protest published a few years ago in one of the monthly magazines, in which there appeared a number of names of women eminently intellectual, which, I think, far outweighs the authority, high as it is, of the intellectual women brought to bear on behalf of the proposition. Why did these women object to it? Because they thought it would injure their own position. No proof has been given

that it will either benefit women or benefit the State. It is not for us to prove that the measure would work ill; it is for the supporters of the measure to prove that it would work some good; and that, I contend, they have utterly failed to do. I have listened to the arguments that have been used in support of the measure, and I find no sufficient ground except the appeal to the fact that women have already exercised the franchise on local affairs without injury to the community. But it is not alleged by my hon. friend that they have exercised the franchise either with any benefit to the community or to themselves. What are the grounds upon which the franchise has usually been extended? They are mainly two. One was that the Constitution would be stronger and the Government more stable if we included the largest possible number of citizens within the boundaries of the Constitution. Nobody argues now that our policy will be any more firmly based if women were admitted to the Parliamentary franchise, or that there is any substantial discontent in connection with an existing disability on the part of women. Therefore, we may dismiss that at once. The other argument is that the interests of no class will be properly enforced and secured by legislation unless that class is represented. I take it, on the whole, that this is the strongest fact which is advanced by those who are in favour of the change; but my objection is that it rests upon the fallacy of assuming that women are a class. Women are not a class. Who are the women of this country? They are our mothers, our sisters, and our wives. They are not a class, but are members of the class to which their husbands, brothers, and sons belong, and their interests are the same. I think there has been some confusion in this matter. My hon. friend referred just now to the agricultural labourers; they are a class indeed. They had interests which were not the same, and were generally supposed to be opposed to the interests of the farmers and the interests of the landlords; and no one can doubt that the interests of the agricultural labourers have been more carefully regarded by this Parliament than by any previous Parliament, because the labourers now have votes. But the wives and daughters and sisters of agricultural labourers do not form a distinct class, but are part of the same class. Whatever class you take, you will find that the interests of the women belonging to that class are substantially the same as the interests of the men. There is no such antagonism between men and women in this or any other country as makes women a distinct class. I may be told that there is some unjust legislation applied to women in which, their interests being divergent, the interests of women would be better looked after if they had the franchise. How much unjust legislation is there conceived in the interests of men as against the interests of women? There was a Bill before the House last night for making the English Law of Divorce the same as that of Scotland by establishing equality between the offences of men and women. I

voted for that Bill, and I hope it will be passed. I conceive that some people will represent that as a case where the interests of men are opposed to those of women. I do not think it raises that issue. Questions of divorce are of the utmost possible difficulty, and are questions in which the interests of the whole community are involved, and they must not be considered as questions between men and women, and I do not believe Parliament looked upon them in that light. In Scotland that rule has existed for 300 years, because the people believed it to be the fairest and most just law. Doubtless there is much to be said against the Divorce Law of the United States, but they have equality between men and women; and in no part of the United States, except Wyoming, do women enjoy the franchise. Therefore, it is not necessary for women to have the franchise to enjoy equal laws. There are other cognate questions, but when they are looked into as a whole they will be found to depend not on the antagonism of men and women, but on social questions of great difficulty on which the most ardent friends of women may hold very different opinions. Then there are some restrictions on the labour of women which do not apply to men, and some hon. members complain bitterly on the restrictions imposed by legislation on the labour of women, and that they have no voice in determining these restrictions. But these restrictions are not imposed in the interests of men as against women, but in the interests of women themselves, and the feeling of women is divided upon them. So on the point you are not entitled to say that women are a class who require special representation. It is said that in some industrial matters women are exposed to greater disadvantages than men; they get lower wages in some trades, and the men's trade unions have shown themselves hostile to and have oppressed the women's trade unions. I sincerely regret that, but these are matters which legislation cannot deal with; they depend upon the supply of labour and the amount of competition there is. I doubt, Mr. Speaker, if any considerable grievance is left which can be pointed to as a grievanec between men and women which the political power of women is required to remedy. Those who rest their case on this point entirely ignore what has been done done for women during the last 25 years. We have had the Married Women's Property Act, the Guardianship of Infants Act—not in so complete a form as I should like, being a believer in the absolute equality of the rights of father and mother—yet in a form to remove four-fifths of the grievances under which they suffered. They have a large share of endowments; they have been admitted to the teaching at the Universities; they are making their way in the professions, and their trades unions are making good their position in another direction. When reviewing what has been done in 25 years without the suffrage, I have great confidence that women will get the further privileges and advantages they desire without legislative power, and that the good feeling, ustice and sympathy which has helped them before will in the future

have their perfect work. It is said that women would be socially elevated if engaged in political work with men. That is the opinion of my hon. friend, but others hold a different opinion, and neither he nor I can prove it. So far from believing that women will benefit by politics, or politics be benefited by them, I believe politics will do them more harm than good. Political work is exposed to serious temptations, and there are certaiu things in the constitution of women which make them more liable to succumb to those temptations than men. I do not lay stress on that part of the argument; but if I am asked to state my opinion, I believe that the participation of women in voting, and that which must follow voting—sitting in this House, and the participation in all the active work of governing—will ultimately lead to a revolution in the social relations of the two sexes which will be not only momentous, but, so far as we can see, disastrous. I come now to the last ground on which I object to this Bill. It is a very bold experiment. It is recommended by certain abstract theories, by certain shadowy notions of benefits to be conferred on women politically, morally and socially, by giving them a share in the political work of men. I notice that the common argument used is, Why not? We want something better than a "Why not" in this matter; we want a positive reason. All reforms in the franchise have been introduced to remedy or cure some existing defect in our system, and we have been able to apportion the change we made to the cure we desired to effect. Here we are asked to make this great change on pure abstract theory. There is nothing more pernicious in politics than abstract doctrine, and no worse habit can a country contract than that of yielding to abstract doctrine. Why should we make such an experiment, which can have no other effect than to double our constituencies? This little Bill only proposes to admit about a million women, but we know perfectly well the matter cannot stop there. Many ladies object to the Bill because it refuses the franchise to married women. Why should marriage be made a reason for not granting it? The enfranchisement of all women was supported by strong and even physical arguments at St. James's Hall last night. Shall we not be asked in any future extension of the franchise to men to extend it in like manner to women? We are within measurable distance of manhood suffrage, and I say that for this reason neither party in the State is much concerned to oppose it; nobody can tell which party may be benefited by it, and it is as likely as not to come from the party opposite as from the party to which I belong. I ask the House to assume that we are within measurable distance of manhood suffrage, and I submit that if you concede that you cannot refuse womanhood suffrage also. The distinction between the suffrage of men as men and the suffrage of women as women is a clear and well-marked distinction, and rests on rational grounds. If we once admit the principle of women suffrage at all, we put ourselves on an inclined plane on which there is no stopping until we

are landed in universal suffrage—manhood and womanhood alike. If I were asked whether I think woman suffrage would work well, and whether the eleven million adult women in this country—including, of course, domestic servants, who in some London constituencies would form the majority of the voters—are fitted for the franchise, I should reply to the question with an unqualified negative. I should say that in every class of the community women know less about politics than men do; and whatever class of the community my hon. friend looks to, he will find that the women are immeasurably behind the men in political knowledge and interest. This is no disparagement of women; it results from the circumstances of their lives, in which circumstances the interests of their lives are profoundly bound up. How many of the ladies in our own circles are in the habit of reading the political intelligence in the newspapers, or of going to public meetings? We can in this way see the difference between the political capacity of men in any given class and the present political capacity of women in the same class. I may be told that the franchise will be an education, and that women will rise to the functions given to them. I think that argument has been pushed too far, and I could show instances in which it has completely broken down. Let that education make some progress before we try the experiment. The arguments I have put forward must have some weight, because they are found to prevail in all democratic parts of the world. There are other countries more democratic than ourselves; there is Switzerland, why does she not try it? Why does not democratic France try it? Our Colonies are democratic in the highest degree: why do they not try it? In any of the 44 States of America where there is the most unlimited facility for trying experiments—why has not somebody been trying the experiment? I shall probably be reminded of Wyoming. That is a very interesting little State; it has a population of 60,000 spread over an area nearly double that of England, and the biggest town has only 9,000 inhabitants. Wyoming has adopted woman suffrage, but I do not think that example—which may be compared with Ross and Cromartie—will have much weight with the House. There is another case more in point. The State of Washington had woman suffrage for about four years, but when it enacted its Constitution in 1889 it rejected woman suffrage by 35,000 to 16,000. Washington is a wealthy and flourishing State with a population of 350,000, and I think that example will have more weight on one side than Wyoming will have on the other. I feel some little doubt as to prediction in this matter; I do not associate myself with the predictions of my hon. friend, for the results in changes of this kind are often totally unlike those we expect. I think every member of the House will admit that as experiment may probably result in the addition of eleven millions to the electorate it is a very large experiment, from which great results may be expected, and which nobody can say would not affect the Government of the

country. This is an experiment so large and bold that it ought to be tried by some other country first. I am bound to say we have made changes enough of late in the franchise. We enlarged it in 1867, and again in 1885; let us wait a little while before we make another change. There is, I believe, a very large and momentous change, which is dictated to us by the highest considerations of public policy, which we shall have to enter on in the next Parliament, and which will affect the Constitution of the three kingdoms. We have the prospect of a period of passionate controversy over these proposals of change; and I cannot think, with this prospect before us, that this is a very happy time to embark on so bold an experiment. I will appeal even to those who are in favour of the proposal to let us wait until the weather is a little more settled before they ask us to launch out into an unknown sea.

Mr. Wyndham (Dover): The hon. gentleman has dissociated himself from the apocalyptic prophecies uttered by those who have preceded him in this debate. He does not join in the sheer terror with which the hon. member for Flintshire (Mr. S. Smith) views the possibility of the destinies of this country being governed by ladies who prefer serial novels to the works of Jeremy Bentham and Gibbon, of Juvenal and John Stuart Mill:—the rather strangely-assorted library which we are led to infer now guides the agricultural labourer in casting his vote. But at the end of his speech he was unable to refrain from adding a third, though a milder one, to the gloomy prognostications to which we have been treated this afternoon. If he does not fear to be governed by women he is desperately afraid of any further move in the direction of reform. We have been much interested in watching the faces of some of his colleagues while he preached the gospel of caution in sentences which, had the word peasant been substituted for the word woman, might well have been delivered in this House in 1832. The hon. gentleman addressed three arguments to the House. The third and last argument, to which I have just referred, was one of caution against any advance until somebody else had had the courage of their convictions. But I will leave that part of his speech. I do not see why on this occasion we should depart from the invariable usage of this House, and endeavour to frighten ourselves with the possible yet remote consequences of an action the immediate results of which we can gauge by reading this Bill. The second argument of the hon. gentleman was that the franchise would rather do harm than good to the women who receive it. That he delivered, I believe, as a pious opinion. Other speakers had told us that, though women may take the active interest they do in politics, for them to have the privilege of bringing their opinions to bear on candidates would in some strange way degrade them and do away with that refinement and purity which we are glad to think they now possess. That is a pious opinion, and a pious opinion it must always remain. Yet this we know, that in other spheres of

life—in hospital wards, for instance—women have shown a higher power than men to transcend the brutalities and degradations of their surroundings. I cannot, therefore, doubt that conferring the franchise on women may tend more to sweeten and elevate the atmosphere of political life than to work any degradation to the women who will wield that power. The first argument of the hon. gentleman, and the one on which I wish more particularly to dwell, is that for this reform no such case of urgency or need has been made out as for every other reform which has preceded it. It is said that the fallacy under which we are labouring is that women are a class. We are told that in past times the franchise has always been extended to a class to add stability to the State, or to defend the recipients from injury, but that since women are not a class they will add no stability to the State, and do not need any special protection. In connection with that I noted one sentence about "the home." The hon. gentleman said it would imperil home life as understood in England, or quoted and deplored the sentiment of some lady who wished to see that home life materially altered. The hon. gentleman must be aware that a great many women have no home, and can have no home; that the whole status of women—whether we like it or not—is altered; that the daughters, as well as the sons, in many families, have to seek employment and to be independent of the protection of their male relatives, which 60 or 100 years ago was doubtless extended to them in every case. It is for these women we appeal. We believe they constitute a class, in need of protection, and will continue to do so, until the same political privileges are extended to women as men now enjoy. They are, indeed, a class labouring under special disabilities. Because the last Reform Act ostensibly gave a vote to every householder; that was substantially the object of the right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian (Mr. W. E. Gladstone), who introduced the Bill. But from these householders a class was excluded, the class of women householders, who were left without a vote. What we wish to do is to complete the right hon. gentleman's measure; to approach nearer to that ideal which was his ideal, for in the speech in which he introduced the Bill he said—"If we endeavour to attain an ideal franchise we may be led to giving women suffrage or minority representation." So that the right hon. gentleman, when he contemplated an ideal franchise in 1884, contemplated a franchise providing for women suffrage and also, by the way, for the representation of minorities—why did he not then include women householders, as well as men householders? For a very good reason. He objected to what he called "deck-loading" his Bill. He declared that to admit that reform then would but imperil the measure; but does anybody say now when the ship has been sailing safely for eight years, when the cargo has been securely stowed all that time, there is any danger in our rounding off and completing his scheme of franchise by removing the

disabilities which now lie upon women householders and upon women householders alone? What led the right hon. gentleman to select householders as, broadly speaking, the political unit in this country? He did that because he laid it down that every citizen capable of using the vote for his own benefit and for the benefit of the country was entitled to have the vote; and he said that the class of householders although they might exclude some persons who had that capacity at any rate would include very few who had not that capacity. Therefore, if women householders are to be excluded and other householders are to be maintained, it can only be because they are incapable of exercising the vote for their own benefit, and for the benefit of the country. Why are they incapable? We have had some arguments advanced to prove that because women, at the last resource, are possessed of less physical force than men, therefore they are not entitled to the vote. But physical force is not everything, even in the more ordinary and more obvious pursuits of life; and in such an elaborate and complicated function of society as the exercise of the franchise, physical force is nothing at all. Physical force, unless propelled by the emotions and directed by the mind, achieves nothing in politics; and even supposing the whole fabric of society were to crumble about our ears, physical force amid the wreck of civilization would still be of little avail unless so propelled and so directed. And, therefore, if we do not find that women stand on a lower level in moral and intellectual capacity we are not entitled to reject their claim on the ground that physically they are weaker than men. There is another argument or another assertion of the incapacity of women—namely, that they lack judgment, that they are not such good judges of political questions as men are. Surely, when we use such an argument we exaggerate not only the ability but the demands made upon the ability of our fellow voters in this country. It needs no Solon to vote for one man or the other when only two are presented for choice; but, letting that pass, even if a great quality of judgment were required, and even if women possessed less judgment than men that would not invalidate their claim to the vote, for the argument for every reform has been not so much to increase the power of discernment, and to obtain a more accurate view from one standpoint, as to multiply the points of view. Then, in fine, we have only to consider whether the point of view of these women who are independently earning their livelihood is a point of view which we can afford to ignore. That is the sole question left for us to answer; and in reply to that it has been argued that a great deal of legislation has been passed for their benefit in recent years, and that they are pretty well off as they are. All these arguments were familiar in the mouths of those who were opposed to the extension of the franchise to the agricultural labourers. It was pointed out that the lot of English peasants was cast in happy places; and yet, now we are told that

without allotments, small holdings, and free education, their lives will be no better than those of slaves. I think we must, on both sides, attribute this opening of our eyes in England to the fact that the labourer has been given a vote. Is it then not only possible, but probable, that if the women householders had a vote and obtained a voice for their sisters who are not householders, we should find, forthwith, even in the legislation which we so kindly introduced and passed on their behalf, that we had wounded their feelings, missed their true welfare, and lost by our self-satisfied neglect the guidance which we might have received at their hands? I concede that no doubt the old ideal was a good one in its day. Undoubtedly the position of women in the home was not only tolerable but necessary at a time when the persons and property of women were not safe in England; just as the position of the serf was not only tolerable but perhaps necessary in the days of feudal anarchy when his life could only be protected by service to his lord. But now that is changed in the case of women, as in the case of the peasant. Both having achieved liberty, and foregone protection as the price of subordination, demand the right to protect themselves. I hold it, therefore, certain that just as the abolition of feudalism in the relation of the lord to his vassal led at last, but led inevitably, to the enfranchisement of the labourers of England, so the abolition of feudalism in the relation of man and woman must inevitably lead to the enfranchisement of women in this country.

Mr. Asquith (Fife, E.): The House always listens with pleasure and instruction to the hon. member for Dover, and I think I may congratulate him on the present occasion upon having contributed in a very difficult case new arguments to a well-worn discussion. In the first place, the hon. gentleman informs us of what I for one certainly never imagined before, that his new zeal and that of many hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House who are going to support this Bill is due to the very disinterested desire to "round off" the system of enfranchisement introduced by the right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian in 1884. I hope that the hon. gentleman and his friends will not allow their logical enthusiasm for the development of Liberal policy to evaporate at this point, but that when we present to the House some other consequences which, in our opinion, are much more legitimate deductions from the principles of that measure of 1884—for instance, when a measure is introduced providing for "one man one vote" we shall be able to count on the hon. gentleman's support. The other argument which the hon. gentleman used, and which, so far as I know, has not been anticipated, is that there are a very large number of women in this country who are without homes—clerks, servants, and persons of that description—who therefore cannot be regarded as represented by the male relatives under whose protection they live, and for whom, and in whose interest, it is desirable to provide separate representation. But has the hon.

gentleman read the Bill, in support of which the speech which we have just heard has been delivered? If he has, he has no need to be reminded that, so far as the class he has mentioned are concerned, this Bill will not produce the least effect in the world. This Bill excludes from its operation every lodger; and I suppose that persons without homes who are pursuing their occupation, whether as clerks or servants, would certainly in 99 cases out of 100 fall within the category of lodgers. Therefore, whatever force there may be in that argument it is entirely irrelevant to the measure now before the House. I confess I think both the House and the country ought to be congratulated that they have at last got an opportunity for determining with precision, as the division to-day will enable us to do, whether this movement for the so-called enfranchisement of women has advanced or receded within the last ten years. Among all the social and political agitations of our time, it is a movement which has enjoyed, and does enjoy, exceptional advantages. It has been recommended to the country by names of great and just authority. It has been engineered and advertised with a skill and a pertinacity which show, to my mind at any rate, that we have among us at the present day women who, even without the vote, can in that department of political activity teach us many lessons, and whom we can teach very little. And while I do not wish in the least to disparage the genuine enthusiasm which is felt in some quarters for this Bill and for kindred schemes, I am bound to add that, so far as I can form a judgment, it has been very largely accepted not from conviction, but without mature examination or inquiry; in that spirit of flaccid fatalism by which people persuade themselves that a thing must come if only it is shouted for loud enough, if only it drapes and clothes itself in a democratic disguise. I trust that, after this afternoon, we shall examine this question on its merits. I observe in the press and in speeches which have been made by outside supporters of this movement that they are approaching the division to-day with unusual heaviness of heart. They are lamenting, and lamenting somewhat publicly, the backslidings and fallings-away of eminent persons who in bygone times used to vote for their Bill, and even advocated actively their cause. They know their own tactics best; but I confess I should not have thought that that was the best way of recommending their claims to the attention of the House and the country. But I suppose, when you have got no proselytes to boast of, the only thing you can do is to denounce the perverts whom you have lost—I say, when you have no proselytes to boast of. I must admit that I rather agree with my hon friend the member for Aberdeen, that some of the arguments both for and against this measure were pitched in rather too high a key. So far from thinking that it will lead to the political millennium which has been described in such graceful and elaborate language by the hon. member for Dover, I regard it, for reasons which I shall shortly state to the House, as upon

the whole a mischievous and injurious scheme; but, on the other hand, I cannot associate myself with all the gloomy predictions which we hear from the hon. member for Flintshire and others, who seem to imagine that we are passing a measure which will lead to a complete and speedy disintegration of the social fabric. I believe that for some years its consequences would be slight and almost imperceptible. But we have got to consider and to deal, not with its immediate results, but its ultimate tendency. It is admitted that we have in this matter no relevant experience to guide us. There is no civilised country in the world, living under conditions similar or even approximating to those which prevail in Great Britain, which has ever made the experiment of giving women the vote. As to the case dealt with by my hon. friend the member for Aberdeen, the solitary case of Wyoming in the western part of America, I need not repeat what has been already said by my hon. friend. It will be sufficient to point out that it is impossible to argue seriously from the experience of a rudimentary community, with a sparse population thinly scattered over what they call in America "magnificent distances," to the case of an ancient, complex, and highly organised society such as our own. Nor is more light to be gained from our experience of municipal elections. The women's vote there may have done good or harm. There is no evidence upon which to pronounce an opinion one way or the other; and the reason for that is that the result has been infinitesimal, either for good or for harm. No doubt there is a great and growing interest in these municipal contests; but we should be shutting our eyes to facts not to recognise that they are for the most part determined by local and personal considerations. The position of women voters in such contests is fundamentally different from what it would be if, through their instrumentality, an immense addition were made to the Parliamentary register, and if, when a great election was coming on, where every vote was a matter of almost national importance, this large body of untried and susceptible opinion were to be exposed to the influences, solicitation and pressure which cannot be withdrawn from a Parliamentary election. As we have no experience to guide us one way or the other, this change must be recommended on purely abstract grounds; and I do not think I am doing any injustice to the argument of the promoters of this Bill when I say that the main weight of their case rests on the assumption that in a democratic community such as ours, to exclude from the franchise any class of persons—especially persons who pay rates and possess property—is an indefensible anomaly, and a negation of the principle of popular representation. In other words, this Bill is recommended, as the hon. member for Dover has said, as the logical development and completion of previous extensions of the suffrage. That is a position which, in its length and breadth, I entirely traverse. I assert that, in many essential particulars, the present proposal differs from all other previous enlargements of the franchise. In the first place, there has

been no case hitherto in our constitutional experience where the franchise has been extended to a class without clear proof to demonstration being given that that class was, if not unanimously, at least in immensely preponderating numbers, and by an emphatic and clear voice demanding the boon that was to be offered. Now, what is the case in relation to women? It is true that there are some of the best women who are strongly in favour of women's suffrage. It is also true that there are some—I will not say a majority—of the best women who are strongly opposed to it. But as to the great mass of the sex, the only thing that can be asserted with truth is that they are watching with languid and imperturbable indifference the struggle for their own emancipation. Again, there has been no previous extension of the suffrage except where it has been capable of proof, and where it has been proved, that the class excluded, and whom it was sought to admit, are persons capable of performing, and actually performing, the duties, bearing the burdens, and liable to the calls of active citizenship. That was the case with the £10 occupier, and with the urban and rural householder. They were all men liable to be called upon in the last resort for the defence of their country. They were men to whom, before they got the franchise, most positions of public emolument and trust were already open. They were men for whom the duty and the burden of carrying out, and being actively responsible for, the policy and legislation of the country, existed, and who had no voice in directing or deciding that policy. The hon. gentleman opposite has spoken with contempt of the argument derived from physical force. But in the last resort, not living in an ideal state of things, the sanction of the law is force; and the law which rests on the opinion of a majority of voices, but which cannot summon to its aid, in case of difficulty and danger, the active assistance of the physical force of the country—that is a law which is made to be broken, and for the performance of which there is no practical or adequate security. I say, therefore, that you are asking for the first time for the introduction into the constitution of a new and a privileged class. You are asking the House to give women a vote and the power to count head for head with men in the making of laws, in the determining of policy, in the supervision of national administration; and yet, at the same time, you are not casting upon them—because nature does not allow it—the burden which is cast upon every male citizen. I go now to a further point. I say that there is no case in which the franchise has been enlarged where it has not been shown that there was an actual grievance of which the excluded class had a right to complain. One of the worst effects of a limited suffrage has been its tendency to produce class legislation; and it can be shown to demonstration that every extension of the suffrage has led directly, as an almost immediate consequence, to the remedying of grievances and the redress of injustice, or to the opening out of new opportunities, in respect of the class which was then for the first time

admitted to electoral rights. It was so in 1832, when the £10 occupier was admitted. That led to the opening of the Municipal Corporations and to Free Trade. It was so in 1867, when the urban householder was admitted. That led to the scheme of national education. It has been still more conspicuous in the case of the last enlargement. For there is no doubt that, but for the enfranchisement of the rural labourer, the country would never have heard of allotments or small holdings, or any part of that large and varied programme of social and agrarian reform which is to be spread before the eyes of the country voter at the next general election. I have taken these instances for the purpose of challenging any hon. member who may follow me to show that, in respect of sex, there is, or there has been for the last 30 years, a case of provable injustice in the legislation of the Imperial Parliament. The hon. member for Aberdeen has dealt with the efforts of Parliament to put married and single women on the same footing in relation to contract and property, and to deal fairly between men and women with regard to the care of children. Is there any case now where the law weighs unfairly on women, and to which the attention of Parliament is not just as likely to be invoked successfully under the present suffrage as under a suffrage which would include women? I do not believe that any such case can be cited. It is the framers of this half-hearted and illogical Bill who are going to introduce distinctions between women and women, and between men and women. They are creating distinctions between women and women because, whereas a Parliament of men have removed every distinction and disability with respect to contract and ownership of property as between married and single women, the movers of this Bill ask the House to affirm that a woman is perfectly qualified and competent by intelligence and experience to exercise a vote; but that the moment she approaches the altar she constructs for herself a disability which Parliament ought to recognise as thenceforward disqualifying her for a vote. That is not the only distinction; for while it is sought to enfranchise women for the particular and limited purpose of giving a Parliamentary vote, the movers of this Bill at the same time refuse to take the next step—a step which, if their premises are right, would logically follow—and give them the capacity to sit in Parliament and hold important offices in the State. As the right hon. gentleman the member for Midlothian has pointed out, there is to be a new class of voters, privileged in one sense, as taking no part in the execution of the law, but in another sense disabled, because, while they may vote, they may not sit in the House of Commons or hold any public office. Now, that is a state of anomalies and inequalities which no legislative body, in which male opinion predominates, would ever be guilty of putting on the Statute Book. The question has been asked with considerable force, or at any rate with great superficial plausibility, whether the opponents of the Bill are prepared to assert that there are no women fit for the exercise of the

franchise. They have been asked, by way of illustration, whether they will assert that a woman of genius like "George Eliot" was unfit for the vote which was given to her butler and her footman. But legislation must be framed to deal not with exceptions and portents, but with average cases and normal conditions; and when this question of fitness is raised it is incumbent to realise oneself, and to remind others, that fitness is a relative term. We have not only to ask whether the average woman is fit for the franchise, but, if I may use such an expression, whether the franchise is fit for her. I demur to the doctrine that women are unrepresented, or that they contribute nothing to our political life at the present moment. They contribute through their own appropriate agencies quite as much as men do. They contribute to it imagination, insight, sympathy, a host of moral and intellectual qualities, which are impossible to analyse and difficult to classify, but all of which have this common property—that they operate by personal influence, and not by associated or representative action, and that their natural sphere is not the turmoil and dust of politics, but the circle of social and domestic life. I do not say that if this measure were passed women would cease to exercise that influence; on the contrary, I believe they would still exercise it. But exactly to the extent to which the temptations offered by this measure were operative, in that degree they would tend to draw women from the sphere in which they are really powerful, and transplant them to another, where they would play a subordinate, a secondary, and an inappropriate part. I have heard this measure recommended in the name of democracy. But it is not a democratic measure. The doctrine of democracy demands that we should equalise where inequality exists among things fundamentally alike, but not that we should identify where things are fundamentally unlike. The inequalities which democracy requires that we should fight against and remove are the unearned privileges and the artificial distinction which man has made, and which man can unmake. They are not those indeliable differences of faculty and function by which nature herself has given diversity and richness to human society.

Mr. Courtney (Cornwall, Bodmin): My hon. and learned friend (Mr. Asquith) has made such a very powerful speech that I feel considerable diffidence in rising to follow him; and especially so, as I am aware there are others who desire to join in the debate. I will, however, briefly deal with one or two arguments he has advanced. My hon. friend has said this will be an occasion for taking the measure of the progress of opinion on the subject dealt with by the Bill, and he seemed already to congratulate himself that the division would show a dwindling force into its support. I do not inquire what result to the Bill the immediate decision may be. Whether it be for or against the second reading I shall receive the result with an equally unmoved temper, because I am persuaded that this measure, small as it is, is a part of the great movement

which, in spite of all the rallying of the opposition, is bound to persevere, bound to go on, and must very soon prevail. The hon. member for Fife (Mr. Asquith), referring to the extremely able speech of the hon. member for Dover (Mr. Wyndham), said that the hon. member advanced a new argument against the Bill. The hon. member for Dover referred to a large section of the women population of this country who, in consequence of the alteration of economic and social conditions, are now themselves forced to earn their own living and are more or less self-dependent, and he argued that was a class whose interests at least deserved consideration, and were liable to be forgotten by this Imperial Parliament so long as women were not represented by this Parliament. "But," says the hon. member for Fife, "this Bill does not enfranchise women of that character." It is, however, a Bill which will undoubtedly enfranchise something like eight or nine hundred thousand women, most of them closely associated with the working women of whom I have spoken, and who will share their hopes, their fortunes, and know the particular wants of women, and the particular wants which require attention. It may be possible that not many of these working women who are self-dependent will get the franchise under this Bill, although I think there are more than the hon. member for Fife suspects; but this Bill if passed will establish the great principle that women not only economically and socially but politically must be regarded as persons who are more or less capable of self-dependence. And the influence which already operates to a large extent will, from the political operation of the vote, still more be strengthened and confirmed, so that woman in the future working out her own position and dependent upon her own exertions would fortify the Legislature and render it more responsible to her wants. It is said that women have no particular claim to protection at the hands of the Legislature. And it is curious to note that the class proposed to be enfranchised has always already received careful and full attention from the Legislature, but when it becomes enfranchised it is found that its members have a considerable right to ask attention which up to that time has been neglected. During the speech of my hon. and learned friend the member for Fife, and his argument about women, and still more during the speech of the hon. member for Flintshire (Mr. S. Smith), who fears the terrors of what will happen if eleven million women are admitted to the franchise, I was reminded of an incident which occurred in this House during the debate on the Household Suffrage Bill. Some member on the Conservative side dilated on the frightful consequences which would come if the working classes were admitted to the franchise *en masse*, and the right hon. member for Midlothian (Mr. W. E. Gladstone), animated by a just resentment of that kind of argument, said—

> "You talk of these persons as if they were wholly removed from us; as if they were persons who would vote against us. Are they not also our own flesh and blood?"

I venture to say of women—"Are they not also our own flesh and blood?" Have not they got some sort of interest in what we do, in the laws we proclaim; are they not interested as men are interested; and from that point of view, are we to assume with the hon. member for Flintshire that the final effect of this movement, if now adopted, will be to enfranchise eleven million enemies? It is said that women have no special merits, no special needs. But I would recommend for consideration the action of women in connection with the representative institutions they could influence. Why, Sir, experience of the action of women as electors in representative assemblies has shown that women are very keenly interested in the character and the conduct of the persons they choose, and they are very keenly interested, too, in the kind of social legislation which affects the happiness of the home, and affects the relations of the wage earner of the home. And who can doubt that if women do get the vote, even under the limited form of this Bill, there will be a considerable addition to the strength of the demand for temperance legislation. As to the needs of women, I have had some small experience as a member of the Labour Commission, which at least shows there are some wants of women which have not been hitherto attended to, and which I think would receive ampler attention, and more immediate attention, if women had an active voice in the Legislature. There is, for example, such a small matter as the inspection of factories. The mass of workers in the textile factories are women, not men; and they are universally agreed in their demand for women inspectors, and yet they do not get women inspectors to help them in any degree. I think if the Home Secretary had women voters at his back he would soon have to come to the House of Commons to ask for an increased inspectorate, and to allow women to inspect the conditions of work in our factories as well as men. Then there is the matter of educational endowment, which has also been referred to, and under which women have not had their fair share. There is also the question of the divorce laws, and the subject of the custody of children still remains in a most incomplete form, inflicting great injury and injustice on the mother. For example, a husband may treat his wife so badly that it is impossible for her to live with him, and yet if the wife separates from the husband the latter has complete control of the children. This Bill is a very narrow and simple Bill. It proposes to declare this—that a woman already entitled to the municipal vote or county council vote should also be entitled to the Parliamentary vote. "Oh," said the hon. and learned member for Fife (Mr. Asquith), "You are creating a new class with exemptions; you do not give the vote to the married women." We, however, take the situation as we find it. We do not cut out the married women at all. To the women who have a vote we give a vote; and if the hon. member for

Fife is so anxious to remove the disability of coverture there is no reason why he should not endeavour to do so. It is not we who have created the disability; we accept the disability simply as it stands, and we propose to extend the Parliamentary franchise in accordance with the conditions regulating the municipal franchise. I have said this is a very small measure in itself, but it is part of a great movement, which may be pregnant with important consequences. If adopted it will initiate this principle—that woman is a citizen as well as man, and that woman, self-dependent, has the same right to be represented in this House as man. And in that respect—aye, small as the matter is—I accept it as one dictated by common-sense and the plain principles of justice, and supported by the experience we have had; and whatever may be the ultimate consequences to which we are moving—I am not bold enough to prophecy—I am satisfied with the movement itself. No doubt we have gone through an age of the emancipation of women. From the time when men, in the plenitude of their strength, put to death the surplus female infants who were not wanted, because they were drags upon their action and limitation to their power, from that time to the present we have made great advances, and no doubt there are greater advances yet to be made. What may be the ultimate position of men and women in the society of two or three centuries hence I do not pretend to know. I am satisfied with this one step. This step is a simple one, and it is a just one. This one step is dictated to us by experience. This one step is recommended by the past. The future may take care of itself. This one step we are emboldened to take, because we see in it a step onward in the progress which has been made in the development of woman as a factor in our social system. I am, therefore, induced to give this Bill my support, and I hope the House will give it their support also when it goes to a division.

Sir H. James (Bury, Lancashire): It is some 21 years ago since I first took part in the discussion of a Bill somewhat similar to the one now before the House. Since then I have so often expressed my views upon the subject, that perhaps those who have followed the discussions on this question will feel I am unduly intruding myself upon their attention. But the sound of my right hon. friend's voice has aroused me. He has recalled some struggles he and I have had on this subject before. Well, Sir, I admit the skill of his rhetoric and his power in debate have not afforded me many opportunities for answering him this evening. Yet, at the same time, there are some topics upon which an answer should be given. Mr. Speaker, my view is that my right hon. friend has misconceived the nature of this Bill. I did not enjoy the opportunity of hearing the hon. gentleman (Sir A. Rollit) who introduced this Bill, explain the strange and fantastic character of it, and the circumstances under which he felt justified in presenting it to this House. I have always understood that one of the principal

grounds upon which this measure is based is that women shall be placed upon an equality with men. Some have said they support the Bill because men have been hostile to women. Both the grounds I believe to be untenable. If the hon. gentleman who introduced the Bill is asking for the political equality of women with men, will he, in his reply, state why he shrank from approaching that subject? My right hon. friend says he supports the Bill in order that redress for women's grievances may be obtained. If so, why does he shrink from Parliamentary equality? The attempted explanation of my right hon. friend is one entirely devoid of logic. By this Bill it is sought to give to Parliamentary women—if I may use the term—a municipal franchise, while we retain to men the Parliamentary franchise. The municipal franchise proceeds on certain grounds. In dealing with municipal matters you have to deal essentially with the imposition of rates, and the application of those rates. Therefore, in the municipal franchise you have to deal wholly with a rateable franchise. You will not extend it beyond the rateable franchise. You will not allow the 40s. freeholder to vote in the municipality, nor will you allow the lodger franchise to be extended to the municipal voter, nor will you allow the service voter to vote for one and the same reason—that is, because they are not rated. Thus, when in 1888 the House had to deal with this question in the Local Government Bill, they always kept the distinction clear between the Parliamentary voter and the municipal voter with a rating franchise. The promoters of this Bill, whilst extending the Parliamentary franchise to women, yet keep her within the municipal rating area, and refuse to give her the 40s. freehold vote, the lodger vote, or the service vote. You are thus erring exactly in the wrong direction. I listened just now to the eloquent language of the hon. member for Dover (Mr. Wyndham), who drew a picture of a lonely woman, with no one to guide her, without a husband to protect her, and with no paternal roof to cover her. o she wandered into—where? Lodgings, I presume. That homeless lady, the particular friend of the hon. member, is thus shut out from the franchise of this Bill. You refuse to give Parliamentary equality to that homeless person who needs a vote to redress her grievances, for the simple reason that you are endeavouring, as a matter of tactics, to say that what you are going to give is to be given because it has been given before without any consideration of the reasonableness or the unreasonableness of the different qualifications now existing. Now, Sir, one word more with regard to my right hon. friend the member for Bodmin (Mr. Courtney). He says that although this is but a partial measure, he accepts it, and does not care to what it will lead. Should that be the view of any man who desires to take part in public life—that he will look only to the immediate effect of a particular Bill, without considering whether its natural result must be for good or for evil? I say the man who sets the stone rolling at the summit of the hill is bound to see what effect will be produced in

the valley. And, Sir, as has been pointed out in the course of this debate, the House is bound to contemplate the time when, in consequence of the spread of education and the increase of intelligence and political knowledge, which must be factors in the progress of this country, we shall put on one side those evidences of fitness by property qualifications, and ask that every man shall have a vote. I do not contemplate whether the time will be sooner or later when that condition of affairs is reached; but it is in that direction the political forces of the time are drifting. When that day is reached, no one will hear of this timid shrinking from political equality. If you give universal suffrage to men, with the admission by this Bill that you are seeking to obtain Parliamentary equality, then you must give it also to women. Well, Sir, we have 900,000 more females than males in the United Kingdom. That is the proportion of the two sexes, I do not say of adults, and we should, consequently, have a large majority of female voters over male voters. What I ask is, are you prepared to say that the destinies of this country shall be governed and controlled by that preponderating majority? Are you prepared to say that this majority shall have the power of directing a policy which, as my hon. and learned friend the member for Fife (Mr. Asquith) has pointed out, they never can be called upon to carry out? Mr. Speaker, there is also one practical view of this question. What do our politics consist of? Men may be eloquent upon subjects, especially Imperial subjects, from an abstract or theoretical point of view; but in the main our politics are composed of practical subjects, and they must depend for their decision upon practical knowledge. We hear discussed here questions affecting the control of the army, and we listen to military men on the subject. Naval questions are also discussed, and we have the opinions of naval men to guide us. Commercial life is represented by commercial men, and even legal matters are represented by lawyers. Now, upon none of these subjects can we receive practical assistance from any woman, she not being a member of any of these professions. Yet it is proposed to give the preponderating influence to women, who are unskilled from lack of practical knowledge, while at the polling booth, as well as in Parliament, women will be allowed to take the same share as men in deliberating on and determining questions of which they are totally ignorant. The House must look to the consequences of such a proposal as this. Logically hon. members must accept the proposition that if women have equal power of voting with men they should also have a seat in Parliament, and should have the privilege of filling many offices. That is the view of the supporters of this Bill. The hon. and learned member for Haddington (Mr. Haldane) has introduced a Bill in which he proposes to make it almost a duty of the State to appoint a woman as Archbishop of Canterbury, Prime Minister, and Commander-in-Chief, whether she be competent or not. If the principle of Parliamentary equality is established, all the positions of this House must be open for women,

even that of being a "Whip," and I have no doubt she would administer that office against us with great efficiency. The result is that we should be regarded as a nation of women instead of a nation of men. Sir, there is one argument I should have shrunk from if it had not been for some remarks that fell from my right hon. friend (Mr. Courtney), and that is as to the fitness of women for this measure. It has been said that one becomes personal if he states that a woman is more unfit than a man to exercise the franchise; but I confess, if I were not afraid of the consequences, I should be disposed to express that view strongly. My right hon friend the member for Bodmin (Mr. Courtney) on one occasion made a statement on which I may rely in confirmation of my opinion that women are not so fit as men to exercise the franchise. This is the opinion of my right hon. friend the member for Bodmin, who, in moving the introduction of the Bill, said:—

> "The narrowness of women's range of ideas is absolutely deleterious in its effects."

My right hon. friend went on—

> "Our earliest lessons are received from them. Are they not often lessons that we have afterwards to unlearn with great difficulty? We often find a difficulty in freeing ourselves from them, and in emancipating ourselves from the errors of our earliest days."

My right hon. friend has passed on from the days of infancy to what I hope are happier days.

Mr. Courtney: Read a little further.

Sir H. James: Certainly I am about to follow my right hon. friend into his later life. Again, he says—

> "Of those who enter into the married relation of life, how constantly does it happen that the man's freedom of intellect is hampered, and he is incapable of imparting to the woman with whom so much of his life is spent any conception of his thoughts."

It is true my right hon. friend uttered these words many years ago, but he goes on to say—

> "He does not find in her any companionship, but, on the contrary, a drag upon his aspirations."

My right hon. friend, referring to women individually, declared that, speaking on behalf of his country, he is willing to give to such women, who have taught us these evil lessons in our youth, the franchise. But at what expense? What time of probation is a woman to go through, and what price are we to pay for this school of treatment? It is at the expense of the Government of this country that this instruction will be given: the nursery will be the polling booth, and the schoolroom this House of Commons. But does it occur to him that there are men who take a different view of the subject, and who believe that those first lessons have not been deleterious to us. There are men who believe that such instincts for good as they have they received from their mother's teaching. It may be that teaching was

not always logical, but to that teaching of the child could, oftentimes, be traced all the lessons for good that were applied in manhood. And these women who gave these lessons are women who never had the vote, and who did not spend their time on the platforms of the country. Upon the second subject on which my right hon. friend touched, the subject of married life, it certainly is a strange anomaly that whilst my right hon. friend wishes to teach the mother and make her a better mother he would not extend the benefit of the lesson to the wife. He will allow the drag to continue on an imaginary husband; he will still allow the deleterious effect of the narrow range of ideas to affect a learned husband. If it is the intention of my right hon. friend to give married women the vote let him say so; let the mover of this Bill say so. Do not let them take advantage of us by saying that this is a simple and harmless measure, and then say that they are willing to give the vote to married women. If this Bill passes, the natural consequence must be that the married women must have a vote as well as the unmarried women. It is an absurdity otherwise. Whilst men have their professions women have only one, and that is marriage, and yet we are asked to impose a disability upon her as soon as she is successful. The last time I referred to this subject there was great dissent from the view that a woman's destiny in life was controlled by the profession of marriage, and I believe an echo of that dissent was heard from a source which is invisible, though it may be audible (the Ladies' Gallery). But my foundation for the statement is that when Lord Herschell brought a Bill into this House to abolish actions for breach of promise of marriage the women of England, under the handwriting of Miss Lydia Becker, protested against the measure, because they said that women's profession, in which she alone could succeed, was marriage, and they objected that the right to bring an action for breach of promise of marriage should be taken away from them. What is the absurdity of this proposition? The timid supporters of this measure would allow a woman, who has been unsuccessful in her profession, to retain the vote; but the one who has gifts and qualities of mind to attract, and becomes successful in that which those ladies termed their profession, the moment she attains the crown she is to be deprived, by her success, of the vote, and disfranchisement is to follow. These are, indeed, strange arguments upon which to found a Bill which is to appeal to the intelligence and logic of men. We are no enemies of women who seek to prevent their inroads into public life. It was a gifted woman who said that the woman who rocks the cradle rules the world, and she who has the power in the homes of England, she who can influence men, she who can, notwithstanding my right hon. friend's view, enter into the thoughts and guide the actions of men, is a power irresistible in its force. But if she seeks for another mode of action, if she is asking through her advocates for a different power, she must pay the cost of it

by losing those influences which proceed from her very inability to enter into the contentions and rough struggles of public life. Whenever she does this she will yield up real forces and influences for good, she will fail to maintain her higher power when she struggles against man, but she will not fail in producing influences which will be destructive and disastrous to the very best hopes and interests of this country.

The First Lord of the Treasury (Mr. A. J. Balfour, Manchester, E.): I should not have thought it necessary or entirely for the convenience of the debate to have intervened if it were not that I find myself in opposition to the greater number of friends of mine who sit on these benches, and with whom I am in the habit of acting in the closest agreement on all political matters; and knowing, also, that the opinions I am about to express are not shared by a large number of gentlemen who sit on this side of the House, I am unwilling to give a vote without very briefly stating some of the reasons which influence me in taking that course. The debate has been an extremely able and interesting one, and the burden of the attack upon the Bill introduced by the hon. member for South Islington has been borne by two gentlemen sitting on the other side of the House, the right hon. gentleman who has just sat down, and the hon. member for Fife. The right hon. gentleman the member for Bury, though he made a very able and interesting speech, laboured under two or three disadvantages. He laboured, amongst other things, under the disadvantage of having replied to a speech which he had not heard, and he attacked my hon. friend who moved the second reading of this Bill on grounds which he never advanced at all. He supposed that this Bill was introduced in order to produce absolute equality and symmetry in the position of men and women in regard to politics. My hon. friend would have been guilty of the greatest absurdity if he had advanced arguments of that kind in support of a Bill which, on the very face of it, does not profess to produce that equality. And many of those who are going to support this Bill do not support it on any ground of abstract right or equality, or on any abstract right at all. We support it for practical reasons which I will endeavour shortly to state to the House. Another argument put forward by the member for Bury was, if he will permit me to say so, fundamentally inconsistent with the arguments advanced by the member for Fife. The right hon. gentleman drew a picture of what the condition of England would be when eleven million women had a vote, and only ten million men had a vote. He said—

> "You will then be under the subjection of women. Women will control the policy of this country, and we shall be a nation of women and children."

That implies that the women are all going to vote on one side and the men on the other, and that women would outvote the men. In other

words, it pre-supposes that there is a class distinction and cleavage between women and men in matters political which would put all the women on one side and all the men on the other. That is altogether and wholly inconsistent with the argument of the member for Fife, who told us that to consider this question as one of class distinction was altogether to misconceive the conditions of modern society. Turning from the right hon. gentleman to the learned gentleman behind him (Mr. Asquith), he gave us a very good Tory speech of the old tune upon the question of Reform Bills in general, and, in fact, there has been an unexpected vein of Toryism, or, at all events, what is described as Toryism by Liberal critics, in the speeches of gentlemen who sit on the opposite benches on this question. As the member for Dover (Mr. Wyndham) has pointed out, had the words "agricultural labourer" been substituted for "women," some of those speeches were such as might have been heard from the small knot of gentlemen who were opposed to the Reform Bill of 1885, and precisely the same arguments have been used with respect to the incompetence of the class to be admitted, and as to the interests of that class having been hitherto fully considered. These are arguments with which we are all familiar, and have been familiar from time immemorial, the only difference being that they have much less justification in the present case than, I think, they had on previous Reform Bills. The hon. and learned gentleman mentioned three points in which this particular alteration of the franchise differed from any previous alteration of the franchise that had ever been proposed. He said that in every previous case the class to be enfranchised had shown their very great anxiety to obtain the franchise, and that in this case no such anxiety had been shown. I differ from the hon. and learned gentleman. I think those who wished to be enfranchised have used the only methods they could use in the matter. That is to say, they have expressed their desire to obtain the vote on platforms and by public meetings, and by whatever other means were open to them. The hon. gentleman appears to think that there was a widespread desire on the part of agricultural labourers to claim the franchise in 1885. I do not believe the desire existed, and I am sure it was never demonstrated. I am sure it could not be demonstrated; there were no means of demonstrating it except the means which have been used in the present case—platform speeches, public meetings, petitions, votes, and resolutions. Then, Sir, the second point on which the hon. gentleman says this Reform Bill differs from every other Reform Bill is that the class to be enfranchised on this occasion are not capable of performing the duties of active citizenship as the classes which were previously enfranchised had been. What duties? So far as I know, the main one to which the hon. gentleman alluded, is that of fighting for their country. That duty cannot be performed with efficiency by gentlemen over 60 years of age. At all events, I am not aware that

the severest conscription in any country requires any person over 60 years of age to serve under any contingency whatever, and yet I do not think the hon. and learned gentleman desires to disfranchise them. The *posse comitatus* does not go out and fight the enemy; the enemy is fought by the disciplined forces of the country, and the chief duty of the ordinary citizen consists not in shouldering a rifle and going off to the frontier; it consists in paying the bill. That is a duty which the people desired to be enfranchised by this Bill can perform; it is a duty they are obliged to perform; and the mere fact that they cannot enrol themselves in volunteer corps does not appear to be an adequate reason for refusing them some control over the policy by which the foreign relations of our country are conducted and means of defence are to be secured. The third argument of the hon. and learned gentleman was that in the case of every previous Reform Bill there had been a grievance of the class to be enfranchised which required to be redressed, and which could not, and would not, be redressed until the franchise was given to them, and he pointed out with great force that in connection with each of the great Reform Bills the grievances of the enfranchised class came to the front. But when did they come to the front? Did they come to the front before the enfranchised class received the vote or after it? The hon. and learned gentleman has only to consider the list of cases he has himself given, and he will discover that it was only after the vote was conferred that it was discovered that this House really had a function to perform in modifying legislation in this country in the interests of the new class of voters. Now, Sir, leaving the speech of the hon. and learned gentleman, and referring to the general course of the debate, there is one argument which has been used which I desire directly to traverse. We have been told that to encourage women to take an active part in politics is degrading to the sex, and that received the assent of an hon. friend of mine below the Gangway. It has received the assent of almost every speaker to-day. I should think myself grossly inconsistent and most ungrateful if I supported that argument in this House, for I have myself taken the chair at Primrose League meetings, and urged to the best of my ability the women of this country to take a share in politics, and to do their best in their various localities to support the principles which I believe to be sound in the interests of the country. After that, to come down to the House, and say I have asked these women to do that which degrades them appears to me to be most absurd. I do not know much about these matters, but I understand that there are other associations of the kind of which women are members, and I have heard of a Liberal-Unionist Women's Association; I do not know if it has given my right hon. and learned friend the member for Bury (Sir H. James) that valuable assistance they are always ready to give. There is also, I think, a Women's Liberal Federation. I daresay the learned member for Fife (Mr. Asquith) has taken part in its meetings.

Mr. Asquith: Never.

Mr. McLaren (Cheshire, Crewe): Mrs. Gladstone is president.

Mr. A. J. Balfour: The House will understand that I do not wish to introduce personal questions at all, but I think I may take it that every section in this House is only too glad to use the services of women when they think they can profit by them, and it does not lie in the mouths of any of us to say that taking a part in framing the policy of the Empire is degrading to the sex. In any other department of human thought than politics such an argument would be described by no milder word than "cant." Cant it undoubtedly is. The argument which appealed most, I am convinced, to those who oppose this Bill is not an objection of this character, but the conviction—the ill-founded conviction, I think—that it must necessarily carry with it, as what they call a logical consequence, the result that women must have a seat in this House, in the Cabinet, and should in all respects, so far as public offices are concerned, be placed on an equality with men. I do not believe a word of that argument. I can quite agree that it is very difficult to stop in such a course—to fix an arbitrary point and say there you will stop—if the arguments for going further are precisely those which made you travel thus far. The point, therefore, for us to consider is, Can the arguments that are brought forward in favour of this Bill be also brought forward in favour of women having a seat in this House? No, Sir; they cannot. There is no fundamental distinction between giving women the right to vote in municipal affairs and giving them the right to vote in Imperial affairs, and yet, though there is no distinction, you have resisted the change for 20 years, and according to the hon. member for Fife, you are going to resist it for 20 years more. How easy it would be to resist a change which involved a new departure—a new principle! Everybody must assent to the proposition of the hon. gentlemen the member for Flintshire (Mr. S. Smith) that women cannot engage on an equality with men in a large number of professions. They cannot; and I quite agree that the profession of politics is one of these. In my opinion women could not with advantage to themselves, or to the community, take part in the labours of a great deliberative assembly like this. That is a reason for not giving them a seat in this House, but is it a reason for not giving them an opportunity of expressing an opinion and giving a vote every four or five years? I do not know what the average duration of Parliament has been during the last 100 years, but I think in the future it will probably not be so long. If you want to prevent further progress you ought to stop at a point where defence is possible, but at the present point logical defence is not possible. Therefore, those who are greatly moved by logical consistency should, I think, move on till they come to a point where further change could be successfully resisted. The debate has now almost reached its natural termination, and all I will say is that the matter which surprises me

in this debate is the position taken up by hon. gentlemen opposite. I understand that part of their programme is a great alteration of the franchise, in spite of what fell from the hon. member for Aberdeen (Mr. Bryce). I understand one plank of the Newcastle platform was one man one vote. When that is brought forward I believe we shall have all the old flesh-and-blood arguments urged again, all the old arguments for political liberty, and the whole train of commonplaces again thrust before us for our acceptance, by which each successive change in the franchise has been accepted, and yet the very gentlemen who say they are going to bring forward that programme at this moment absolutely refuse to admit the validity of a single one of these arguments when they are directed towards enfranchising not the least worthy class of the community, but what I believe to be one of the worthiest classes. You will give a vote to a man who contributes nothing to taxation but what he pays on his beer, while you refuse enfranchisement to a woman because she is a woman, whatever her contribution to the State may be. She has sufficient ability to look after lighting and paving, but is not so fitted to look after the interests of the Empire as a man who cannot point out on the map the parts of the world of which that Empire is composed. I think from all I can hear that this Bill is not likely to be successful on this occasion; but, depend upon it, if any further alteration of the franchise is brought forward as a practical measure, this qnestion will again arise, menacing and ripe for solution, and it will not be possible for this House to set it aside as a mere speculative plan advocated by a body of faddists. Then you will have to deal with the problem of woman suffrage, and to deal with it in a complete fashion.

Question put.

The House divided:—Ayes 152; Noes 175.—(Div. List, No. 86.)

ANALYSIS OF

THE DIVISION LIST.

Wednesday, 27th April, 1892.

Numb. 86.

Parliamentary Franchise (Extension to Women) Bill. —Order for Second Reading read;

Motion made, and question proposed, "That the Bill be now read a second time."

Amendment proposed, to leave out the word "now," and at the end of the question to add the words "upon this day six months."—(*Mr. Samuel Smith.*)

Question put, "That the word 'now' stand part of the question."—The House *divided;* Ayes 152, Noes 175.

List of members who voted for the Bill.

CONSERVATIVES.

Addison, John
Anstruther, Col. Lloyd (Suffolk)
Balfour, Rt. Hon. A. J. (Manch'r)
Balfour, Gerald William (Leeds)
Banes, Major George Edward
Beach, W. W. Bramston (Hants.)
Bentinck, Lord H. C. (Norfolk)
Borthwick, Sir Algernon
Bridgeman, Col. Hon. Fran. C.
Compton, Francis (New Forest)
Cubitt, Rt. Hon. George
Dimsdale, Baron Robert
Dixon-Hartland, Fred Dixon
Elcho, Lord
Finch, George H.
FitzGerald, R. Uniacke Penrose
Gathorne-Hardy, Hn. A. (Suss'x)
Gedge, Sydney
Giles, Alfred
Goldsworthy, Major-General
Gorst, Rt. Hon. Sir John Eldon
Grimston, Viscount
Grotrian, Frederick Brent
Hamilton, Col. Chas. E. (South'k.)

Heathcote, Captain Edwards-
Heaton, John Henniker
Hervey, Lord Francis
Hill, Rt. Hon. Lord Arthur (Down)
Hill, A. Staveley (Staffordshire)
Holloway, George
Howorth, Henry Hoyle
Hozier, James Henry Cecil
Hughes, Colonel Edwin
Isaacs, Lewis Henry
Isaacson, Frederick Wootton
Johnston, William
Kimber, Henry
King, Henry Seymour
Knightley, Sir Rainald
Lafone, Alfred
Lawrence, Sir Trevor (Surrey)
Llewellyn, Evan Henry
Mallock, Richard
Maxwell, Sir Herbert E.
Northcote, Hon. Sir H. Stafford
Norton, Robert
Pearson, Sir Charles John
Pomfret, William Pomfret
Puleston, Sir John Henry
Rankin, James
Reed, Henry Byron (Bradford)
Rollit, Sir Albert
Round, James
Russell, Sir George (Berkshire)
Seton-Karr, Henry
Sidebottom, William (Derbysh.)
Smith, Abel (Herts)
Stanley, Edward James
Stokes, Sir George Gabriel
Temple, Sir Richard
Tyler, Sir Henry Whatley
Vincent, Col. Chas. E. Howard
Walrond, Sir William Hood
Whitmore, Charles Algernon
Wolmer, Viscount
Wood, Nicholas
Wortley, Charles Beilby Stuart-
Wright, H. Smith (Nottingham)
Wyndham, George

UNIONISTS.

Corbett, Archibald C. (Glasgow)
Courtney, Rt. Hon. Leonard H.
Crossman, General Sir William
Fry, Lewis (Bristol)
Mildmay, Francis Bingham
Russell, T. W. (Tyrone)
Thorburn, Walter
Villiers, Rt. Hon. C. Pelham
Watkin, Sir Edward W.

LIBERALS.

Acland, A. H. Dyke (Yorks)
Balfour, J. Spencer (Burnley)
Beaufoy, Mark Hanbury
Buchanan, Thomas Ryburn
Cameron, Charles (Glasgow)
Channing, Francis Allston
Clark, Dr. G. B. (Caithness-sh.)
Coleridge, Hon. Bernard
Conybeare, Chas. A. Vansittart
Dillwyn, Lewis Llewelyn
Esslemont, Peter
Farquharson, Dr. R. (Aberd'sh.)
Gane, Lawrence
Gaskell, Chas. Geo. Milnes-
Gourley, Edward Temperley
Graham, Robert Cunninghame
Grey, Sir Edward (Northumb.)
Haldane, Richard Burdon
Hanbury-Tracy, Hon. F. S. A.
Holden, Isaac (Keighley)
Hunter, Wm. Alex. (Aberdeen)
Illingworth, Alfred
Keay, John Seymour
Lawson, Sir Wilfrid (Cumb'land)
Leake, Robert
Lockwood, Frank
Logan, John William
M'Lagan, Peter
McLaren, W. S. B.
Manfield, Moses Philip

Montagu, Samuel
Morgan, Octavius V. (Battersea)
Morgan, W. Pritchard (Merthyr)
Philipps, John Wynford
Plowden, Sir William Chichele
Randell, David
Roberts, John Bryn (Eifion)
Roby, Henry John
Rowntree, Joshua
Stuart, James (Shoreditch)
Summers, William
Thomas, Alfred (Glamorgan, E.)
Weston, Sir Joseph Dodge
Wilson, John (Lanark)
Woodall, William
Wright, Caleb (Lanc. S.W.)

NATIONALISTS.

Abraham, William (Limerick)
Leahy, James (Kildare)
M'Carthy, Justin (Londonderry)
M'Kenna, Sir Joseph Neal
Nolan, Colonel (Galway, N.)
O'Brien, William (Cork, N.E.)
Sullivan, Donal (Westmeath)
Webb, Alfred

Members who voted for the Bill, whose opinions were not previously known, or who were formerly against Women's Suffrage.

CONSERVATIVES.

Bain, Sir James
Bigwood, James
Jebb, Richard Claverhouse
Kerans, Frederick Harold
Madden, Dodgson H. (Dub. U.)
Morrell, George Herbert
Pearson, Sir Chas.
Rentoul, James Alexander
Robinson, Brooke (Dudley)
Stokes, Sir G. G.

UNIONIST.

Lubbock, Rt. Hon. Sir John

LIBERALS.

Birrell, Augustine
Broad, Harrington Evans
Cozens-Hardy, Herbert Hardy
Dunn, William
Gaskell, Chas. Geo.
Maden, John H. (Lanc. N.E.)
Rowlands, W. Bowen (Card'sh.)
Thomas, Abel (Carmarthen, E.)

NATIONALISTS.

Harrison, Henry
O'Brien, Patrick (Monaghan)
Quinn, Thomas

Members who voted against the Bill.

CONSERVATIVES.

Baden-Powell, Sir Geo. Smyth
Bailey, Sir Joseph R.
Barry, A. H. Smith (Hunts.)
Barry, Francis Tress (Windsor)
Bartley, George C. T.
Bartelott, Sir Walter
Baumann, Arthur Antony
Beckett, Ernest William
Bethell, Commander
Blundell, Col. Hen. Blundell H.

Bonsor, Henry Cosmo Orme
Boulnois, Edmund
Bristowe, Thomas Lynn
Brodrick, Hon. St. John
Bruce, Lord Henry (Wiltshire)
Burdett-Coutts, W.
Campbell, James A. (Glas. Univ.)
Carmarthen, Marquess of
Chaplin, Rt. Hon. Henry
Charrington, Spencer
Clarke, Sir Edward (Plymouth)
Cooke, C. W. Radcliffe
Cross, Hon. Wm. H. (Liverpool)
Curzon, Hn. Geo. N. (Lanc. S.W.)
De Lisle, Edwin
Douglas, Rt. Hon. A. Ackers-
Ewing, Sir Archibald Orr
Fergusson, Rt. Hn. Sir J. (Manc'r)
Green, Sir Edward
Gunter, Colonel
Hall, Alexander Wm. (Oxford)
Hamilton, Rt. Hn. Lord G. (Midx.)
Hamley, Gen. Sir Edw. Bruce
Hardcastle, Edward (Salford)
Hinckes, Harry Tichborne
Hoare, Edw. Brodie (Hampstead)
Hunt, Frederick Seager
Jackson, Rt. Hon. Wm. Lawies
Jarvis, Alexander Weston
Kelly, John R.
Knatchbull-Hugessen, H. (Kent)
Lambert, Cowley (Islington)
Lowther, Jas. W. (Cumberland)
Maclean, James Mackenzie
Makins, Colonel
Matthews, Rt. Hon. Henry
Mowbray, Rt. Hon. Sir J. (Oxfd. U.)
Murdoch, Charles Townshend
Newark, Viscount
Paget, Sir Richard Horner
Penn, John
Penton, Capt. Frederick Thomas
Plunket, Rt. Hon. David R.
Powell, Francis Sharp
Sidebotham, J. W. (Cheshire)
Stephens, Henry Charles
Talbot, John Gilbert
Theobald, James
Tollemache, Henry James
Watson, James
Weymouth, Viscount
Wilson, Sir Samuel (Portsm'th)
Young, Charles Edward Baring

UNIONISTS.

Barclay, James William
Baring, Viscount
Barnes, Alfred
Beaumont, H. F. (Yorks. W.R.)
Biddulph, Michael
Bright, John A. (Birmingham)
Caldwell, J.
Cavendish, Victor Christian W.
Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. J. (Birm.)
Chamberlain, J. Austen (Worc'r.)
Chamberlain, Rich. (Islington)
Ebrington, Viscount
Finlay, Robert
Fitzwilliam, Hon. W. H. W.
Goldsmid, Sir Julian
Gurdon, Robert Thornhagh
Hobhouse, Henry
Rothschild, Baron F. James de
Sutherland, Sir Thos. (Greenock)
Taylor, Francis

LIBERALS.

Austin, John
Asquith, Herbert H.
Barran, John
Beaumont, W. B. (Northum.)
Bolton, Jos. Cheney (Stirlingsh.)
Bolton, T. D. (Derbyshire)
Bolton, Thomas H. (St. Pancras)
Brand, Hon. Arthur George
Broadhurst, Henry
Brunner, John Tomlinson
Bryce, James
Buxton, Sydney Charles

Campbell-Bannerman, Rt. Hn. H.
Causton, Richard Knight
Cavan, Earl of
Cobb, Henry Peyton
Craig, James
Crawford, Donald
Cremer, William Randal
Davey, Sir Horace
Ellis, James (Leicestershire)
Evans, Francis H. (Southampton)
Evans, Samuel T. (Glamorgan)
Ferguson, R. C. Munro (Leith)
Flower, Cyril
Fowler, Rt. Hon. Henry H.
Gardner, Herbert
Gladstone, Rt. Hon. W. E.
Gladstone, Herbert J. (Leeds)
Gower, Geo. Granville Leveson
Grove, Sir Thomas Fraser
Gully, William Court
Harcourt, Rt. Hon. Sir William
Hingley, Benjamin
Howell, George
James, Hn. Walter H. (Gatesh'd)
Labouchere, Henry
Lambert, George (Devon)
Lawson, H. L. W. (St. Pancras)
Lefevre, Rt. Hon. George Shaw
Leon, Herbert Samuel
Lyell, Leonard
M'Ewan, William
Mappin, Sir Frederick Thorpe
Marjoribanks, Rt. Hon. Edward
Morgan, Rt. Hn. G. O. (Denbighs)
Morgan, J. Lloyd (Carmarthen)
Morley, Arnold (Nottingham)
Morton, Alpheus Cleophas
Mundella, Rt. Hon. Anthony John
Palmer, Sir Charles Mark
Paulton, James Mellor
Pease, Alfred E. (York)
Pease, Henry Fell (Yorks. N.R.)
Pease, Sir Joseph W. (Durham)
Picton, James Allanson
Portman, Hon. Edwin B.
Potter, Thomas Bayley
Priestley, Briggs
Reed, Sir Edw. James (Cardiff)
Reid, Robt. Threshie (Dumfries)
Rendel, Stuart
Robertson, Edmund
Robinson, Thomas (Gloucester)
Roe, Thomas
Roscoe, Sir H. Enfield
Rowlands, James (Finsbury)
Samuelson, Sir B. (Oxford, N.)
Samuelson, G. Blundell (Gloucs.)
Smith, Samuel (Flint)
Stern, Sydney James
Stevenson, Jas. C. (S. Shields)
Waddy, Samuel Danks
Warmington, Cornelius M.
Watt, Hugh
Whitbread, Samuel
Will, John Shiress
Williamson, Steph. (Kilm'nock)
Winterbotham, Arthur Brend
Woodhead, Joseph

NATIONALISTS.

Campbell, Henry (Fermanagh)
Cox, Joseph Richard
Fitzgerald, J. Gubbins (Longf'd.)
Knox, Edmund Francis Vesey
O'Connor, John (Tipperary)
O'Kelly, James
Tanner, Charles Kearns

Counting the tellers 154 voted for the Bill and 177 against it. Mr. John Morley and Sir George Trevelyan were absent unpaired, though Mr. Morley was present during a large part of the debate. There were 25 pairs, and Messrs. C. H. Wilson, Burt and Fenwick (Liberals), and Mr. Fraser Mackintosh (Unionist), desired to pair in its favour, but were unable to find other members to pair with them. Including these, the totals are 183 for the Bill and 202 against it. Politically these are divided as follows :—

	For the Bill.	Against the Bill.
Liberals	59	86
Conservatives	94	82
Liberal Unionists	18	27
Nationalists	6	3
Parnellites	6	4
	183	202

Conservatives Against

Sir M. Hicks-Beach
Lord R. Churchill
Mr. E. Stanhope
Mr. W. Long
Sir H. Fletcher
Mr. J. Gathorne-Hardy
Mr. R. G. Mowbray
Mr. Brookfield
Mr. Noble
Mr. R. G. Webster
Mr. Wraughton
Mr. Cornwallis
Mr. Darling
Mr. Tomlinson
Mr. Macartney
Mr. Fulton
Col. Sandy

Conservatives For

Sir W. Marriott
Sir E. Lechmere
Col. Cotton Jodrell
Col. Eyre
Captain Grice Hutchinson
Sir E. Birkbeck
Mr. S. Hoare
Mr. Forwood
Mr. Muntz
Mr. Duncombe
Mr. Halsey
Mr. Bayley White
Mr. Agg Gardner
Mr. Ainslie
Mr. A. S. Hill
Mr. W. H. Fisher

Liberal Unionists Against

Mr. Coghill
Mr. Wiggin
Sir S. Crossley

Liberal Unionists For

Mr. Collings
Mr. T. Lea
Mr. Pitt Lewis
Mr. W. Cornwallis West
Mr. G. Dixon

Gladstonians Against	Gladstonians For
Mr. Charles Acland	Mr. Stansfeld
Mr. P. Stanhope	Mr. Mather
Mr. Asher	Mr. Storey
Mr. Wayman	
Sir U. Kay Shuttleworth	

Naticnalist (Parnellite), Mr. Maguire.

ANALYSIS OF THE DIVISION LIST.

(Pairs and Tellers included.)

	IN FAVOUR.				AGAINST.			
	Known Friends.	Unknown or Doubtful.	Changed Votes.	Total.	Known Opponents.	Unknown or Doubtful.	Changed Votes.	Total.
Conservatives . .	73	16	3	92	40	35	9	84
Liberal Unionists .	13	5	—	18	16	10	1	27
Gladstonian Liberals	43	14	—	57	31	31	22	84
Nationalists . . .	7	5	—	12	—	6	1	7
Totals. . .	136	40	3	179	87	82	33	202

SUMMARY OF DEBATES ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

				Votes for.*			Votes against.*				* Tellers and Pairs included.
				Lib.	Con.	Total.	Lib.	Con.	Total.	Majority.	
1867	May 20th	Amendment to Reform Bill, Mr. J. S. Mill . ..	..	66	15	81	80	122	202	121	Against the amendment.
1870	May 4th	Bill, Mr. Jacob Bright ..	L.	93	31	124	52	39	91	33	In favour of the Bill.
„	May 12th	„ „ „ „ ..	..	79	40	119	150	94	244	126	In Committee, when a strong pressure was brought by Mr. Gladstone to bear, so as to rally a full House against its further stages.
1871	May 13th	„ „ „ „ ..	..	100	59	159	123	105	228	69	Against the Bill.
1872	May 1st	„ „ „ „ ..	..	113	50	163	123	119	242	79	„ „
1873	April 30th	„ „ „ „ ..	..	121	51	172	123	116	229	67	„ „
1874	..	„ Mr. Forsyth (Q.C.) ..	C.	..	..	*Bill withdrawn.*					
1875	April 27th	„ „ „ „ ..	..	99	71	170	76	129	205	35	„ „
1876	April 26th	„ „ „ „ ..	..	94	67	161	88	161	249	88	„ „
1877	June 6th	„ Mr. Jacob Bright ..	L.	..	..	*Bill talked out.*					
1878	June 19th	„ Mr. Leonard Courtney..	L.	110	45	155	76	159	235	80	„ „
1879	March 7th	Resolution, „ „	..	74	29	103†	70	147	217†	114	Against the resolution. † Exclusive of tellers and pairs.
1880	..	No Bill brought in this year.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	Year of the General Election.
1881	..	Resolution, Mr. Hugh Mason	L.	..	..	*Postponed.*					
1882	..	„ „ „ „	..	..	..	„	„				
1883	July 6th	„ „ „ „	..	132	29	161	78	99	177	16	Against the resolution.
1884	June 10th	Amendment to Reform Bill, moved by Mr. Woodall ..	L.	39	98	137	245	27	27	136	Against the amendment.
1885	..	Bill „ „ ..	..	*Day absorbed by Government business*							
1886	Feb. 18th	„ „ „ and on Mr. Woodall accepting office, Mr. Courtney took charge. A division, whether the Bill should be read took place on February 18th..	..	103	58	161	69	35	104	57	In favour of proceeding with the Bill.
		After which the Bill itself	..	PASSED WITHOUT A DIVISION.					..	..	It did not, however, reach the stage of Committee before the dissolution.
1887	..	Bill introduced by Mr. Woodall	..	*Days taken by Government business.*							
1888	..	„ „ „ „	..								
1889	..	„ „ „ „	..								
1890	..	Resolution by Mr. McLaren	L.								
1891	April 30th	Bill by Mr. Woodall— Debate, whether the day be kept	..	G.L. 27	Nat. 2	L.U. 13	C. 117	159	G.L. 90	Nat. 23	L.U. 25	Con. 78	218	59	Against retaining the day. The Bill was therefore discharged.
1892	April 27th	Bill by Sir A. Rollit	C.	53	11	13	75	152	78	7	24	66	175	23	Against the second reading.

CENTRAL NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

FOUNDED 1872.

The object of the Society is to obtain the Parliamentary Franchise for Women on the same conditions as it is, or may be, granted to men.

The Society seeks to achieve this object—

1. By acting as a centre for the collection and diffusion of information with regard to the progress of the movement in all parts of the country.
2. By holding Public Meetings in support of the repeal of the Electoral Disabilities of women.
3. By the publication of Pamphlets, Leaflets and other Literature bearing upon the question.

I approve of the objects of this Society and wish to add my name to the List of Members, I enclose a

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or
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