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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

THIRD ANNUAL  
MEETING IN EDINBURGH

IN

QUEEN STREET HALL,

ON 22D JANUARY 1872,

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

THE EDINBURGH BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY  
FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

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THIRD ANNUAL MEETING

IN FAVOUR OF

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,

HELD IN

QUEEN STREET HALL, EDINBURGH,

JANUARY 22. 1872.

A PUBLIC MEETING was held in Queen Street Hall, on Monday, 22d January, in favour of conferring the Electoral Franchise on Women who are qualified as being owners or occupiers of lands or houses in their own right. On the platform were—Sir Robert Anstruther, Bart., M.P.; Mr Duncan M'Laren, M.P.; Mr John Miller, M.P.; Dr Lyon Playfair, M.P.; Professors Kelland, Masson, and Calderwood; Mr W. A. Brown, advocate; Mr M'Lennan, advocate; Bailie Marshall; Mr John Cox, Mr R. Cox, W.S., Mr Alexander Nicolson, Mr W. M'Crie, Mr David Pryde, Councillors Millar and Bladworth, Mr Stephen Wellstood, Mr James Clark, Mr Ord of Muirhouselaw; and a number of ladies, including Mrs M'Laren, Mrs Ord, Mrs Clark, Mrs M'Crie, Mrs Warren; Misses Taylour of Belmont, Wigham, Hunter, M'Laren, Burton, Kirkland, and Walker; Mrs Robertson and Miss Shepherd, Paisley, &c.

On the motion of PROFESSOR KELLAND, Sir Robert Anstruther was called to the chair.

The CHAIRMAN said it would require few words from him to convince the meeting that the subject they were met to discuss was one which demanded their serious attention. From the first time this subject was mooted in Parliament, he felt himself compelled by a sense of justice to give it his cordial support—(applause)—and for this simple reason, that it appeared to be just. He did not trouble himself with abstruse questions regarding what might follow the enfranchisement of women. He dealt with this question, as he was accustomed to deal with most other public questions, in a very simple fashion. He asked himself whether the thing proposed to be done

was just and right; and if he conceived it to be just and right, he voted for it, and left the consequences to take care of themselves. (Applause.) It appeared to him that it was singularly appropriate that a subject of this sort should be discussed in this city. Edinburgh had become famous for the education of women, and he might also say famous for the want of education of women. (Laughter.) Within the last year he had been delighted and surprised at the magnificent schemes which had been carried out for the endowment of the schools under the charge of the Merchant Company; and the chairman of that Company had been praised by all sections of the community in England and Scotland, and all the civilised world he might say. (A Voice—"Question.") It must be a great satisfaction to that gentleman, and those who acted with him, to know that their example had been held up as worthy to be followed by all educational reformers. There was another subject connected with the education of women—he referred to the failure of the lady medical students in Edinburgh to obtain satisfaction and justice at the hands of the University Court. It was not his province to enlarge on that question, but he did say that it was with surprise and regret that those who were interested in the University of Edinburgh had seen the authorities failing to implement what was considered to be their honourable promise to those students. (Applause and hisses.) He did not hesitate to say they had the sympathy of all those who were interested in the medical profession; and it would be very easy for him to demonstrate what, in his opinion, was the folly of those distinguished gentlemen. That would be foreign to his purpose. He would only say this, that when they found in a free country men behaving so unfairly to women, it was high time that they should be given more power to speak and act for themselves. (Cheers, and a hiss.) Sir Robert then proceeded to refer to the debate which took place in the House of Commons early last spring on the very interesting question which they were to discuss that evening. That was a debate, he said, of a very remarkable kind. Those who were interested in the enfranchisement of women might contrast it very favourably with the debate and division which took place on the subject the year before. Among the speeches there was, above all, that of the Prime Minister. It was not a very long speech, it was not a speech in which he declared his opinion in their favour; but, if he was not very much mistaken, it was a speech which caused them to see the beginning of the end of their great movement. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) Before, however, alluding to that speech, he would refer to one or two others. The first speech hostile to their movement was made by Mr Bouverie, the member for Kilmarnock. It was a speech characterised by great want of taste, and one which, had there been time, might have been very easily answered. Mr Bouverie did not hesitate in that speech to bring very serious charges against some very distinguished people—against men who were not in the House to defend themselves. He said—"To his mind, his hon. friend (Mr Jacob Bright) struck at the very foundation of society—namely, the family. Was the head of the family the man or the woman? Was the head of the

family to be the master of the family, or was he not?" Then he went on to say that he would quote a passage from Mr Mill:—"If married life were all that it might be expected to be, looking to the laws alone, society would be a hell upon earth." And again—"The law of servitude in marriage is a monstrous contradiction to all the principles of the modern world. . . . There remain no legal slaves except the mistress of every house." Mr Mill didn't say there a word against the sanctity of marriage; what he objected to, and most reasonably, was the law under which woman was compelled to be the absolute slave of her husband. Upon that Mr Bouverie founded this very unwarrantable remark—"Such were the views on which were founded the operations of those persons outside the House who asked for an extension of the franchise to women owners of property." It would be impertinence on his (Sir Robert's) part to attempt to defend Mr Mill against such charges as these; and his whole married life gave a triumphant answer against any charges made against him by Mr Bouverie. And they with him would acquit all others interested in this movement of anything like the charges that Mr Bouverie would there desire to bring against them. Another speech was that of Mr James, the member for Taunton, who complained that if they gave the franchise to women, they would then be eligible to sit in the House of Commons, and, of course, to be representatives in the House of Peers, act on juries, and sit upon the Episcopal benches. It appeared to him that that was straining the matter a little too far. He never heard any desire on the part of any lady to become a bishop. He did not know that a bishop's was such an enviable position, although he had a seat in the House of Lords; nor had he heard, on their part, any claim or desire to be admitted members of the House of Commons. In principle it was perfectly true, if it were competent for women to sit on school-boards in London, comprising forty-nine members, it might be competent for them to sit in the House of Commons. It would enliven their debates and society very much. His answer to Mr James would be, that if it were objectionable that they should assert these claims, they could exclude them by statute. One of Mr James' statements was, that if women were endowed with the franchise they could not be expected to give an unbiassed vote, the result of their political convictions. There was no doubt that, if true, was a very serious charge; but it proved rather too much. If they refused to enfranchise women because they could not be expected to give an unbiassed vote, they ought to disfranchise all men who did not give such a vote. It was matter of notoriety that a large number of the enfranchised classes were not in a position to exercise an independent opinion of themselves; and they had no scruple to give them a vote. His firm belief was, that so far from not giving an unbiassed vote, they would, quite as much as any class of the constituency, desire that their votes should be used for the general and social welfare. (Laughter.) Mr James hoped that the House would not be led away by itinerant and restless ladies; but he seemed to forget that there had been itinerant and restless men

who had accomplished great things—there was hardly any reform effected in the country but had been accomplished by agitation. Mr James winded up by imploring the House not to attempt to upset what nature had ordained and custom had ratified as the natural place for women in the State. If nature had ordained it—he presumed he meant the God of nature—and custom had ratified it, possibly they should have nothing further to say; but he adduced no proof that God intended unequal laws passed by men as against women. (Applause.) In concluding, Sir Robert alluded to the speech of Mr Gladstone, which he said indicated the working of his mind. They knew very well that when that distinguished man took anything in hand he carried it through. They had seen him take one or two things in hand since he became Prime Minister of England. They had all succeeded; and he thought they might fairly hope that if Mr Gladstone would devote his mind candidly and honestly to the consideration of this question it would succeed also. “We have done wisely,” he said, “on the whole, in giving both the franchise and the right of sitting on the school board to women. Then comes a question with regard to Parliament, and we have to ask ourselves whether we shall or shall not go farther. Now I do go as far as to admit that my hon. friend has a presumptive case for some change in the law; although, for my part, I will go no farther until I know more of the nature of the change to be effected. . . . I admit there is more presumptive ground for change in the law than some of the opponents of the measure are disposed to own.” Then further on he said—“I cannot help thinking that, for some reason or other, there are various important particulars in which women obtain much less than justice under our social arrangements;” and “I am by no means sure that these inequalities may not have an indirect connection with a state of law in which the balance is generally cast too much against women, and too much in favour of men.” When they considered by whom these words were spoken, he thought they might, without presumption, take it that Mr Gladstone was turning his mind towards this matter seriously. In the closing sentence of his speech, Mr Gladstone said that although he could not vote for the bill of last year without some modification, yet he was not “sorry to think that some activity of thought in these busy days of ours is directing itself to the subject of the relations which actually prevail between men and women; and if it should be found possible to arrange a safe and well-adjusted alteration of the law as to political power, the man who shall attain that object, and who shall see his purpose carried onward to its consequences in a more just arrangement of the provisions of other laws bearing upon the condition and welfare of women, will, in my opinion, be a real benefactor to his country.” As far as he (Sir Robert) could render Jacob Bright any assistance, he would be glad to do it, and hoped that those present, by their conduct and their resolutions, would give all the assistance in their power to aid him in passing his measure through the House of Commons. (Applause.) Apologies for absence had been received from Sir John Murray of Philiphaugh, Professor Caird, and the Rev. Dr Pulsford. A telegram has also been received

from Miss Robertson, who was to have been one of the speakers; and Professor Hodgson wrote:—“If I had any leisure and strength for public meetings not connected with my immediate duties, I would certainly be present at the meeting this evening. The more I think of the subject the more surprised I am that, all other legal qualifications for the suffrage being present, sex should be made a disqualification. Of course, the advocates of the present one-sided and unjust state of affairs will require women to shew reason why they should be admitted to the franchise; but I think as regards principle the advocates of the present system are bound to shew why women should be excluded. That the admission of women to the rights of voting would powerfully help to abolish what of male tyranny, injustice, and cruelty yet remain in our legislation and social intercourse, I am satisfied; and I have not yet heard or read of any valid argument against it. I trust that this meeting will greatly aid the movement. It is well that both the members for the burgh and the member for the university are warmly in its favour.” (Applause.)

Miss WIGHAM, one of the secretaries, then read the annual report of the Edinburgh Branch of the Society:—

“In presenting our Annual Report for the year 1871 to our friends and supporters, we would claim their continued and increased sympathy and help, in the hope that many more anniversaries will not come round before our efforts in this matter shall have arrived at their legitimate conclusion, being crowned with success. Reasonable objections to our claims cannot well be substantiated, and unreasoning prejudice is fast dying away before the advance of general intelligence.

“Our operations during the past year have been similar in character to those adopted during previous years, but we have to report an increase in amount of work done, and a proportional amount of successful result.

“The holding of public meetings has again been adopted to considerable extent. The series commenced with the great Annual Meeting in the Music Hall, on the 12th January 1870, presided over by our much honoured senior member, Mr Duncan M'Laren, and aided by the presence and advocacy of Mr John Stuart Mill, and many other influential friends of women's suffrage. This was followed, during the year, by sixty public meetings held in different parts of the country. These were generally presided over by the chief magistrate or some other influential citizen of the towns in which they were held: and from nearly all of these, petitions were voted and signed by the chairman in support of Mr Jacob Bright's Bill.

“We have to express our obligations to Mrs Fawcett for coming to Scotland, and delivering able and elegant lectures in St Andrews, Stirling, and Paisley; and we must again record our thanks to Miss Taylour, for her most industrious, gratuitous, and efficient advocacy of women's suffrage, while delivering upwards of fifty addresses in many

towns of Scotland. On nearly all of these occasions, the lecturer was accompanied by a member of our committee, who succeeded in organising allied committees to the number of twenty-four, to co-operate with our Association, and to promote the signing of petitions to parliament, and in other ways to give efficient aid in the future agitation.

"On the 13th of February 1871, Mr Jacob Bright's Women's Electoral Disabilities Bill was introduced into the House of Commons; besides his name, on the back of the Bill were also the names of Mr E. B. Eastwick and Dr Lyon Playfair. On the 3d of May, Mr Jacob Bright, in a powerful speech which called forth the warm commendation of the Premier, moved the second reading of the Bill. The motion was seconded by Mr Eastwick, and supported by Lord John Manners, Dr Lyon Playfair, and Mr Ward Hunt. The arguments used by these gentlemen, it would seem to us, must convince every candid mind of the justice of the cause they so ably and generously advocate; and for their advocacy we would record our heartfelt thanks.

"The opposition was conducted by Mr Bouverie, Mr Scourfield, Mr Beresford Hope, Mr Newdegate, and Mr James, and to the speeches of these gentlemen we may refer for all the objections that can possibly be raised against women's suffrage—not a very convincing array truly!

"Mr Gladstone spoke carefully yet candidly on the question, reviewed the arguments on both sides, admitted that the 'mover of the Bill had a presumptive case for some change;' 'that there was more presumptive ground for some change in the law than most of the opponents of the measure are disposed to own;' alluded to the fact that there is a progressive increase in the number of self-dependent women, and that they approach the task of providing for their own subsistence under greater difficulties than attach to their more powerful competitors; and that there are various important particulars in which women obtain much less than justice under social arrangements. He added, 'I am by no means certain that these inequalities may not have an indirect connection with the state of law in which the balance is generally cast too much against women, and too much in favour of men.' He touched on several points wherein the law does *less than justice* to women, and concluded by stating that he was not prepared to vote for the Bill in its present state. He added, 'I am not sorry to think that some activity of thought in these busy days of ours is directing itself to the subject of the relations which actually prevail between men and women; and if it should be found possible to arrange a safe and well-adjusted alteration of the law as to political power, the man who shall attain that object, and who shall see his purpose carried onward to its consequences in a more just arrangement of the provisions of other laws bearing upon the condition and welfare of women will, in my opinion, be a real benefactor to his country.' Mr Gladstone did not (as in 1870) vote against the Bill!

"On the question being put, there appeared for the second reading, 151; against it, 209; majority against the Bill, 58.

"Although numerically we seem to have lost, the analyses of the division gives many encouraging circumstances, a few of which we quote, as they cannot fail to be of historical interest. The Bill was supported by 96 Liberals and 55 Conservatives, including four members of the late Government, Mr Disraeli, Mr Corry, Mr Ward Hunt, and Lord John Manners. Out of the 151 who voted for the Bill, 42 were new supporters; of these, 20 were Liberal and 22 Conservative. Seventeen members who voted against the Bill in 1870 voted for it last session. Five others who voted against Mr Mill's motion in 1867, voted with Mr Bright in 1871; so that out of the 42 new adherents, 22 were former opponents. Against this, we must notice the defection of three members who voted for the Bill in 1870, and against it in 1871. The majority which threw out the Bill contained 115 Liberals and 102 Conservatives. The five great towns which return each three members to Parliament, give undivided support to the Bill. There is no other political or social question which secures the unanimous support of the representatives of these large towns. Out of their 15 votes, 12 were recorded in its favour in May last, and one adverse vote was explained as having been given under a mistake, the other two were neutral. Of the constituencies, 22 gave their full vote of two each for the Bill; 61 gave it their full vote of one each; and 38 constituencies have given each one vote for the Bill, their other vote being neutral; so that 125 constituencies are now ranged on the side of the Bill against 100 in 1870.

"The total number of members now in the House of Commons who have voted or paired in favour of women's suffrage is 202. For the Bill, counting tellers and pairs, on 5th May, there were 159, against it, 228, and absent, 271; of the Scotch members, 25 voted for the Bill, 13 against it, and 22 were absent, the Scotch members having thus declared themselves as two to one in favour of women's suffrage. During the session of 1870, 622 petitions signed by 186,976 persons were presented to the House of Commons in favour of women's suffrage. Of these petitions, 286 were sent from Scotland, including 10 from the Town Councils of the most influential cities and burghs.

"We desire to express our sincere thanks to all the members who voted for the Bill, and especially to Mr Jacob Bright, for so ably and vigorously introducing and conducting the question. He has agreed again to bring in his Bill early next session, and we earnestly hope he will be supported from without even more largely than in past years, to shew a sense of gratitude to himself, as well as a strenuous determination to press for a successful issue to this year's struggle.

"The exercise of the municipal franchise by women in England is a useful illustration of the advantage of women voting at elections. To Scotland this act of justice has not yet been extended, but it is probable

the greater will include the less, and the claim for Parliamentary representation will include that for Municipal representation also.

"The important position which the question of women's suffrage has now assumed, has called for the organisation of a representative society in London to watch over the question. This Central National Society numbers among its members forty members of Parliament, and a long list of the most influential names. All local associations throughout the kingdom are invited to take part, by their representatives, in the deliberations of this society, whose special function it is to watch the action of Parliament, and summon on occasions of importance, the energy, strength, and co-operation of the provincial societies—thus forming at once a rallying point and watch-tower for the whole country.

"A very pointed argument in favour of women's suffrage exists in the fact, that more than two millions of women in the British islands are self-supporting, and this number is increasing from year to year. Many of these women conduct extensive business concerns, and many provide for the support of families and dependents. That these industrious, tax-paying citizens should be denied the right of direct representation is an injustice which surely cannot long be tolerated. We claim representation for all women who are householders or owners of land in their own right, because we cannot but see that injustice in legislation prevails towards non-represented classes, and that appeal to the Imperial Parliament is more respected from electors than from non-electors. We also claim the suffrage for women in order to their having just legislation in matters specially referring to them wherever the laws are partial and unjust. But not for themselves alone do women desire the franchise; they wish to have a constitutional opportunity of expressing their opinion in matters of which they are peculiarly qualified to know something: such as questions concerning the care of the poor—the reformation of criminals—the laws of health—concerning morality and education—and concerning war and peace.

"The Home Secretary, on being questioned recently by his constituents as to his views of women's suffrage, gave forth as one argument against it, "that women in Parliament might vote us into a war, knowing that they were themselves exempted from the danger of bearing arms." Could even the Home Secretary possibly utter this argument seriously? Because, personally, women are not expected to go forth to battle, have they not vital interests dearer than their own lives perilled by the declaration of war? Do not women feel even more keenly than men the terrible attendants of war—the waste of precious life—the multiplication of widows and orphans—the desolation of homes—the cramping of industrial resources—the national suffering; and they would reasonably wish to have some voice respecting these things—not to sit in Parliament and vote the country into a war—but seriously and intelligently to vote for such men being sent there as shall act for the general well-being of the nation, applying the principles of legislation

uniformly to all classes, and who shall, in the spirit of true patriotism, institute measures in accordance with that 'righteousness which alone exalteth a nation.'

Miss Wigham then read the names of committee, and added, "In reading over these names, there is one name omitted to which we would refer with feelings of touching interest. We allude to that of Miss Dick Lauder, whose sudden removal from among us has filled our hearts with sadness. We shall greatly miss her faithful, ready help, her unvarying gentleness, and her wise counsel; but, while feeling our loss, and deeply sympathising with her bereaved family, we bow before the Wisdom which has taken her from this sphere of service. It might have been more in accordance with our feelings that this meeting should not have been held to-night, but it would not be according to the mind of her who has left us, that duty should be postponed on account of feeling; and the sudden removal of workers from this life but calls to those who remain to fill up the ranks, and to be yet more zealous and faithful, for the time is short; we know not how short."

Mr ALEX. NICOLSON, advocate, seconded the adoption of the report. He said he looked upon this movement as one of the most important of the present time; and believed that when it attained practical success—the time for which was not far distant—it would lead to results, both as regarded social and political consequences, which, so far from being injurious, as some ignorant and prejudiced people thought, would, in his estimation, be beneficial both as regarded their influence on general politics and upon the relations of society. He believed the anticipations expressed in the report were well founded, and though they had met with some obstructions in the past, and might look forward to such before they attained success, they must look to it as a part of the ordinary process through which every salutary change in this country had to pass before it became law. This measure, to adjust the balance of political power, had been on the *tapis* for only four or five years. When it was first introduced to the House, only seventy members voted for it, and it had since gained to its side no less than two hundred members of the House of Commons. That fact in itself was a strong presumption that a measure which in so short a time had commended itself to so large a number of members was likely soon to be crowned by success, especially when they looked at the constitution of the majority, and considered the fact that twenty-five to thirteen of the Scotch members were in favour of the bill. This measure had drawn to its support men who were diametrically opposed to each other, not only in politics, but on almost all matters on which men thought. It was a certain augury of the success of this measure when they found that it drew into the lobby such men as Mr Mill and Mr Disraeli, Mr Jacob Bright and Mr Ward Hunt, Dr Lyon Playfair, and Lord John Manners, the latter of whom, he said, was the representative of everything that was sentimental and conservative.

(Applause.) He did not say that in disparagement of Lord John Manners; on the contrary, he entertained great esteem for his Lordship both as a man and a poet. Another augury of success was the speech made by Mr Gladstone, which shewed that after the Premier had overcome the difficulty of making up his mind—(laughter)—and had attained that point when he was satisfied that it was his duty, he would then, with all the earnestness and power of his magnificent nature—(renewed laughter)—declare that this measure must be carried, and that the whole weight of the Government would go in its support. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN put the motion to the meeting, and declared it carried.

X ✓ Mr MILLER, M.P., moved the following resolution:—"That the ownership or occupation of lands or houses being now the basis of representation, it is unjust in principle to make sex a ground of disqualification, thereby excluding a large number of intelligent persons well qualified to exercise the electoral franchise, who pay all the national taxes and local rates equally with men." To his mind this resolution brought pointedly before them the wrong to women by the existing state of the law, and if it was their opinion that such a wrong existed, it would be their duty to move so as to have the law amended as soon as they possibly could. The present state of the law appeared to him to have arisen from some eastern idea that women were inferior to men, or that exercising the right of voting in the election of members of Parliament is incompatible with their nature. This idea was one they could not admit, and he did not know how else they could account for the existing state of the law. The defect which some classes of women in this country previously had through want of education was being done away with, and he hoped this movement would go on until the sexes were on a footing of perfect equality; but even in their present state, women were not in any degree inferior to those who enjoyed the franchise. They knew that the right of women to vote had been conceded in 1869 in municipal elections in England, and that in such elections they had exercised their right with quite as much intelligence as men. In 1870 the same right was conceded in the English Education Bill, and not only that, but women have been elected as members of the School Boards, even of the School Board of our great metropolis. (Applause.) Parliament having gone so far in the right direction, it was difficult for him to understand why it stopped short of giving to them the Parliamentary franchise. He hoped sincerely this would soon be accomplished. Some people said that women did not wish to interfere in politics. Mr Jacob Bright's Bill would not enforce voting on the part of women householders, it would only confer the right, that right to be exercised as they may think fit; but he knew many women who would exercise their right, and quite as intelligently as men. It was also objected that women could not undergo the hustling and tumult of voting at general elections. In answer to this, he was happy to be able to say that they had no tumults at their

Edinburgh elections; but even in districts where such scenes took place, the ballot system, which will (it is all but certain) be in operation before the next general election, will admit of the most delicate lady recording her vote with the utmost comfort. He for one would rejoice to see women in possession of the Parliamentary franchise, as he felt confident that were their voice heard by our Legislators, it would vastly aid in making laws most important for their own sex and the social condition of the country. (Hear, hear.) Had women been allowed to vote for members of Parliament, they might never have had their statute-book polluted with such laws as had lately been passed, and the sooner these were wiped off the better. (Cheers and hisses.) He hoped that this meeting, and others to be held in the country, would not hesitate in adopting the resolution he had proposed. (Applause.)

✓ Miss TAYLOUR of Belmont, who was received with loud cheers, said—I beg to second the resolution which has now been submitted to this meeting. I do so with a feeling of solemnity, for I believe that the cause which we seek to advance by our meeting here this evening is one of grave and vital importance. The question at issue is not merely that of deciding the justice of admitting ratepaying women to a due share of the privileges as well as the burdens of householders; nor is it one narrowed down to the consideration of whether the one sex is mentally equal to the other; but it is in reality the great and important question of whether woman is a complete and responsible human being, having the correspondent inherent rights of such, or whether she is in truth but a mere chattel, created solely for man's service or pleasure, and consequently intended to be dependent upon his will and subject to his rule. This question involves the most momentous and weighty interests; it affects the welfare of the whole human race—(applause)—and we have come to a period in the world's history when it must be settled completely and conclusively. It is fortunate that the difficulty of its settlement bears no proportion to the magnitude of its importance. In truth there is no difficulty surrounding it that will not be easily swept away by those who have entered into the spirit of our Lord's command—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Emancipated from narrow prejudice and superstition, and enlightened by Christian love, reason will be quite able to guide to a just and wise arrangement of those matters of detail that selfishness or ignorance now so often persistently strive to distort and darken. Every one capable of forming an intelligent and candid opinion must surely allow that the capacities bestowed by nature upon any creature are given for development and use; also that such gifts can never be fully developed and used while they are repressed and dwarfed by restraint. Yet, so far as women are concerned, these very plain axioms have always been, and still are, more or less practically denied. This denial has not been the less real or less foolish because it can be traced back to the earliest ages of the world. Hoary antiquity may

becloud with its delusive mists, and appeal to a morbid veneration; but it can never change that which is eternally true. The root from which woman's subjection sprung may be easily traced. When sin entered the world there came in its train dangers and difficulties that required man—the physically stronger—to take the precedence that was indispensable in order to enable him to become the protector of woman—the physically weaker—but the taking of this precedence did not prove man's superiority to woman in any other attribute than that of mere muscular power. (Applause.) And as a balance to this superior strength, impartial nature has endowed woman with such peculiar attributes, as enable her to give to man adequate compensation for the protection that he accords. In the beginning man and woman were created equals, made in the same divine image. God blessed them unitedly, and gave them conjoint dominion over the world. The distinctive characteristic differences that marks the sexes were intended to complement each other, and blend in one harmonious and perfect unity, not to lead to the usurpation of power by the one over the other. But sin came and changed this natural order of things, by converting the precedence—necessarily taken by the protector—from a matter of expediency, into a sovereignty that increased with exercise, until mere physical power established a supremacy that has existed in a greater or less degree until now. Under this arbitrary rule woman has been more or less degraded to the position of a slave; been treated in many respects as a mere chattel, and she has rarely, if ever, been in a position fully to develop, and freely to use the powers with which her God has gifted her. Politically, men have taken upon themselves the right of legislating for women, without any direct reference to their feelings and opinions—without any direct acknowledgment of the truth that they are reasoning beings like themselves. So also socially. Men have arrogated to themselves in general the right to dictate to women what they should and should not be, and do, and learn; what is befitting for them, what unseemly, apparently quite unconscious that, in so doing, they treat them both unjustly and insultingly. If woman was intended thus to be under man's rule, it naturally follows that nature must have suited her gifts to the level of the designed position of inferiority. Either, then, she has the spirit and powers of an inferior, and will remain in the state of subjection natural to such, without need of restraint, and without feeling that state a hardship; or, on the other hand, she has not been given the spirit and lower powers of an inferior, in which case the laws, the rules that would force her into subordination, are both unnatural and cruelly tyrannical. A most emphatic protest is now being made against the old and world-wide form of falsehood that assumes the inferiority of woman; and the very fact of such a protest being made, proves forcibly and conclusively, that neither in spirit nor in capacity is she a mere servile appendage to man. Woman stands forth now before the world, and claims as her birth-right the freedom to which every human being has an inalienable title. She claims the right to belong to herself, as a self-contained individual existence—the right that every soul, stamped

with the divine image, has of striving to perfect itself by the free exercise of its own faculties: the right to refuse submission to the sovereign rule of a fellow-creature, weak and erring as herself: the right to perfect liberty in fulfilling her duties in the world in accordance with nature's teachings and her own convictions: in short, her right to live up to the full measure of her capacities, to reach up to the highest and most useful standard she can attain. In answer, some may say that we have—under existing circumstances—all these rights sufficiently acknowledged and respected. Those who would say so take a very narrow and imperfect view of life indeed, and proclaim their ignorance in regard to the workings of human nature. It is undoubtedly true that some women can and do live high and useful lives under existing circumstances. But if all this high and holy living was united to the untrammelled practical living that should be made possible to every aspiring human soul, what an added wealth of work would come to bless the world! What an amount of gladness would accrue to many hitherto circumscribed workers, who are mourning over sorrow that they are helpless to relieve; sorrows, some of which they believe to be in some measure caused or intensified by the repression that degrades woman to the position of a mere cipher, or to that of a restrained and enfeebled worker. It is worse than vain to expect women to work with strong hearts and unflagging energy in the alleviation of distress, in the reclamation of the outcast, and the protection of the weak, if they are not permitted to give effective expression to their opinions when laws are framed that regulate these matters—laws that often nullify or weaken their best-directed efforts. Reason alone—apart from all the lessons that experience can teach—shews us that it is not a matter of doubt, but one of certainty, that none of the great social problems of life now awaiting solution can ever be satisfactorily settled until women take their full share in the regulation and administration of human affairs. And just in proportion as the feminine differs from the masculine, is it necessary for legislation to be the result of the combined wisdom of both sexes. Nor should woman's thoughts and influence be confined to social matters, for as her interests are co-extensive with human interests, wherever they extend her voice should be heard. The widest political questions affect her well-being as much as that of man, and even in their adjustment she must have something wise and useful to say that is especially hers. In deliberations that involve the issues of life and death, direct female influence should carry its full weight. The burdens and horrors of war fall quite as heavily upon women as upon men—perhaps more so, for there are sufferings worse than death or physical pain, as thousands of desolate women can testify. It is desirable, therefore, that we should have the franchise—not only that we may, through its exercise, be enabled to bring our due influence to bear directly upon social politics, but also that we may be in a position to give constitutional expression to our opinions, power to our influence, when men are called upon to debate matters that refer to peace and war. We are entering upon a momentous and stirring era in the world's history—much that has



hitherto been venerated and set apart for respectful homage is about to be dethroned. The knell of departing Conservatism is being rung—(loud applause)—and while it sounds out loud and clear, thrones shake, and people clamour for what will prove a delusion and a mockery, unless it is founded upon the basis of immutable justice and truth. When the spirit of change is thus brooding everywhere over the land—when destructive forces are marshalling, and the overturn of many things is imminent—are women—one half of the human race—to take no recognised part in determining questions that will involve the entire reorganisation of society? Yes! And when change is threatening to lay its busy hand upon our own time-honoured Constitution, are the daughters of free Britain to have no voice in deciding alterations that will affect the welfare of their beloved land—no power to give constitutional and effective expression to the loyal devotion that burns within them? Women are patriots as well as men; we, equally with our brothers, are descendants of liberty-loving sires. Yes, Scotchmen, if you love liberty and justice, we, your sisters, love them too. The same blood that flows in your veins flows in ours—the blood of those who fought and bled in the defence of right. Think you that we are content to forego our share in the freedom that our ancestors so nobly gained? No, we are not. Like you, we have inherited their love of liberty, their spirit of patriotism. This love of liberty, this spirit of patriotism that we possess, has at last cast aside the apathy that has hidden it so long, and, quickening into life and vigour, is inspiring us to arise and seek a position more worthy of the daughters of those who won the liberties you so much prize. If reforms are to be based upon the great fundamental principles of truth and justice—upon which alone stable and righteous government can be founded—woman must no longer be considered a political nonentity—she must no longer be treated as a chattel, or classed politically with minors, paupers, criminals, or lunatics; but she must take her true, her normal position by man's side—the dignified position of one who is conjoint owner of human capacity and human responsibility. The whole world, heavy laden with sin and sorrow, is crying loudly for ministration. So long as its intense hunger for sympathy is unsatisfied, its mighty cry for help unanswered, there will be work enough to task to the utmost the ability and the energy of every earnest man and woman in it. No estimate can ever be formed of how much the world has been impoverished by the folly that has ignored and repressed the highest powers of half the human race. Sometimes the foolish remark is made that the success of this movement for advancing the position of women will result in the turning of the world upside down. I once heard an excellent reply made to this by a gentleman, who said that, in his opinion, the world had been upside down all this time; and that he looked to the restoration of woman to her proper place of conjoint authority over it as the means by which it will be set right side up again. I believe there is a precious germ of truth enfolded in this reply. Since man and woman share the same humanity—are equally entrusted with the same awful talent of individual responsibility—

are called to live after the same divine example, and are joint-heirs of the same eternal destiny—should they not be guided in their lives by the self-same principles; and does not this involve equal freedom of action for both? This freedom has never yet been fully accorded to woman. Drawn down to the standard fixed by man, she has been restrained and subjected to his rule, until slavery has done its work by degrading her more or less too generally into a state of apathetic indifference, or selfish and enervating frivolity. Here and there in the past is seen the vision of some noble woman rising above the circumstances that surrounded her—bright exceptions, demonstrating what many might have been, if restraining pressure had been withdrawn. Prophetic, too, of coming days—when woman, stirred by high resolve, would, with the aid of good and earnest men, shake off the bondage that has fettered and degraded her sex so long, and advance with solemn step and thoughtful brow to resume her proper place by man's side. Those days have come. Even now is woman rising from the apathy and ignorance of past ages, and as she makes her first step forward, she meets an obstacle that bars her progress. This barrier is formed by the political disabilities that shut her up to the endurance of unjust laws, that brand her unlawfully with the insulting stamp of inferiority, and that weaken and restrain her efforts in every direction. We come to you, our brothers, and we ask you to remove this obstacle from our path. And we believe you will, for we have faith in your manhood, in your love of justice. Perhaps there is not one man present who would deliberately allow low and selfish considerations to lead him to withhold either political or social justice from women, but probably there are many amongst you who have hitherto held back from helping us to gain our enfranchisement, because you have permitted the fanciful veil of poetic imagery to hide from your view the realities of life. I beseech of you, brothers, to cast this veil aside, and look at the sad truths it conceals. Look seriously at the painful fact that tens of thousands of unprotected women are struggling to escape from the cold grasp of cruel poverty. Crushed beneath a sad weight of deprivation, they almost hopelessly seek or wait for the work that comes not. These struggling, suffering women are the sisters of our countrymen, and some of you now before me may yet have daughters amongst them. I solemnly charge you to ponder this sad—this unnatural state of things; and when you trace, as you easily may—how much of this misery results from the political and social injustice to which women are subjected, I feel confident that you will come with generous haste to aid us in the advancement of the righteous reform we seek. Emancipation from prejudice and superstition will be followed, too, by the recognition of the truth, that the womanliness that is worthy of admiration will not, as some absurdly dread, disappear or be injured by the concession of political justice; for as an Act of Parliament did not confer the distinctive attributes of womanhood, neither can one destroy them. Nature, which gave woman her peculiar gifts, will maintain them—nay more, she will assert her power by developing them more and more in pro-

portion as full and perfect liberty is attained, for undue restraint and subjection is as injurious to the development of true womanhood as to that of manhood. We are told that "whatever day makes man a slave takes half his worth away," and so is it also with woman. In like manner as enfranchisement benefits man, so will it benefit her also. Freedom, not subjection, is the root of virtue in the one sex as well as in the other. Weak dependence upon the will of others is not womanliness, any more than the self-asserting power of mere brute force is manliness. It is true, too, that the parasite, however much it may please the eye by its graceful twinings, is no sign of good to the noble tree; it often causes the decay that it so certainly hastens. In view of the true solemnity of human life, and the undoubted duty that lies upon woman to take her full share of work and responsibility in regard to all that concerns it, what are the paltry, petty objections worth that are brought forward to interpose between her and the due discharge of this duty? They are mere motes in the sunbeam, mere flecks of foam upon the ocean wave. There they dance, there they shimmer; but the all-pervading flood of light shines brightly over all, undimmed in lustre and in power; the sounding main sweeps grandly on, its mighty depths unconscious of the froth that crests its waves: so the bright enlightening outflow of truth, the overpowering might that accompanies just principle, will continue to endure, and despite all paltry obstructions, will carry the righteous reform sought for on to a triumphant issue. If any tell you that the cry for woman's restoration to her normal position in the world comes only from a "restless and discontented few" who would draw the many into degradation, believe them not—the cry comes from the very heart and soul of true and earnest womanhood. It is uttered by those who would struggle upwards to regain the high position from which they have been dethroned, and who—in their upward struggle—would bear, high above all vulgar strife, the spotless fame of pure and gentle womanhood. It is not degraded and masculinised woman that we would enthrone, but the woman that nature formed to be noble, tender, pure, and true; and we would make it possible, too, for all women to escape from degradation, and join in the endeavour to rise to her original place in God's creation. From the deepest, most solemn conviction of our hearts, then, has our earnestness in this arduous work been evolved; and those have never fathomed the depths of an earnest woman's nature, they know nothing of the inflexibility of her determination, nor the energy with which she can prosecute what she believes to be a duty, if they think we will relax our efforts until success has crowned them. Then, and then only, may we hope to see the lofty ideal of the poet realised—woman rising to the full height of her normal grandeur,—

"Till at last she set herself to man  
Like perfect music unto noble words,  
And so these twain upon the skirts of time  
Sit side by side, full summ'd in all their powers,  
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,  
Self-reverent each, and reverencing each;

Distinct in individualities,  
But like each other ev'n as those who love.  
Then comes the statlier Eden back to man,  
Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm,  
Then springs the crowning race of humankind."

May these things be. (Loud cheers.) The resolution was also adopted.

Professor CALDERWOOD submitted the third resolution to the meeting—"That this meeting desires to thank Mr Jacob Bright for his advocacy of the electoral rights of women, and for the success which has attended his efforts to enlighten the public mind on the subject by means of the discussion raised by him in Parliament on the bill for removing the electoral disabilities of women, and respectfully requests him to introduce his bill early in the ensuing session." He was sure they were all deeply convinced of the important service done to the country by any member who carried a measure of practical reform through the House of Commons. Those who remembered the ability with which Mr Bright advocated this cause when he appeared in Edinburgh, and had observed the effective support he had given to the claim of the ladies, when introducing his measure to Parliament, would be satisfied that he was entitled to hearty thanks and strong encouragement in continuing his efforts. On the ground of justice, he did not think much needed to be said with reference to the case before them. They had been asked—Who is the head of the house? To this, however, they had a very ready answer—the person who pays the rent of the house—(hear, hear)—and the taxes, and supports all who live in the house. And if it so chanced, because of affliction, that the person who was thus the head of the house was a woman, he felt ashamed of the man who would deny her the rights as head of the house. (Hear, hear, and applause.) And if it chanced that the woman was an eldest sister, and supported the house, and not an eldest brother, so much the more would he honour that sister, and stand by her claim to be honoured in the midst of our country, where he hoped they would always value moral worth and true honest purpose in fulfilling all the obligations which Providence might lay upon them. (Applause.) If they passed from the claims of justice to the interests of their nation, he would like to know if any one, looking upon the influence women exercised in society, would say that members of Parliament would be in no respect the better of having some portion of their constituency peculiarly interested in those matters which especially concerned women. He could not understand how there should be opposition to such a measure as this, except it was upon the very natural, proper, and honourable feeling which would desire to shelter women from suffering and rudeness, from shamelessness and from scorn. They all honoured the feeling which would cast a sheltering hand over woman, and try to save her from exposure to any of those perils which men might be prepared to encounter. Acknowledging all this, if there stood before them a plain injustice through a person who held property and discharged all the duties connected therewith, not receiving the rights of

property, then he would say, let justice be done. Had the question never been raised by those who thus ought to have a vote, they might possibly have been content to let it go by, but they were now entering a time when legislation must deal more especially with social questions, and touch women's interests even more than it had done in the past, and therefore they had come to a time when it was a right thing that a woman should stand forward and claim on ordinary grounds of justice that she should exercise such influence in the nation as her property and place distinctly entitled her to according to other principles of the Constitution. Then it was said that if women received that right which they claimed, they would use the right to the franchise, proceeding on knowledge gathered at second hand. He should like to know where the man was that used his right to the franchise, and proceeded from knowledge that was not gathered from second hand. He wondered who attended meetings gathered together for considering the interests of the community, who had knowledge at first hand on questions connected, for instance, with the army and navy, and those matters with which the Legislature had to deal, and professed itself competent to judge. He thought there were not many who would make such a claim. He should ask how many members of Parliament proceeded in legislation from knowledge gathered at second hand. When they had to do with the rights of women, and all those things which touched personal and domestic well-being, did they pretend to profess that they proceeded upon knowledge gained at first hand? He thought it was at least a feasible thing that, before they legislated for women, they should ask women to tell what they wished to be done in their own interests. (Applause.) They would give them a fair opportunity of expressing their own wishes, and, at least so far as some of them were constitutionally on other grounds entitled to vote, let them vote, indicating the direction in which they wish legislation should proceed. If they asked what women were so much interested in, he asked, were there no legal questions most seriously involving the interests of women, whose husbands were to them anything but the protectors they ought to be, and who knew what it was to allow their wives to toil and then take the gain? Was it not true that the laws affecting women might affect women holding property which was their own by all law and justice, just as a man who made it claimed it simply upon the grounds of earning it; and if it were true, consequent upon our present relations, that year after year orphan children were sadly neglected, and were cast upon the care of the State, was it asking too much in the interests of sound and good government that women should also have something to say in reference to the education of those orphans, those dependents upon the State, whose training now determined the position that would afterwards be held by them as members of the nation. (Applause.) He thought they had only to consider what were the reasons which women had to speak out, only to bear in mind what was the nature of their claims, to be convinced that there should be some opportunity for giving voice to those wrongs which were now burning deep into the hearts of some, and finding no

utterance. He asked nothing in the way of discussing questions in regard to equality, but one question, and a great question, was this—Had women some knowledge in reference to their own wants that men had not? Was it true that the woman's sphere was home? And if it were true, could she not speak for home and all domestic claims as men could not? If so, she should be granted that right which she claimed by getting a free, formal, legitimate opportunity of expressing her desires, which would not only be in accordance with justice, but ultimately be a gain to the whole. (Applause.)

Mr W. A. BROWN, advocate, seconded the resolution, and in doing so he said that at one time he held very different views, and he appeared there that night in the humble attitude of penitence and conversion. (Laughter.) But while most cordially supporting the movement, he desired to explain the grounds on which his views rested. He did not recognise the political equality of the sexes as its foundation, and that for the best of all reasons, that he did not believe in that equality, or any other equality, in relation to the sexes. He said this in no disparaging sense; in some respects women were superior to men; all that he contended for was that equality could not be predicated in the constitution of the sexes. Nor did he think that anything of the nature of a State necessity had been made out requiring this claim to be conceded. On the occasion of the extension of the suffrage in 1868 there was a necessity which the State could not fail to recognise without serious injury to itself—he meant when a large section of the community for the first time received political power. He did not think that the cause they were met to promote stood in anything like that position; but that was not a matter to be regretted, for on that account it had a chance of receiving more close and dispassionate attention. He felt it to be open to him to say he thought it was holding the language of exaggeration to represent the continued withholding of this claim as a peril to the State. But on the other hand he had no doubt the cause was immovably fixed on principles of justice, and what was more, upon a clear view of what would eventually be for the public good; and, therefore, although he should not be disappointed if the cause progressed with but slow stages, he looked forward without apprehension to its ultimate and complete triumph. His reasons for supporting the movement were—(1.) That he could not withhold this claim without operating an injustice. Until the basis of parliamentary representation was changed in this country, he could not understand upon what principle a distinction could be maintained with the view of imposing disabilities between the property of women and the property of men. (2.) It was unjust and unwise not to concede it in view of the future history of the country, which would probably be called upon to a much greater extent than in the past to deal with questions, and with ever new and shifting aspects of the questions of women's rights. It was manifestly absurd that the ultimate solution of those questions in which women would certainly be gravely interested,

should depend on the voice and votes of men alone. (3.) A third reason was, that the influence and interference of women in political matters were proverbial, but while admitting that this influence was right, it should be provided that women should have political knowledge, and that could not be secured without political responsibility. Mr John Stuart Mill had pressed this argument with unanswerable force. (4.) He supported it because he believed that the co-operation of women with men on the political platform was an agency that was required to complete the moral education of the world. The world was growing older, and he doubted whether it was getting better, and they might well consider whether a great responsibility did not lie with them for having so long rejected the assistance which women had proved themselves so well able to render in the crusade they had to wage against vice, pauperism, intemperance, and crime. (Applause.) He concluded by proposing that the following addition be made to the motion:—"Resolve to present petitions to both Houses of Parliament, and memorials to the Prime Minister and Home Secretary in terms of the resolutions, and authorise the Chairman to sign the same in the name of the meeting."—Agreed to.

Mr DUNCAN M'LAREN, M.P., in moving a vote of thanks to the Chairman, said this should not be merely a formal vote of thanks, such as was passed to every Chairman, but one coming heartily from the meeting—(loud cheers)—for Sir Robert Anstruther had come at much inconvenience to himself in consequence of a recent accident, and had he not been devoted to this as he was to every other liberal question—(cheers)—he would have had ample grounds for declining to take part in this meeting.

The motion was carried by acclamation, and duly acknowledged by Sir Robert Anstruther.

## INCOME.

Subscriptions and Donations, . . . . .	£297 15 6
Collections at Meetings, . . . . .	34 17 9
Interest from Bank, . . . . .	0 5 3
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Due to Treasurer, . . . . .	£332 18 6
	12 0 9½
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	£344 19 3½

## EXPENDITURE.

Due to Treasurer from last year, . . . . .	£5 18 10
Expenses of Sixty Public Meetings, . . . . .	220 17 8½
Printing and Publications, . . . . .	56 16 7
Expenses attendant in getting up Petitions, . . . . .	36 11 7½
Postages, . . . . .	20 10 6½
Committee Room, . . . . .	4 4 0
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	£344 19 3½

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Gibson, Miss, Forres Street, . . . . . 2 0 0	Robertson, Thos., So. Bridge, . . . . . 0 10 0
Gibson, Mr, Princes Street, . . . . . 0 5 0	Robertson, Miss, . . . . . 0 2 6
Gifford, Lord, . . . . . 2 0 0	Robson, W., Palmerston Road, . . . . . 1 1 0
Gordon, Mrs, Nairn, . . . . . 0 5 0	Rose, Hugh, 3 Hillside Cres., . . . . . 5 0 0
Gordon, Miss, Huntly Cot., . . . . . 0 2 0	Russell, Sheriff, Jedburgh, . . . . . 0 10 0
Greig, D., 3 Spittalfields Cr., . . . . . 0 10 0	Scott, Miss, 100 George Street, . . . . . 0 10 0
Hunter, Misses, Gt. Stuart St., . . . . . 10 0 0	Stevenson, Miss E., Randolph Crescent, . . . . . 12 0 0
Do., do., donation, . . . . . 5 0 0	Stevenson, do., donation, . . . . . 4 0 0
Home, Mrs F., Bassendean, . . . . . 2 0 0	Stevenson, Miss L., donation, . . . . . 3 0 0
Hope, George, Fenton Barns, . . . . . 1 2 6	Thomson, Rev. Mr, . . . . . 0 5 0
Hope, Miss, do., . . . . . 1 0 0	Trevelyan, Arthur, Tyneholm, . . . . . 2 0 0
Hoyes, Mr, 7 Ainslie Place, . . . . . 1 0 0	Warren, J., 4 Mayfield Street, . . . . . 0 10 0
Hoyes, Mrs, do. . . . . 1 0 0	Warren, Mrs, do., . . . . . 1 0 0
Hume, Mr, Register Street, . . . . . 0 5 0	Wellstood, Mrs, 14 Duncan St., . . . . . 0 5 0
Inglis, Mrs, Rose Hall, . . . . . 0 1 0	Wellstood, Mrs S., do., . . . . . 0 5 0
Keith, Mrs, Gordout St., Nairn, . . . . . 0 2 6	Westren, Mr, Princes Street, . . . . . 0 5 0
Kerr, Mrs, Neilson Street, . . . . . 0 5 0	Wigham, J. and E., . . . . . 0 15 0
Kirkland, Miss E., Raeburn Pl., . . . . . 0 6 0	Wilson, Mrs G., Hawick, . . . . . 1 0 0
Latchmore, Miss, Leeds, . . . . . 0 5 0	Wilson, Mr, Meuse Lane, . . . . . 0 5 0
Lauder, Miss Dick, . . . . . 3 10 0	Wright, Mr, George Street, . . . . . 1 1 0
Law, Mr, St Andrew Square, . . . . . 0 10 0	Young, Captain, Dunoon, . . . . . 1 0 0
Lillie, Mrs, 19 Minto Street, . . . . . 0 5 0	