

# WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE JOURNAL.

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THE meeting which was held in St. George's Hall, on May 13th, fully sustained the reputation for oratorical ability and powerful advocacy which the speakers on this occasion had already won. The meeting was held under the presidency of the Right Hon. the RECORDER OF LONDON, whose prominent position in the ranks of the Conservative members of the House of Commons should afford to the most timid a sufficient guarantee that a measure promoted by him is not calculated to upset social order, the British constitution, the ordinances of Providence and the laws of Nature, and whose personal and judicial character, chosen as he has been by successive administrations as an arbitrator in inquiries and negotiations of a most delicate and responsible nature, enables him to approach the subject of the political disabilities of women in a spirit as free from that of a partisan as it is possible for anyone to attain.

In his opening remarks the Right Hon. the RECORDER said that he was glad to see so very numerous a body assembled who were determined to fail in no exertion to get rid of that which he believed to be a great evil to men as well as a great injustice to women. The opponents assumed that the objects were something altogether different from those professed by the Bill, and they rested their arguments on what they thought might follow from it. That was a very old argument, for he did not know any reform which had been effected that had not been met by its opponents saying that it meant something else and that the advocates really wished something very different from what they proposed to enact. He had been surprised to hear that argument used by some who had met with the same difficulty in the reforms they had carried. It was, however, thought too useful a weapon not to be used on the present occasion. It was said that one necessary consequence of giving votes to women would be that we should be obliged to give them the right of sitting in Parliament. But experience proved that was no necessary consequence. Nearly a century ago clergymen were prevented from sitting in Parliament, but it has never yet been proposed to deprive them of the franchise, nor has it been suggested that because they have the franchise they must necessarily be entitled to sit in Parliament. That

disability is not confined to clergymen. For a great deal more than a century large numbers holding certain offices in the country were deprived of the franchise. After a long struggle we succeeded in getting them the franchise, but it is not therefore argued that these office holders should be entitled to sit in Parliament. It had been suggested that the case rested on assumed hostility between the sexes. He had never rested it on such ground. He disclaimed as strongly as any one the belief that there is real hostility between the sexes, but there were many questions on which the sexes look from a different point of view. It was very important that the views of all should be represented, and he had yet to learn that because women may take a different view from men they should be excluded from taking their part in the election of members of Parliament.

MISS BECKER, before moving the resolution entrusted to her, read a letter from the Right Hon. CHARLES PELHAM VILLIERS, M.P. He wrote that he had voted for the measure on more than one occasion, and should do so again. As far as he was acquainted with the objections usually alleged, he was bound to say they only appear to be those which have always been offered whenever any fresh extension of liberty to the subject has been proposed, and which he had himself heard urged against personal freedom in the colonies, religious liberty in this country, the enfranchisement of the working classes, and against the abolition of every monopoly, political or commercial, wherever it has been assailed. He had seen with what little success resistance on these great matters had of late years been attended, and with what satisfaction the results of past changes are now regarded by the country. The advocates of the cause had only to persevere, making it clear to the public that the claim is just and possible to be enforced, and that political rights are now withheld where there is intelligence and capacity to use them wisely, and where the possession of them would afford protection and benefit to those who demand them. MISS BECKER said that, although the claim had just been rejected by a considerable majority of the House of Commons, its advocates were not discouraged by a circumstance which in this

country was an inevitable incident in the path of all reforms. Not all the eloquence of all the most eloquent men that ever lived could persuade an intelligent, patriotic woman, who felt an interest in her country, and cared for the welfare of her fellow citizens, that she had not a right to a vote if she had the qualification and paid her rates, any more than such eloquence could persuade the same woman that she had no right to be educated if she could pay the college fees, or to sit down to dinner if she could pay the bill. She was one of those women who would be satisfied with the Parliamentary franchise on the conditions on which women exercise the local vote, and she might say with confidence that in this she represented the great body of active workers, and the vast majority of the women who were interested in the movement. Mr. BRIGHT said the country had a right to determine how it would be governed. If Mr. BRIGHT meant that the men only of the country had a right to determine how the country should be governed, that was tantamount to saying that the present possessors of electoral privileges had the sole right to such privileges, which was very unlike the doctrines we were accustomed to hear from Mr. BRIGHT. If he meant that the men and women of the country had a right to say how they would be governed, he conceded the principle of the claim. She characterised the assertion that the claim was based on assumed hostility between the sexes as unjust, ungenerous, and untrue. Mr. BRIGHT had himself been persistently accused of a design to set class against class; of all living men he should have been the last to steal this base weapon from the armoury of his adversaries, and to hurl it against the women of his household and his home.

Mr. JAMES COWAN, M.P., said he firmly believed that the movement would ultimately triumph, and that when women were admitted to the franchise, the effects of that admission would be speedily felt.

Miss FRANCES POWER COBBE said that, although they could afford to leave the "chartered libertines of debate" to amuse the House of Commons as they saw fit, the case was altered when a great and generous-hearted statesman, a man whom those who differed from him in politics, as she did, yet regard with profound personal respect and sympathy, took up the case against them, then she thought it called on every woman who had a heart and a tongue to say, "No, it is not true that women have no wrongs; no, their interests are not always considered and provided for by men. It is not true, in any sense whatever, that this demand for a voice in the legislation of the

country ought to be regarded in the odious light of hostility between the sexes. She would as soon think it was for the interest of her right hand to have her left arm in a sling, as that it should be for the interest of men that women should be deprived of rights, or kept out of the life in which Providence may have given them the power to be of use. There are two classes of women in the world. On one side she saw women lapped in every luxury which the hands of loving fathers and husbands can provide—the winds of heaven never visit their cheeks too roughly. They are like the gods of EPICURUS, too "bright and blooming in their own blue skies" to heed the groans of their sisters in the sordid streets below. These exquisite ladies pass over the miry places of life like Queen ELIZABETH treading on RALEIGH'S cloak. And then they sweetly assure members of Parliament, at their own splendid dinner tables, that women have everything they want, and they sneer at the demand for the suffrage as if it were something between a joke and a sin—that worst kind of sin in the modern Decalogue—a sin against the great god TASTE. It was so much a nicer thing to be contented and to find everything smooth and pleasant that she did not wonder that men thought these the best women. But, on the other side, there were perhaps a million or so of women struggling sorrowfully, painfully, often failing under pressure of want of employment, of underpaid, unhealthful, unhelpful employment, or of grinding oppression and cruelty from those whose duty it was to protect and cherish them. When she looked at these women's faces she seemed to see in them stories of years of sordid toil, of petty cares, of pleasureless lives, of blighted expectations, of wrong and oppression, borne as if those things were natural to them. She did not know or believe that the suffrage would cure all those evils, but she believed it would tend more than any other measure which human ingenuity could devise to do so.

Mr. HINDE PALMER said from his personal experience he could confirm what was stated by Miss COBBE. In the last Parliament he had charge of a Bill for the amendment of the Married Women's Property Act of 1870. He carried the second reading of his Bill by a considerable majority, but was prevented from carrying it further by successive "counts out," in consequence of the careless indifference with which the just claims of women were regarded by members. In another instance, when an Act was passed in the last Parliament to extend the powers of Justice TALFOURD'S Act, enabling women when separated from worthless husbands to obtain the custody of their

children, it was done only through the expensive process of the Court of Chancery. He proposed an amendment giving to poor women whose maternal feelings were quite as strong as those of richer mothers, a right to apply to the county court for relief, but he was beaten by a majority of 14. If women had had votes, and could thus bring their influence to bear on members, the result would probably have been very different on these two occasions.

Miss STURGE said that Mr. BRIGHT had done much for liberty in the past, and he had made our movement possible in its present form. As she had once suggested to him, it was, perhaps, the repeal of the Corn Laws which had led them to perceive that women could do without restrictions just as well as corn. In reading the speeches she was reminded of an anecdote about a lady, who was on board a vessel. Being rather timid, she asked the captain if there was any fear of danger. His reply was, "Madam, there is plenty of fear, but no danger." It was difficult to understand the timidity of our legislators when we did not sympathise with their fears. "What will it lead to?" was a question asked on the eve of all reforms. If they would be just and fear not, she believed that progress would give some satisfactory answers. In one of Mr. BRIGHT'S speeches he tells of a landowner who, many years after the repeal of the Corn Laws, said to him, "I did not know that this would be a good thing for my class." Mr. BRIGHT told him, "If you would have a little more faith, we would do more good for you still." Would not the men of England have some faith in the women? Mr. BRIGHT tells us we are not a class; but when Government gives what it calls household suffrage, and then casts out all the women householders, that is doing exactly what we object to, and making a class of women. Mr. LEATHAM says women cannot feel the want of the franchise as a stigma of inferiority, but that is just what they complain of. If she were not a householder she should not feel it unjust that she should be refused a vote. She only declined to be disfranchised because she was a woman. Mr. LEATHAM brought documents from America to back up his case. But whether the women in America were or were not what Mr. LEATHAM represented, shortcoming in advocates did not necessarily tell against the thing advocated. She recollected hearing a good man say that although he was a firm believer in Christianity he should very much object to be made responsible for everything that had been said in support of it. For the same reason she protested against Mr. BRIGHT reading stray letters, as if they were any arguments against Mr. FORSYTH'S Bill.

Mr. O'SHAUGHNESSY, M.P., said women were now drifting from their old moorings of reserve and seclusion of past generations, and unless in their new sphere of freedom their self-reliance and capacity be developed, they must be exposed to the dangers to which idleness and misdirected energy exposes every human being. He thought the great advantage of such an Act of Parliament as they desired would be that it would be a declaration that the restrictions which had excluded women from useful occupations were to be abolished. It might seem strange that he should attribute to an Act of Parliament so subtle and powerful an influence, but he did so because he had felt in his own country the instant effect which an Act of Parliament can have on men's manners and minds.

Miss TOD said that history speaks plainly of the common rights of women, which have been limited and injured by exactly the same causes which at different times have limited and injured the common rights of men. She learned from the writings of Sir HENRY MAINE and other historical jurists, how fair and just the ancient laws both of England and Ireland were to women, and how they were both changed for the worse by the corruption of the Norman power. But the old spirit was never dead, and the spirit of liberty might be seen asserting itself here and there. Its strongholds were always the local rights and privileges, and the local representation on which those rights depended, and it was not a little significant that it is there also that we must look for the recognition of those common rights of women to which she had alluded. Some people, to prevent the analogy between the municipal and Parliamentary franchise from having its due weight, have tried to depreciate the former. They make little of that local self-government which has played so important a part in the political education of the people. But women remembering history, feel that the local franchise possessed by them are of great value. They are treading exactly the same path which other bodies of citizens have trodden before them, and are learning their political lessons in the same school. From time immemorial the local franchise has been held by men and women alike when they had the same qualification. The rate book was the register. CRABBE says of his clever woman farmer:—

No parish business in the place could stir  
Without direction or assent from her;  
By turns she took each office as it fell,  
Knew all their duties, and performed them well.

And no one wondered at her. Not a few women now exercise not merely their right of voting, but a rational dis-

crimination as to motive and character, and take a steady interest in the questions with which their local representatives have to deal. It is for them, as it has been for men, a school of political knowledge and experience.

Mrs. M'LAREN moved, and Miss ANNA SWANWICK seconded, a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which was put to the meeting by Mr. C. H. HOPWOOD, Q.C., M.P., who called attention to the fact that Mr. RUSSELL GURNEY had stood side by side with Mr. JOHN STUART MILL as teller on the first occasion on which a division was taken on the question in the House of Commons. The meeting then separated.

ALTHOUGH public attention will be mainly directed to the debate which has just taken place in the House of Commons on Mr. FORSYTH'S Bill, the discussions which have arisen in several Town Councils on the proposal to petition Parliament in favour of that measure are well worthy of notice. In many Councils this petition has been adopted, in others it has been rejected, not on the merits of the proposal, but on the ground that Municipal Councils had no right to take cognisance of, or to petition Parliament for imperial questions in the name of the town. This objection was raised and overruled in Hull, Southampton, and other Town Councils, and very properly overruled, in our judgment. It would be manifestly inconvenient if Municipal Councils were made the arena for party conflict in respect to imperial politics; but when questions are before Parliament which affect the rights and interest of the burgesses whom they represent, and which have a general-bearing on the welfare of the community, irrespective of party, it seems to us that municipal bodies would abdicate a dignity and neglect a duty by denying themselves the right to form and express a judgment upon them.

At Southampton Mr. S. S. PEARCE moved the adoption of the petition. He said the Council had previously approved of the principle of the measure, the object of which was to place the two sexes on an equality in regard to household suffrage, the same as was the case in regard to municipal elections. Mr. ABRAHAM said he should vote against the motion. The electoral franchise had been widely spread in extending the municipal franchise to women, and if they granted them the Parliamentary franchise, they did not know where it might end. A woman might become a red-hot politician, and if she got married it might be difficult to get her into harness. Alderman PAYNE "did not understand why women wanted to mix in politics at all." It is difficult to see

why the measure of the worthy Alderman's understanding should be the measure of other people's rights. He went on to observe, "If ladies were unmarried they ought to be looking after husbands, and if they were widows they ought to be satisfied with the honour of having been married." The old-fashioned notion was that if ladies were unmarried, intending husbands ought to be looking after them, but the etiquette of modern chivalry apparently reverses this doctrine. In spite of these brilliant coruscations of oratory the petition was ultimately carried by a majority of the Council of Southampton.

At Hull, Alderman DOWSING moved the adoption of the petition, saying that other important municipal bodies had passed resolutions in favour of Mr. FORSYTH'S Bill. Mr. SPURR moved the previous question, "believing that if women were invested with political power it would be contrary to the grandest principle of human nature. It had long been established that money or property were not the only things which should guide them. Intelligence and reason were requisite. He held women above men, but he firmly believed it would tend to degrade them if they were placed on an equality with them." We can assure Mr. SPURR that women are quite willing to be "degraded" in the estimation of himself and those who agree with him to the level of "reason and intelligence" requisite to give a vote. Mr. GIBSON took another and more original line of objection. He said "Women read trash enough already in the form of novels, and if they had the political franchise they would be reading the Parliamentary debates in the morning papers." We are afraid that, even without the political franchise, a good many women do read the Parliamentary debates, and if that is the evil to be deprecated, the mischief is already done. Mr. GIBSON went on to observe that "it was true that women had property, but it had come to them through their male predecessors." We should be inclined to wonder whether Mr. GIBSON had never heard of women earning money for themselves, and keeping up their houses, and paying their rates out of the fruits of their own industry, were it not that so many men have an inveterate habit of indulging their imagination and sentiments in regard to women, without the smallest attempt to verify their impressions by comparison with conditions of society and the facts of life. On a division the petition was adopted by the Council of Hull. The following Councils have petitioned, this Session, in favour of the Bill—Lincoln, Batley, Northampton, Edinburgh, Dewsbury, Hull, Belfast, Aberdeen, Montrose, Denbigh, Paisley, Dumbarton, Hanley, Huddersfield, Middlesborough, Sunderland, Linlithgow, Forfar, Kirkcaldy, Cupar, Jedburgh, Stromness, &c., &c.

## PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS, Monday, May 15th.

## LAW OF DIVORCE.

Colonel EGERTON LEIGH asked the Attorney-General whether it was true that a woman, should her husband commit adultery, is not allowed by the law to marry again, a husband not being prevented marrying again should his wife commit adultery; and whether should such be the case, a Bill would be brought in to remedy the injustice to women.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The question of the hon. and gallant member seems to assume that, if a man's wife commits adultery, he can immediately marry again. That is not so. By the law as it stands a husband is enabled to obtain a divorce if his wife commits adultery, but a wife cannot obtain a divorce on that ground. She must go on further, and prove cruelty and desertion as well as adultery. I do not admit that the law as it stands works any injustice to the woman, and therefore I do not admit that a Bill on the subject is necessary.

NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.—  
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

The annual meeting of the Central Committee was held at the office in Berners-street, on Saturday, May 13th. The chair was taken by Mr. Ashurst. The following letter was read from Mr. Forsyth, M.P. :—

"61, Rutland Gate, S.W., April 28th, 1876.

"Dear Madam,—I am sorry that I cannot attend the meeting on the 13th May. I hope that you or your friends will not be dispirited nor discouraged by the adverse decision of a majority of the House of Commons on Wednesday last. Many a cause has ultimately triumphed after frequent defeats, and minorities are often in the right. I have no doubt whatever that the good sense of the people of England, and their regard for fairness and justice, will not long allow their fellow citizens who bear the burden of taxation and rates to remain unfranchised simply because they are women. And I can only advise you to persevere, and endeavour by persuasion and argument to convert opponents into friends. If, as we believe, the cause we advocate is right, it must in the end prevail. Think of the question of the abolition of slavery. I believe that Mr. Wilberforce and his friends sustained nearly forty defeats in the House of Commons, and yet they ultimately succeeded. And when a Bill to give women householders the electoral franchise has passed into a law, and it is seen how foolish have been the fears of its operation and effects, men will wonder at the opposition with which it has been met, and laugh at the fallacies which are now mistaken for arguments against it.—Yours faithfully,

"W. FORSYTH.

"Miss Blackburn."

Mrs. LUCAS, in moving the adoption of the report and financial statement, said that in all agitations there were various crises, and with regard to the one which they had just passed through in the House of Commons, she thought that the speech of one closely connected with her had created a great deal of interest in the country, but she had no doubt that the speech would, in the end, do them a great deal of good; and she thought also that the feeling created by the speech of Mr. Smollett must rouse indignation and bring them an increased number of adherents. (Hear, hear, and cheers.)

The motion was seconded by the Hon. Emmeline Canning, and carried. The second resolution, appointing the executive committee for the ensuing year, was then moved by Miss Beedy, seconded by Mr. Bennett, and carried. A vote of thanks to the chairman, moved by Mrs. Sims, seconded by Miss C. A. Biggs, concluded the proceedings.

## PUBLIC MEETING AT ST. GEORGE'S HALL.

A public meeting was held in St. George's Hall, Langham Place, which was crowded, on May 13th, under the presidency of the Right Hon. Russell Gurney, M.P., Recorder of London, who was supported by a goodly number of members of Parliament, including Mr. James Cowan, M.P.; Mr. W. A. Redmond, M.P.; Mr. C. H. Hopwood, Q.C., M.P.; Mr. Whalley, M.P.; Mr. O'Shaughnessy, M.P.; J. Hinde Palmer, Esq.; and Mr. Edward Maitland, Mr. Arthur Cohen, Q.C., and Mr. Edward Sterling. Many ladies who have distinguished themselves in the advocacy of reforms of various kinds were present, including Miss Becker, Miss F. P. Cobbe, Miss Anna Swanwick, Miss Isabella Tod, Mrs. M'Laren, Misses Ashworth, &c., &c.

The CHAIRMAN said: I am very glad to see assembled here so very numerous a body, determined to fail in no exertion to get rid of that which I believe to be a great evil to men, as well as a great injustice to women. Although in point of numbers we have no doubt sustained a defeat, I am not aware that we have sustained a defeat by having any additional weight of argument brought against us; although our opponents mustered in stronger force at the recent division than they ever did before. There was a certain quantity of that ribaldry and abuse which I think as disrespectful to the audience to whom it was addressed as to those who were the subjects of it. What, however, I have to deal with is whether there are any difficulties urged by those who might be willing to support us, and, if so, whether in any way their difficulties can be removed. One cannot help observing that the arguments used by our opponents were not against the matter contained in the Bill, but against other matters which were altogether outside the Bill, and which had not necessarily anything to do with it. Our opponents have assumed that our object is something altogether different from that which we professed by the Bill, and they rested their opposition rather on what they thought might follow from the Bill we proposed being carried. Well, that is a very old sort of argument, for I don't know any reform which has been effected but what has been met by its opponents always saying that they meant something else, and that their advocates really wished something very different to what they proposed to enact. (Cheers). That has been the line of argument always used, and I should have thought it would have been scouted by those who have been our principal opponents of late. I was surprised to hear it argued with so much force by some who have met with the same difficulty in the reforms which they themselves have carried. It has, however, been thought too useful a weapon not to be used on this occasion. We are told we wanted something much more extensive than that which we profess at present, at any rate, to carry out. For my own part I can say that my object is a very simple one, and it is found entirely in the provisions of the Act of Parliament which was introduced this year. I don't propose to carry it any further. It corrects exactly the injustice which I think at present exists. But the grounds upon which we advocate this measure are very often misunderstood and very much misstated. My ground is that by the law of this country our franchise is one which depends upon the ownership of landed property and upon the ratepaying occupation of houses or land. That is the simple qualification almost exclusively, and I cannot for the life of me see why a person occupying No. 13 in a street, paying rates for that house, should have a vote, when a person occupying No. 14 in the same street, paying the same rates, bearing the same burdens, should not be allowed to vote merely because one is a man and the other is a woman. (Cheers.) That is what I think is an injustice. It is as bad in theory as can be, and I think

it is equally bad in practice, and one who is by far the most formidable of our opponents, said that it was a difficult argument to answer. Well, I think it is, for neither he nor anyone else has succeeded in answering it. That being the ground upon which we rest our argument, the question is whether the burden of proof does not lie upon our opponents to show why that distinction should be made? I don't see what argument there is against us, except what are said to be the necessary consequences of what we desire. We are told that one necessary consequence of giving the franchise to women would be that we should be obliged to give them the right of becoming members of Parliament. I don't think that is a necessary consequence; certainly experience does not tell us that it is. I should like to point out that nearly a century ago the clergymen of this country were prevented from sitting in Parliament; but it has never yet been proposed that they ought therefore to be deprived of the franchise, nor has it during that century been suggested because they have the franchise that they must necessarily be entitled to sit in Parliament. But that disability is not confined to clergymen. For a great deal more than a century large numbers holding certain offices in this country were deprived of the franchise. Some little time ago, after a long struggle, we succeeded in getting them the franchise; but it is not, therefore, argued that these office-holders should therefore be entitled to sit in Parliament. All experience, therefore, is against the main argument of our opponents, and I don't see that it can be urged fairly as a necessary consequence of granting the franchise to women. It has been suggested that we rest our case entirely upon an assumed hostility between the sexes. For my part I have never rested it on any such grounds, and I never will, because I don't believe it to exist. (Hear, hear.) I disclaim as strongly as any one can the belief that there is real hostility between the sexes. I believe their interests to be the same, but I must say that there are many questions on which the sexes look from a different point of view. But it is very important that the views of all should be represented, and I have yet to learn that because women may take a different view from men they should be excluded from taking their part in the election of members of Parliament. (Cheers.) Many of our opponents are as anxious for the welfare of women as we are, and certainly the gentleman who made this suggestion entertains the most anxious desire for the welfare of women. There is no doubt that on certain points the interests of women are at variance with those of men, and it is difficult to make men adopt the views which we might otherwise expect them to adopt. Take, for instance, the question of medical education of women. I don't believe any one present will come to the conclusion that women have been fairly treated in that matter. (Hear.) I advert to this in consequence of what I observed of the discussion on this question last year. One of the ablest of our provincial papers made some comments upon that debate. It was a paper not favourable to our views, but it expressed extreme regret at the opposition given to that motion, because they said it materially strengthened the hands of those who were advocating the granting of women's suffrage, and they used this expression, "Does anyone believe that that course would have been taken if the persons who took it had had to meet women as their electors at the next election?" I think that shows that there is an important object to be gained in even a limited number of women having the franchise who would enjoy it if we carried our proposal. Those who sought their suffrages would then be brought into communication with women, and would know their feelings, wants, wishes, and necessities far better than they can possibly do in any other way. We are told that the persons who complain of being

excluded are our wives, sisters, and daughters. No doubt that is so, and I have no doubt their husbands, fathers, and brothers wish them well, but they don't always take the same view of things as their wives, daughters, and sisters, and I don't understand why these are not to be represented just the same as others. We are told that there are men who suffer hardships. Younger sons, for instance, suffer hardships, for the eldest sons carry off all the property, and the youngest are left without any; but we don't exclude younger sons from the franchise, and they, at any rate, have the opportunity of electing members of Parliament to assist in removing evils which affect them. The younger sons have thus the means of making their grievances known to those who have the means of remedying them. (Cheers.) There is not much more I am disposed to dwell upon. My object in taking part in this meeting was to see whether we were as hearty in the cause as before. I have not undertaken to take any very active part in the proceedings of the meeting, but rather to listen to what is said by others much more ably than anything I can say. I am not in the habit of taking part in public meetings, as my occupations are too onerous, and I have always endeavoured to avoid such engagements; this was, however, an occasion on which I thought I was fairly called upon by those who had been active supporters of the cause, and I was not able to refuse the wish they expressed that I should occupy the position I have assumed. (Cheers.)

Miss BECKER: Before proceeding to move the resolution which has been committed to my charge, I ask permission to read a letter which I have this day received from one who is a veteran in the cause of freedom, and in opposition to monopoly of all kinds. I mean the Right Hon. Charles Pelham Villiers, He writes:—

"39, Sloane-street, May 13th.

"Madam,—I regret that I cannot comply with your request in attending the meeting at St. George's Hall. You must not, on that account, however, infer that I am unfriendly to its object. I have voted in its favour on more than one occasion, and doubtless I shall do so again. It may be, as some think, that no great advantage at this time would accrue to the country by extending the electoral suffrage, but I cannot see any principle or consistency in withholding it, especially from those whose cause you are pleading. The Legislature has conferred the right on women of voting for their municipal representatives, of voting for (and, indeed, acting as) Poor-law Guardians, and the same with regard to School Boards, and they have always been entitled to fill certain parochial offices, and it is never alleged that in the discharge of these duties they have acted less worthily than men. In most respects, their rights as owners of property are concurrent with those of men. They can inherit peerages, and, as we know to our satisfaction, they can occupy the Throne. I cannot, therefore, see on what ground it is that they can reasonably be said to be disqualified from determining upon the claims of candidates who seek to represent their interests in Parliament, especially under the peaceful condition in which they would now record their votes. As far as I am acquainted with the objections usually alleged, I am bound to say that they only appear to be those which have always been offered whenever any fresh extension of liberty to the subject has been proposed, and which in former years I have myself heard urged against personal freedom, in the colonies, religious liberty in this country, the enfranchisement of the working classes, and against the abolition of every monopoly (political or commercial) whenever it has been assailed. We have seen, however, with what little success resistance upon these great matters has of late years been attended, and with what satisfaction the results of

past changes are now regarded by the country. You, then, have little reason to feel discouragement at the present position of your cause. You have only to persevere, making it clear to the public that your claim is just and possible to be enforced, and that political rights are now withheld where there is intelligence and capacity to use them wisely, and where the possession of them would afford protection and benefit to those who demand them. With great respect, dear madam, I remain, your obedient servant.

"C. P. VILLIERS.

"To Miss Lydia Becker."

The resolution which I beg to move is as follows:—"That this meeting hereby records its approval of the assimilation of the conditions of the Parliamentary to those of the municipal franchise, in so far as regards the disability of sex, and pledges itself to support the principle by every constitutional means." This resolution conveys simply and explicitly the object of our movement. Women exercise the franchise in England in municipal government on the same conditions as men. If they possess the qualification which entitles a man to vote, they are not denied the suffrage because they are women. We ask that this principle shall be extended to Parliamentary elections. This claim has just been rejected in the House of Commons by a considerable majority. Other claims for political privileges have undergone a similar ordeal, but their advocates have not been discouraged by a circumstance which in this country is an inevitable incident in the path of all reforms. (Applause.) No one will suppose that an adverse vote of the House of Commons will convince any woman who makes this claim as a matter of justice that the claim is unjust. Not all the eloquence of all the most eloquent men who ever lived could persuade an intelligent, patriotic woman, who feels an interest in the welfare of her country and cares for those about her, that she has no right to a vote if she has the qualification and pays her rates, any more than such eloquence could convince the same woman that she has no right to be educated if she can pay the college fees, or to sit down to dinner if she can pay the bill. (Applause.) The claim we make is constantly misrepresented. We are not asking for any revolutionary measure. We are not asking for an alteration of the conditions of the electoral law in order to admit women. We are not asking for an alteration in the conditions under which women exercise the local vote in order to admit them to the Parliamentary vote. But we are reproached with having ulterior aims concealed behind the modest dimensions of Mr. Forsyth's Bill, and it has been said that the supporters of that Bill were not honest, inasmuch as they did not avow such aims. But so far as this movement for women's suffrage is in any way represented by me, I disavow the aim of anything beyond that which we have already put forward. I am one of those women who would be perfectly satisfied with the Parliamentary franchise on the conditions on which women exercise their local vote; and I may say with confidence that in this I represent the great body of active workers, and the vast majority of women who are interested in this question. (Applause.) I neither desire nor demand more than is to be found within the four corners of Mr. Forsyth's Bill, and I am sufficiently conservative in my feelings to believe that the safest path to political freedom for men or women lies in the ancient lines of the constitution. But the very moderation of our demand is brought forward as a reason for refusing it. Our opponents say, "If your Bill has not an ulterior object it ought to have." (Laughter.) We reject it because it does not contain something else, and if it did contain that something else, we should reject it because we do not like that something else." (Laughter and applause.) They say, "A Bill for giving votes to women is unjust if it does not contain provisions for giving votes to married women, and we cannot

possibly give votes to married women; therefore, we reject a Bill which does not include such clauses." (Applause.) One of the objections raised to giving votes to women on the existing basis of their franchise was that many of the grievances complained of referred to the conditions of the marriage contract, and the vote would be given only to unmarried women. This objection is based on the fallacy of assuming that married women only are interested in the amendment of these conditions, and that it is, therefore, illogical to give votes to unmarried women for the purpose of redressing them. But it might be assumed, with far greater appearance of truth, that unmarried women alone are interested in such an alteration of the law. It is only before a contract is entered into that either of the parties can ask for an amendment of its conditions. If it were proposed to abrogate the rule of the common law, which vests in the husband absolutely property owned by a woman at the time of marriage, or which she may afterwards inherit, men might say that they had taken their wives under those conditions, and had thereby acquired rights that the Legislature could not justly destroy. So strongly was this felt at the time of the passing of the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, that the clauses dealing with property, as distinguished from earnings, are limited in their operation to persons married after the passing of the Act. The women who have been married since the 9th August, 1870, are living under different laws as to property from the women married before that date, and it is not probable that Parliament would make any further alteration in the law which should have a retrospective effect. There is, therefore, some ground for maintaining that it is only women as yet unmarried who can have any personal interest in any further amendment of the law with respect to the property of married women. From the speeches of some honourable members one would imagine that married and unmarried women were distinct orders of beings, instead of classes perpetually interchanging. They appear to think that the destiny of women is fixed according to the rule laid down by Eliza Spinks, the cook, in Mr. Calverley's pleasant verses—

"Then Eliza Spinks made answer, blushing, to the coachman John;  
"John, I'm born and bred a spinster; I've begun, and I'll go on."

(Laughter.) In the debate many statements were made and objections raised, which will afford matter for future consideration. I will limit myself on this occasion to one or two points raised by Mr. Bright. He said, "If a man lives in this house and votes, and a woman lives in that house, why should she not vote? That is a very plain question, and it is a question which it is not always easy for a man to answer." (Applause.) Mr. Bright did not give an answer to that question. He answered something else, which was not the question before the House. He said—"Many of us admit that it could do no harm to the country to give that woman a vote. But," he said, "the country has a right to determine how it will be governed—whether by one man, whether by few, or by many." If that is the case, I say the country has a right to determine whether it will admit a few women among the men who are to govern the country. But I should like to know what Mr. Bright means by the country. When he says the country has a right to determine whether it will be governed by one man or by few, does he mean that the one man or the few who govern have a right to determine whether the country shall be governed by them, or have those who are to be governed a right to a voice in the matter? Does Mr. Bright mean by "the country" the present possessors of political privileges, or does he include in his definition the prospective claimants to such privileges? The question of admitting any more persons to the suffrage must, of course, be determined by the present electorate; but that is not quite the same thing as saying that the present

possessors of the franchise have the right to determine how the country shall be governed. The householders in boroughs have the power of withholding the franchise from the householders in counties; but the householders in counties may have an equal right to the franchise with the householders in towns. Mr. Trevelyan says, on behalf of his clients, "A man who lives in a house on this side of the boundary votes; a man who lives in a house on that side does not vote." Would the man thus excluded be satisfied to be told by Mr. Bright, as a reason for the exclusion, that the country had a right to determine how it should be governed? Would he not reply, "I have a stake in the country equal to that of my neighbour who votes, and I feel that I have a right to a voice in determining how the country shall be governed?" (Cheers.) I should like further to ask Mr. Bright whether by "the country" he means the men only, or the men and women of the country. If he says "the men only," that is tantamount to saying that those who at present possess political power have the sole right to possess it. This is very unlike the doctrine we are accustomed to hear from Mr. Bright. If he says the men and women have a right to determine how the country shall be governed, he concedes the principle of our claim. Mr. Bright says the Bill is based on an assumed hostility between the sexes. I do not hesitate to characterise this assertion as unjust, ungenerous, and untrue. (Applause.) Women ask that those among them who are qualified should exercise the vote appertaining to their qualification, because they feel it to be a matter of justice. They repudiate with indignation the assumption that their claim is based on hostility, real or imaginary, between the sexes. (Cheers.) What would Mr. Bright say if he were told that the claim for household suffrage in counties was based on an assumed, constant, and irreconcilable hostility between the householders in counties and those in towns? The assertion would sound monstrous in his ears, and even his vocabulary might fail him in the attempt to describe the mental condition of those who should oppose a claim, just and reasonable in itself, on the ground of such gratuitous aspersions on the motives of those who make it. This excuse for resisting our claim sounds as absurd and unworthy to us as it would to the county householders if it were offered to them, and is just as little likely to be accepted as a solution of the question in the one case as in the other. Mr. Bright has had some experience of warfare of this kind. He has been persistently accused of a design to set class against class. No one has suffered more than he from this kind of misrepresentation against which we protest. Of all living men he should have been the last to steal this base weapon from the armoury of his adversaries, and to hurl it, not against strangers to himself in aims, in sympathies, and in blood, but against those of his fellow-citizens who are aspirants for the privileges which he has taught them to value, who are learning the lessons which he has spent his life in enforcing—against the women of his household and his home. (Loud applause.)

Mr. JAMES COWAN, M.P., supported the motion. The question, he remarked, of women's suffrage was one which was not only of great importance to women themselves but to the country generally; and though it might not be successful for some years to come, he firmly believed that the movement in which they were engaged would ultimately triumph. When women were admitted to the exercise of the franchise the effects of that admission would be speedily felt. Whatever else they did, women would be always sure to vote in favour of peace, of economy, and of temperance. (Applause.)

Miss FRANCES POWER COBBE, who was received with loud cheering, said:—Mr. Chairman, I had no intention of intruding upon you to-day, or venturing to speak upon this subject. I

am a scribbler by trade, and not a speaker, but I will venture to say a few words to-day. I had no intention of addressing this meeting at all this year. I had expected that we should hear, as usual, in the House of Commons a certain number of solemn platitudes (I think I may venture to call them) and remarks a little aside the question, and also some jokes that seem—at least to us ladies—to be rather strange things for masculine senators to use in discussing the interests of women. Well, I thought that we could afford to leave those "chartered libertines of debate," as the *Morning Post* styles one of them, to amuse the House as to them seemed fit. But the case is altered when a great and generous-hearted statesman—a man whom even those who differ from him very much in politics, as I do, yet regard with the profoundest personal respect and sympathy—when he takes up seriously the case against us, then I think it calls upon every woman who has a heart and a tongue to say—"No; it is not true that women have no wrongs. No; their interests are not always considered and provided for by men. It is not true that there is nothing in the condition of women that a parliamentary franchise might reasonably set right; and it is not true, in any sense whatever, that this demand for a voice in the legislation of the country ought to be regarded in the odious light of a war between the sexes." That statement has been already commented on, and I will not refer to it any more. I believe with all my heart that Tennyson says right when he says "the Woman's cause is Man's"—that we are one in reality, and that the interests of one must always be the interests of the other. I should as soon think that it would be for the interest of my right hand to hold my left hand in a sling, as that it is the interest of men that women should be kept away from their rights, or kept out of the life in which Providence may have given them the power to be useful. That same principle applies to every limb of the social body. I entirely believe that the interests of all classes are really the same. I suppose that we all agree that the interest of the nobles is that of the people, of the sovereign that of the subject, of the employers that of the employed, and of the capitalist that of the labourer. (Applause.) And, yet I perceive that notwithstanding that great underlying interest we have an immense system of balances and safeguards, laws of every sort and kind, to prevent one of those classes trespassing on another. The reason why we require those safeguards is that these deep, underlying interests are forgotten in the hurry and selfishness of life, and I have yet to learn that as between men and women this same short-sighted selfishness has not at least an equal place. Mr. Bright says that "it is a scandalous and odious libel to say that women are a class," or "that they suffer the least from not having direct representation." I am prepared to maintain, on the contrary, that they form the class of all others which needs the protection of direct representation, seeing that their special interests concern not only money or land, but things tenfold dearer—personal rights, and rights over children. I will venture to say how the question appears to a woman, not from the point from which Mr. Bright shows it, but how it appears to me. Now it seems to me that there are two classes of women in the world. On one side I see women who are lapped in every luxury which the hands of loving fathers and husbands can give them. The wind of heaven never visits their cheeks too roughly; they never know any of the great realities of life. Life is from beginning to end one long, sweet holiday. They never hear rough words, never know toil, never know hunger, never know any of the rougher part of life; and I am sorry to say that, though some of these are among the most excellent and unselfish of human beings, and live in palace-homes as holily and as truly for God as ever nun lived in her

cell, yet others are not so. They are spoiled by the indulgences which their vanity, their luxuriousness, their selfishness receive every hour of the day; they are heartless; they are silly; they are frivolous; their nobler faculties lie dormant; they live for stupid, silly fashion, and lead the lives of butterflies in a world of toil. (Applause.) I do not say these women are wicked, but they are like the gods of Epicurus, "too bright and blooming in their own blue skies,"—or, shall we say drawing-rooms, with blue plates crawling up to the ceiling?—to heed the groans of their sisters in the streets sordid below. These exquisite ladies pass over the muddy places of mortal life, like Queen Elizabeth treading on Raleigh's cloak. Well, these fine ladies meet with the members of Parliament and other gentlemen, their acquaintances, at their own splendid dinner-parties, and they sweetly assure them that everything is perfectly right as regards women; they want nothing. The world is absolutely as they would have it—the "*meilleur des mondes possible*" for women. (Laughter.) That is their account of it, and then members of Parliament come and tell us that all the "best" women they know say that they do not want the franchise. (Laughter.) As for the demand for the suffrage, they regard it as something between a Joke and a Sin, that worst of all kinds of sin in the modern Decalogue—a sin against the great god Taste. Well, of course, we all know that it is a great deal prettier and nicer thing to be contented and to find everything smooth and pleasant in the world, than to have to rough it, and say that we want something different. I do not wonder that men think those the best women; but some other women may think differently. I suppose there are from ten to twenty thousand—or let us be liberal, and say 40,000—of those very happy women. And then I see on the other side, not ten or twenty thousand, but several hundred thousand women—perhaps there are a million or so—who are very poor, struggling sorrowfully, painfully, often failing under pressure of want of employment, of underpaid, unhealthful, unhelpful employment, or of grinding oppression and cruelty from those whose duty it is to protect and cherish them. With all the difficulties which both men and women undergo in the poorer classes, and with all the double troubles, the double weakness, the double difficulties, which under every circumstance beset the path of women—they have to fight a far harder battle than ever falls to the lot of man. And when I look at these women's faces, I seem to see in them stories of years of sordid toil, of petty cares, of pleasureless lives, of blighted expectations, of wrong and oppression—borne as if those things were natural to them. I say unhesitatingly that there is wrong, grievous wrong, somewhere. (Cheers.) It seems to me that this is a shocking state of things. I will not detain you by telling all the stories which I could recall of the state of these women, whose lives from their very childhood began in poverty. A little child told me in Battersea Park yesterday that her mother would not let her skip. She must not have a skipping rope, because it wore out her shoes. I never heard of a little boy who was not allowed to skip. (Laughter.) I recollect once having something to do with a party of poor women, who went for pleasure down to the seaside. They had been living within eight or nine miles of the sea, and yet they had never gone down to the sea, and they had never been on a railway, and had never had a bit of pleasure. When their husbands were asked to let them go, they said—"What do they want of pleasure? We want the pleasure." (Laughter.) Well, these poor things have no pleasures. The fact is their lives are dull and miserable. I say that this state of things is bad for rich women, and bad for the poor; and it is bad for men, because it is bad for women. I do not know or believe that the suffrage will cure all these evils, but I believe

it will tend more than any other measure which human ingenuity can devise to do so. I believe that it will make the rich women at least a shade less frivolous, and give the better ones among them an intelligent interest in graver things than blue plates and the last new opera. And I feel assured that it will relieve many of the burdens of the poor both indirectly and by obtaining speedy legislation upon all matters affecting them. I think that when the attention of men shall be more drawn to this subject, some means will be found, in many ways, of alleviating the condition of poor women. I think that if the women had the franchise, they would, at least, call attention to this state of things. I do not mean to say for a moment (let me be understood here) that men willingly pass over these things; that they intend to do so. I do not say that the members of Parliament do not wish to show kindness and to do justice; but it is in the nature of things that, when they have sixty causes all pressing upon them, if, out of those sixty, fifty-nine are pressed by their constituents, and one of them remains to be pressed by people who are not their constituents, it is no wonder that that one cause goes to the wall. I think that this one answer is enough with regard to what has been said by Mr. John Bright. These ladies will correct me if I am under mistake, but I think that the House of Commons was counted out six times when the Married Women's Property Bill was before it. Can we have a greater reason than that? Six times the House of Commons refused to sit while there was a Bill before it which concerned the very lives of women—if I may say so—or what was next to their lives. That would not have happened if women had had the franchise. If they had the right of voting, there would be an indirect respect for them, and they would be treated with very different consideration. Those cruel and violent crimes which are for ever happening would be, to a certain degree, checked, not only by means of legislation, but by a general growth of respect for women. It is not unnatural that gross and violent men should entertain a disrespect to persons who cannot exercise at any time the rights of citizenship, and who are comprehended in the class, and placed on the same level, with felons and idiots. (Laughter.) I will not say much more—"go on"—but I must just remark that there are a few privileges that Mr. Bright particularly mentioned to be set against this sole grievance of having no rights of citizenship whatever. One of these privileges is, that maidservants are not taxed like men. Well, I should think that that told on maidservants about as much as it did for the ponies under thirteen hands high, which were also exempt from taxation two or three years ago. I suppose that that was a very good thing for the owners of the ponies, but it was of less consequence to the ponies themselves. (Laughter.) The next thing which is mentioned as a great privilege is, that in cases of trial, of breach of promise of marriage, the women generally get an unjust verdict. (Laughter.) Mr. Bright thinks that this is a great privilege. I am not of opinion that it is ever good for people to get an unjust verdict at all; but I should like to say that this notion is a most curious specimen of the masculine feeling about women. Look at this point. A woman may lose her property, and there is little feeling about that. She may lose her limbs; she may be trampled upon; she may have a black eye, or lose her eye altogether; she may lose her teeth by being knocked down; or, perhaps, she may lose her life; and the feelings of men on those subjects are very moderate. But if she should lose a MAN! then their sympathy knows no bounds. (Loud laughter.) Thousands of pounds are given freely for that loss. (Renewed laughter.) Well, then there is another thing. Mr. Bright did not mention it, but a very leading and important journal has cited it as one of our great privileges. That paper delicately expresses it, but I call

it the privilege of telling lies with impunity. (Laughter.) I will give you the exact words of the journal. It says that women may "survive the broken word which brands the man with ignominy." That is put forward as a great privilege. I confess I have a curiosity to see the gentleman who feels that it is a privilege to tell lies without peril of being kicked. Well, now, those are all our privileges. As to our grievances, I will not recite the list of them; our educational disadvantages (ninety-five per cent of the public endowments being devoted to boys), or the various injustices under which we suffer as regards property. I will only touch on one matter in conclusion, which I think sufficiently proves the position we take up, as against Mr. Bright, namely, that women have wrongs, and do "suffer from not having direct representation." There is one interest in a woman's life (when God gives it to her) supreme and above all others—the love of her mother when she is a child, the love of her child when she is a mother. I need not dilate on the dearness and the holiness of this tie, the image here upon earth of God's own love. Even in the poor brutes we honour the maternal devotion which gives courage to the timid bird or sheep; and there are few human hearts, I hope, which would not burn with indignation at putting such love to the test, like that eminent physiologist who cut to pieces a dog nursing her young, and then in her uttermost agony brought her puppies to her to see what she would do with them. The dying beast, it appears, licked and fondled her little ones—and so "science" acquired the fact that mothers love their offspring! Well, in human parents' hearts this love is of course ennobled, sanctified, and made immortal by all the higher elements of our moral nature. No one dreams of questioning its sacredness or its importance; nay, women are sometimes told that they are born for nothing else than for this crown of life. How, then, do the laws of England—the old laws which have come down to us from stern old heathen Rome; but which are but little changed to this day on our statute books—how do they treat this one supreme interest of women? They tell each English mother (you will correct me, Mr. Recorder, if I err) that her child is not hers, but her husband's; that he may take it from her arms while he lives; and that it is to be wrenched from her when he dies by his heirs, if there be even a presumption that he desired it to be educated in a different faith from her own. Of late years some exceptions and mitigations of these laws have been made in cases where so great a personage as the Lord Chancellor may see fit to intervene; but the principle of the law, and its deadly educational action,—making men deem a human mother's rights no greater than those of the poor cow, whose calf they may sever from her at will—this has never been changed. That it would be changed during the first session after the passing of Mr. Forsyth's Bill, when widows would have votes for members of Parliament, I have very little doubt indeed; nor that with such change would begin a worthier estimate and a deeper reverence for motherhood and womanhood together. I advocate woman suffrage as the natural and needful constitutional means of protection for the rights of the weaker half of the nation. I do this, as you have heard, as a woman pleading for women. But I do it also, and none the less confidently, as a citizen and for the sake of the whole community, because it is my conviction that such a measure is no less expedient for men than just for women, and that it will redound in coming years ever more and more to the happiness, the virtue, and the honour of our country.

Mr. HINDE PALMER (lately M.P. for Lincoln) supported the resolution. He said: From my personal experience I am able to confirm what has been stated by Miss Cobbe in her very able and impressive speech. In the last Parliament I had

charge of a Bill for the amendment of an Act which was passed in 1870, relating to the property of married women. The Act of 1870 was carried through the House of Commons by my right honourable friend in the chair; but it was so "mangled" in the House of Lords, that when it became law it left most of the wrongs of women still unredressed. The object of my Bill was to cure this evil, and to secure to married women the full enjoyment of their own property. I carried the second reading of this Bill by a considerable majority; but I was prevented from getting it through its subsequent stages by repeated "counts out," in consequence of the careless indifference with which the just claims of women were regarded by members. I may also allude to another instance, upon a subject of deep interest to women, which has also been referred to by Miss Cobbe. An Act was passed in the last Parliament, to extend the powers of Justice Talfourd's Act, enabling women, when separated from worthless husbands, to obtain the custody of their children. This was only to be done through the expensive process of the Court of Chancery. I proposed an amendment giving to women of the poorer classes, whose maternal feelings were quite as strong as those of richer mothers, a right to apply to the County Courts for similar relief, in a cheap and summary way; but on a division I was beaten by a majority of 14. Now, if women had votes, and could thus bring their influence to bear on members, the result in both these instances would probably have been very different. A great amount of sentimental absurdity, not unmingled with coarse and vulgar detraction, has been uttered against the women's suffrage Bill and its supporters; but the substantial equity and constitutional good sense of the measure, have never been really refuted, and therefore I have supported it in Parliament, and should do so again.

Mr. HALE, who ascended the platform from the body of the hall, for the purpose of proposing an amendment, maintained that at present women were under no great disability, and that their true interests lay in allowing matters to remain as they were. (Applause.) His amendment was "That it was inexpedient at present to confer the electoral franchise on ladies."

A person in the gallery, whose name was not ascertained, seconded the amendment.

On a show of hands being taken, the motion of Miss Becker was carried by a large majority.

Miss STURGE, who was warmly welcomed, moved the second resolution, which was as follows:—"That this meeting hereby expresses its earnest thanks to Mr. Forsyth, Mr. Jacob Bright, Dr. Ward, Mr. Fawcett, Sir Robert Anstruther, and Sir Charles Legard, for introducing and supporting the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill; also to the 161 members of the House of Commons who voted or paired in its favour in the division on the second reading of the measure, on April 26, 1876, and respectfully requests Mr. Forsyth and his coadjutors to take steps for the re-introduction of the Bill at an early period next session." In moving this resolution I do not wish to say one word that may seem harsh or bitter against those who have opposed the Bill. I was glad to hear a proposal in the meeting for three cheers for Mr. John Bright. Now as I read his speech upon women's suffrage it seemed to me so very doubtful and desponding that I thought he was very much in need of cheering. (Laughter.) I often admire Mr. Leatham's speeches, and it is only when he gets upon women's suffrage that I think he becomes ungentlemanly and unmanly. We owe much to all who have worked in the past struggles for freedom—their success has made ours possible, as I once suggested to Mr. Bright—perhaps the repeal of the Corn Laws has led men insensibly to see that women can do without restrictions just as well as corn. It was not either

my privilege or my penance to listen this year to the annual objections raised against the progress of the Women's Suffrage Bill in the House of Commons—penance because from shortness of air that ladies' gallery is a very uncomfortable place; but Mr. Bright says we "deal in very little questions," and as air may be a little question I pass on to the objections—objections which reminded me, when I read them, of a timid lady on board a vessel who asked the captain "if there was any danger." His reply was, "Plenty of fear, but no danger." If he had stood on the floor of the House of Commons on the afternoon of April 26 I think he would have repeated that remark. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) It is always difficult to understand fears unless you share them, and if I read the opinions of opposing legislators with any degree of comprehension it is not our Bill they so much dread as the consequences of their own imagination, for which we are not responsible. What will it lead to? is always an alarming question; it has been asked again and again upon the eve of every reform, and it will continue to be asked to the end of time. If we are just and fear not, progress may be relied upon to give satisfactory answers. Mr. Bright in one of his speeches alludes to a landowner who came and told him that he had not known what good the repeal of the Corn Laws would do his class; experience of the results had converted him, for he had not found his apprehensions verified. When railways were first introduced, it was asserted by those connected with public schools that it would be impossible to prevent the boys from getting away. Has not the result been better than their fears, and should not the past history of alarms reassure those who tremble to think of women sharing the political life of the nation? (Hear, hear.) The kind-hearted gentleman who preceded me has spoken so pleasantly of us that I do not believe he would long refuse what we ask. He thinks the laws are more favourable to women than we represent. The fact is, the common law of England gives a married mother not the slightest right to her child. We complain that the process of defeating the common law is cumbrous and costly, so that it is useless to poor and suffering women. He tells us we are not a class; why, then, should Parliament impose restrictions upon us as if we were? Men say we have household franchise, and men cast out women householders as ineligible, thereby making womanhood a distinct line of demarcation, and treating us as a class. Mr. Leatham says "no woman can feel a sense of inferiority as regards other women because she has not a vote, for the simple reason that no woman has a vote." But does not this place the stigma of inferiority upon womanhood itself? (Hear, hear.) If I am not a householder it is just and fair that I should not have a vote, but I decline to be disfranchised for being a woman; it is neither fair nor just. Like Mr. Brookes of Middlemarch, Mr. Leatham appeared to have taken an extensive view, and his documents referred not to the bill in question so much as to the women of the United States. I recall some lines in which the American poet, Whittier, describes the woman suffragist as one who

Strives, less for her own sex than ours,  
With principalities and powers,  
And points us upward to the clear  
Sunned heights of her new atmosphere.

Shortcomings in advocates do not necessarily tell against the thing advocated, and all who have worked and won in past struggles for freedom have felt the injustice of being decried for the opinions of everybody who may chance to support their movement. "I believe in Christianity," said a good man once; "but I should not like to endorse everything that has been said in support of it." For the same reason I protest

against the production by Mr. Bright, or any one else, of stray letters, as if they were fair arguments against the principle of Mr. Forsyth's Bill. (Cheers.) There has been no attempt to qualify for the School Board or municipal franchise in the way the letter Mr. Bright read suggested, therefore reasoning from analogy contradicts it. Mr. Bright says, "strength is stronger than weakness," therefore I am glad he did not make a strong speech against us. He dwells much on results to be apprehended. If a thing is right we need not trouble ourselves about results. (Hear, hear.) In opposition to the Reform Bill of 1832, I think it was conclusively shown that the pocket boroughs had returned some of the best members, but it did not follow that therefore reform was superfluous, and if women's votes would be, as he implies, too much under the control of priest, parson, and minister. The gentleman who moved the amendment thinks it is a question whether women have not already more influence than men, if this be so, then "priest, parson, and minister" will only restore the balance in favour of men. If their influence is injurious I know no better cure than giving them more opportunity to cultivate independence of thought and judgment. So long as you educate women to believe that men, because they are men, know better what is right for women than women can know for themselves, you are preparing the ground for priestcraft. Although we have been defeated in Parliament, I know that there are many cheering signs abroad. In Birmingham not only have the Liberal Association twice passed resolutions at their public meetings in favour of the franchise for women householders, but the body of four hundred who manage with great energy the affairs of the Liberal Association, this year petition for it, and the National Reform Conference held at Manchester has also passed a resolution in favour of it. (Applause.) The very day after Mr. Bright's speech, I noticed that the only Liberal paper in Birmingham in which I thought I had never before seen anything in favour of women's suffrage, had an article to prove that ours was certainly a very innocent and desirable measure. Hon. members seem to think we shall bring strife and dissension into families. Mr. Leatham speaks of legislative subordination of the wife as if the happiness of the family rested upon it, whereas it seems to me that upon voluntary love and unselfishness grows the beauty of home life. Mr. Froude somewhere comments on the absurdity of commanding a wife to love her husband, because love cannot be commanded—it must be won. The hardship of a woman losing her vote if she marries has been touchingly depicted, but if it is her voluntary choice she will find with her husband the unity of purpose which should make them one. At present marriage is too often degraded by being made a woman's sole chance of position, property, or influence. We look to an extension of our views as likely to check miserable and sordid unions, in which a superficial and hollow peace may rest upon the subordination of the wife and take the place of a higher and holier harmony. Though the illustrious reformer, whose words we have been accustomed to regard as apples of gold in pictures of silver, spoke to us from Doubting Castle, we shall still go forth like Christian and his friend with unfettered purpose, for the key of the fortress is in our hands. The calm conviction—which is the key to all true success—that our cause is righteous and shall prevail. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. O'SHAUGHNESSY, M.P., seconded the resolution. He said: An accident prevented me on the late division from doing what I did previously and shall always do, voting in favour of the measure. Therefore, having no claim to the gratitude which this resolution expresses, I am at liberty to support it. If gratitude be ever due to legislators, it is

certainly due to those who supported this Bill, and the motives on which that gratitude should rest suggest reasons for great hope, to my mind a certainty, of the success of this movement. The members who voted aye did so of their own free will, and without any of the pressure from constituents or agitators, without those terrors which influence so many votes. They voted aye without the impulse of any class, and in the face of principles which prevail not only amongst men but amongst women—principles which have all the intractability of prejudices. But the motives which actuated your friends must of necessity have been of an encouraging kind; their assistance was not bought by hope or by fear, they had to overcome traditions which prevailed not only around them, but probably in their own minds. You could bring no pressure to bear; they yielded to an appeal to reason, and that appeal arrayed in 1876 a number as large as ever supported it, names of every shade, many of them names of distinction, some names which were once the champions of causes less hopeful than yours. (Cheers.) When you reflect on the motives which must have actuated such men you are justified, in justice to the great cause of which this struggle is only a part, you are bound to feel encouraged, and to persevere. Ladies and gentlemen, this question of female suffrage is only a branch, and not the most important, of the question of the position of women. We know the apathy with which classes who have attained the privilege of voting treat it—and so it may be, so very likely it will be in the case of women; but if a vote be of little intrinsic value, it has an important bearing on the great social problem of which you are the centre. We hear it said, "Thank God we have a House of Lords," and I think we may say, thank God we have a press. This is a question that must rest on broad considerations; and after reading the small and inconsistent arguments, for such many of them were, which were urged against you in the House of Commons, it was satisfactory to find the question canvassed in the leading journals with calmness and decorum, to find the pointless witticisms and fallacies neglected, and the real issue plainly stated. It is pleasant to emerge into the open field and to see our opponents face to face. It is not because women cannot bear arms, because they are represented by their brothers and fathers, because the measure would involve a concession to a nameless class—denied to a wife—that you will be refused the franchise. If you are refused it will be on the grounds pointed out in the *Times*, that there is something in the nature of women, in their capacities and defects, some unchangeable principle of society which forbids them political rights. Within a few days after the debate the same journal contained an article called forth by an episode in the Divorce Court, and perhaps in the social literature of these days there is nothing which suggests so strong a misgiving as to our views on the capacities, the duties, and the social relations of women. The writer draws the career and vicissitudes of a lady of our day, and the picture applies to many women of every class. We know their aimless and superficial education, their unprofitable youth, devoted to no object, and evoking no energy, and the liberty which, in our day, society gives them as grown-up single and married women. No one can reflect without seeing that woman has drifted from the moorings at which the reserve, and seclusion, and calm subjection of past generations held her, and that unless she is taught in the new scene of social freedom which we all see and feel in development, to increase her self-reliance, and find occupations that will awaken her energies, we must expect women as their freedom increases to become more exposed to the dangers which idleness and undirected energies bring. If the dangers, whose existence may be assumed on such high authority, increase at their present rate,

they will do more to overturn society than universal suffrage amongst women. (Cheers.) Well, is there any stay for this tendency, or are we to fold our hands and moralise over it? Is it not time to think of allowing women to have some object in life besides the discharge of the duties of a household, duties which, we are told, under the present system, are beginning to fall into danger of being neglected. Most women have to pass years of womanhood before they marry, and neither the formation of their own character, nor economical considerations, will permit them much longer to pass with impunity those years without some definite occupation. Society is beginning to discover that woman's mind is like man's in this at least, that it cannot be properly balanced unless the faculties and self-reliance, which the usages of centuries have almost extinguished, be awakened. (Hear.) Now, the only way in which this can be accomplished is by giving women a sound education, by teaching them that they are expected to employ their unmarried years in useful and profitable occupations, as all women of an inferior class do, and by throwing open to them employments which the unwritten law of society at present closes. You know how rigorous those laws are, and how deeply they are founded in the principles of society. Now, the chief value, in my humble opinion, to be attached to suffrage is that it will be a declaration by the highest authority that these principles should be regarded as prejudices and abolished, and every time that you evoke such an expression as your friends afforded on Wednesday fortnight, you shake the barriers which stand between your sex and the enlarged and salutary sphere of employment to which, if society is to be saved, they must be admitted. (Hear.) It may seem strange that I should attribute to an Act of Parliament so subtle and powerful an influence. I do so because I have experienced in my own country the instant effect which an Act of Parliament can have on men's manners and minds. It is only one who has felt as I have what an act of social significance like the disestablishment of the Irish Church did to take away from the imagination of the Protestant the assumption of superiority, and from the Catholic the consciousness of superiority that can form any idea of the effect on the position of women which would result from their being declared entitled to the franchise. (Cheers.) But, ladies, while you labour for your sex in this sphere, leave no stone unturned, in the more practical, if humbler, lines of action. Above all things look to the education of women, for on that must depend their capacity, when they grow up, for understanding the problem of their existence, or rather for admitting that such a problem exists. If they remain as inadequately educated—(expressions of dissent)—I hope I have said nothing too strong, I hear no expressions of dissent from the ladies around me—(hear, hear)—you must expect future generations of women to be, I shall not say as hostile, but as unconscious of the importance of your movement as the great body of the present. (Cheers.)

Miss TOP said in support of the motion: In listening to the speeches of the opponents of this Bill in the House of Commons, nothing surprises one more than the confident appeal to history against us. Of course they will admit that even the history of these three nations contains the figures of many great and heroic women, and many less known to fame who have proved themselves true patriots. But they do not seem to recognise the fact that history speaks just as plainly of the common rights of women, which have been limited and injured by the same causes that have limited and injured the common rights of men, though, no doubt, to a much greater extent. We have learned from the valuable works of Sir Henry Maine and other historical jurists, how fair and just the ancient laws both of England and Ireland were to women, and how they were both changed for the worse by the irruption of Norman power. Now

we have got rid of most of that feudal influence, in other cases, in which law widely affects the welfare of the people. We are, therefore, really appealing to the ancient and wholesome rules of our ancestors in claiming legal equality for women in politics, as well as in education and other matters of importance. But the old spirit was never dead, and under the most unfavourable circumstances, the spirit of liberty may be seen asserting itself here and there. Its strongholds were the local rights and privileges, and the local representation upon which they depended; and it is significant that it is there, also, we must look for the recognition of the rights of women who held independent positions. Some people, to prevent the analogy between the municipal and Parliamentary franchises from having its due weight, are bent upon depreciating the former. They make little of that local self-government which, as has been often remarked, has played so important a part in the political education of the people at large. We, on the other hand, remembering its history, feel that those local franchises which are already possessed by women are of great value. We are treading exactly the same path which other bodies of citizens have trodden before us. We are learning our political lesson in the same school. From time immemorial certain franchises have been held by men and women alike, when they had the same qualifications. The rate-book was the register. Crabbe says of his clever woman farmer—

No parish business in the place could stir  
Without direction or assent from her;  
By turns she took each office as it fell—  
Knew all their duties, and discharged them well.

And no one wondered at her. These, and some new franchises, are now held by women-ratepayers throughout the three kingdoms; and not a few of them do exercise not merely their right of voting, but a rational and keen discrimination as to motive and character, and take a steady interest in all the questions with which their local representatives deal. (Hear, hear.) In short, it is for them, as for men, a school of political knowledge and experience. In England these opportunities have been enlarged by the granting of the municipal franchise, so that in the largest portion of the kingdom every franchise except the Parliamentary is already held and exercised by women—with benefit to themselves and, as I believe, to their neighbours also. During the debate on Mr. Forsyth's Bill a foolish taunt was thrown out, that it seemed the municipal franchise was not greatly valued, as no efforts were made to obtain it for women in Ireland and Scotland. I do not know whether this is the case as regards Scotland, but it is not as regards Ireland. The members who introduced the recent Irish Municipal Franchise Bill, both in this and previous sessions, were asked to introduce a clause giving the franchise to women, and frankly agreed to do so. If the Bill had been carried, the mode of enfranchisement would have been precisely analogous to the mode in which it was conferred upon women in England. This possession of local franchises is one of the most tangible evidences that our present claim is no sporadic growth, but simply a wise development of ideas which have their root in the past. It is part of a movement which no one ventures to ignore, but which every one pays a certain homage to by approving of some one of its phases. We all know that there is a widespread and persistent effort on the part of women to obtain more culture, more light, larger means to perform duty. From what does this movement take its rise? What creates it, what prepares the way for it in so many different places? We are told, of course, that it is a few agitators that do this: that a few people, by much speaking and writing, stir up many who would rather sit still. But it is a shallow nature only which could attribute it to any machinery, or, indeed, to

any temporary cause whatever. (Hear, hear.) It is simply impossible for such a movement to have attained its present proportions if it depended upon mechanical stimulation, especially considering the very slender material resources which women possess. No; such a gradual but constant uprising of a great section of society is the necessary result of the amelioration of the whole of that society. If we were to believe our opponents, it is a consequence without a cause. We know better. This presentation of the claims of women, with the absolute certainty of their ultimate success, is the natural, the inevitable result of the advance of Christianity and civilisation. (Cheers.) The present grows out of the past. Without noble-hearted and public-spirited women in other crisis of our country's history men would have made no effectual stand for liberty and justice. And now we follow in the footsteps both of our ancestors and our ancestresses, when we claim, in accordance with present circumstances, a privilege which will enable us to do the same duties on a larger scale, and in a manner adapted to modern exigencies. Nothing could be more fatal to a true and dignified national life than a separation between culture and religion on the one hand, and politics on the other. We have seen something like this in other nations, and whatever the cause, the result is always evil. Now, the greatly increased means and opportunities of sound education now offered to women would go far to produce this baleful effect if they stood alone. Men of fine nature cannot divide their lives into two halves. If the higher vision and enlarged thought of their wives, and sisters, and friends are steadily turned away from politics, they will cease to apply their own best powers to their consideration. But it is of good omen for the future of the nation that such is not the case, and that the strong tide of public feeling is carrying forward, at the same moment, the desire for sounder and wider education and the desire for a share of political rights. Mere abstractions, happily, do not attract much affection in these countries. We want to use all new knowledge and power, as we have on the whole used the old, for immediate and practical application to the duties of life, whether these are few or many. If it were possible, which it is not, to put a stop to this movement, our short-sighted opponents would soon find that they had injured the country at large much more than us in particular. They wish that women shall occupy themselves exclusively with private affairs, or at least that they shall care only for public affairs in so far as some one they are related to is engaged in them. Can anything be devised more likely to lower and vulgarise politics than thus to keep away from them those persons who are most prompt to recognise the claims of religion and moral principle? (Cheers.) We presume they don't wish women to become indifferent to the welfare of their country. Yet, in their anxiety to separate women from politics, they are endeavouring to separate politics from patriotism, and that just at the time when Parliament is making itself more vividly and directly felt in all the details of life than ever before. Such a separation, at such a time, would result in placing legislation and the Legislature in the meanest and most contemptible light, not only in the eyes of the excluded ones, but in the eyes of all within their circle of influence. Is this a result of which a statesman should be proud? The mere discouragement of women's thoughts and opinions in political matters, the mere intimation, so publicly given by men to whom the country looks up, that they do not wish to know the convictions of women, nor even their own statement of their own interests, is sufficient of itself to create, if not to justify, that low standard of political life, that indifference to the eternal laws of right in public affairs, which we all deprecate. Sometimes our opponents take refuge from the uncomfortable magnitude

of such truths in the small considerations of selfishness. They profess to think that equality of civil position will lead practically to pre-eminence of women—no compliment to themselves, certainly. This is simply a repetition of the cry which has always been raised when any class claimed equality. (Hear, hear.) When Catholics sought admission into the circle of the constitution, and when Jews sought it, the same cry was raised; and the echo of the alarms created by the last Reform Bill has scarcely yet died away. But the cry is more foolish in this case than in any of the former. For by the Women's Suffrage Bill we should admit a great many women of property, a larger number of women of education, and a still larger number of hard-working women who are earning their own bread with head or hand; and a mere fraction only of those ignorant and lawless persons from whom the State may expect danger. Never was there any extension of the franchise which brought so many tranquillising elements, and so few disturbing elements, as this would do. Yet our opponents are, or affect to be, afraid of our revolutionising society. Who are the people whose admission is to work so singular and sad a change in public affairs? They are the daughters of the men who have long possessed all the privileges of citizenship—they have the same hereditary love of liberty—the same inherited political qualities, good or bad, which their brothers have, and which have so much more to do with the total character of a nation than any extraneous influences whatsoever. In each portion of the kingdom, each rank and each creed, this is true. The main constituents of character are the same; the difference between the old electors and the new will be an individual difference, resulting in the apprehension and appreciation of special affairs, not a violent division, causing organic changes in the body corporate. When the American colonists revolted against taxation without representation, Edmund Burke wrote to them: "We do not know how to qualify millions of our countrymen, contending with one heart for an admission to privileges which we have ever thought our own happiness and honour, by odious and unworthy names. On the contrary, we highly revere the principles on which you act, though we lament some of their effects." We have lived to see all parties agree that he was right. And will the members of the Legislature now adopt these discarded weapons, and call by "odious and unworthy names" those daughters of the State who are "contending for an admission to privileges which they have ever thought their own happiness and honour?" They dread some unknown consequences. But neither public riot nor domestic discord has followed the possession of other franchises. Surely this should reassure those gentlemen who think that the laws of Nature would be upset by conferring one more. Lord Macaulay said truly that "the enormous sin of counteracting the designs of Providence has happily been put out of the power of mortals to commit." But to invoke great names, and make assertions about them often enough seems to be thought good policy by those who have no better. Indeed, the calm substitution of repeated assertion for proof reminds me of nothing so much as the saying of one of the wise men who went forth to hunt the Snark.

"'Tis the voice of the Jubjub," he suddenly cried,  
This man whom they used to call dunce;  
"As the Bellman would tell you," he added with pride,  
I have uttered that sentiment *once*.  
"'Tis the note of the Jubjub," keep count, I entreat,  
You will find I have told it you *twice*;  
"'Tis the song of the Jubjub," the proof is complete,  
If only I've stated it *thrice*.

(Laughter and cheers). The motion was carried unanimously. The Recorder then vacated the chair, which was taken by Mr. C. H. Hopwood, M.P. Mrs. M'LAREN moved a vote of thanks

to the Right Hon. Russell Gurney for presiding, which was seconded by Miss ANNA SWANWICK. In putting it to the meeting Mr. HOPWOOD said:—It should always be remembered that in the beginning of the movement they were there to advocate, when it was by motion first brought forward by Mr. J. S. Mill in the House of Commons, their chairman, Mr. R. Gurney, had stood teller with Mr. Mill, in the division which took place. Thus they had the most advanced Radical of his day, who flinched from no change which would produce reform, and the most consistent Conservative, who never opposed wise reform, united hand in hand to support the cause of women's suffrage. It was an earnest that the measure recommended itself alike to the most advanced thought and the most reflective attachment to the institutions we possessed. To him it was peculiarly a pleasure to greet the chairman, because he knew him besides in the character of the firm but merciful Judge. He could not deny himself, for these reasons, the pleasure of enforcing the motion proposed. The vote was carried with acclamation, and the meeting separated.

CONVERSAZIONE AT WESTMINSTER PALACE HOTEL.

On Thursday evening, May 11th, a large gathering of the friends of the Women's Suffrage was held at a Conversazione at the Westminster Palace Hotel. The invitations were issued in the names of the following ladies:—Lady Anstruther, Mrs. Garrett Anderson, M.D., Mrs. Jacob Bright, Mrs. Maurice Brooks, Mrs. Charles Cameron, Miss Frances Power Cobbe, the Hon. Mrs. Maurice Drummond, Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Forsyth, Mrs. M'Laren, Lady Maude Parry, Mrs. Frederick Pennington, Mrs. Peter Rylands, Mrs. Stansfeld, Mrs. Hensleigh Wedgwood. The company included the following ladies and gentlemen:—Miss Aitken, Prof. Sheldon Amos and Mrs. Amos, Mr. and Miss Anthony, Miss Andrews, Mr. and Mrs. Ashurst, Mrs. Atherton, Mrs. Garrett Anderson, Miss Ashworth and Miss L. S. Ashworth, Sir Robt. Anstruther, Bart., M.P., Mr. Mrs. and the Misses Blind, Mr. J. C. Balsdon, Mr. Austin Birrell, Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Bennett, Mr. and Mrs. Barry, Miss Bird, Mrs. and the Misses Black, Mr. and Miss Blair, Miss Butler, Mr. and Miss Blackburn, Miss Becker, Mr. Biggs, Miss Brown, Mr. Mrs. and the Misses Woolcot Browne, Mr. Baines, Mr. and Miss Babb, Mr. and Mrs. Beale, Mr. and Mrs. Bunyan, Mr. G. and Mr. H. Bowyer, Mr. and Mrs. Jas. S. Beale, Mrs. Beale, Miss Octavia Brooke, Mr. Bushe, Miss Buss, Mr. Jacob Bright, M.P., and Mrs. Jacob Bright, Mr. Maurice Brooks, M.P., and Mrs. Brooks, Mr. Joseph S. Biggar, M.P., Mr. Ball, Miss Beedy, Miss A. and Miss C. A. Biggs, Mrs. Barbor, Mr., Mrs. and Miss Chesson, Mr. and Mrs. Chaplin, Miss Clift, Mrs. and Miss Chapman, Hon. Emmeline Canning, Mr. T. Campbell, Rev. T. and Mrs. Carroll, Mrs. and Miss Cowie, Mrs. and the Misses Case, Miss Sharman Crawford, Mr. Robert Crawford, Dr. Cameron, M.P., and Mrs. Cameron, Mr. Basil Champneys, Mr. Courtenay, Miss Chadwick, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Clayton, Mrs. Dana, Dr. C. Drysdale, Miss Downing, Mrs. and Miss Donkin, Mrs. Drysdale, Miss Elsie Day, Mr. Dunn, Mr. Dryhurst, Hon. Mrs. Maurice Drummond, Miss Drummond, Mr. A. J. Ellis, Mr. Reginald Egerton, Mr., Mrs. and Miss Eiloart, Dr. and Mrs. Edmunds, Mrs. Ellis, Mr. Fawcett, M.P., and Mrs. Fawcett, Mr. and Mrs. Fitch, Mr. Forsyth, M.P., and Mrs. and the Misses Forsyth, Miss Greig, Miss M. and Miss A. Gurney, Mrs. Wm. Grey, Miss Le Geyt, Mrs. Gell, Mr. von Glehn, Lady Goldsmid, Mr. and Mrs. R. R. Glover, Prof. and Mrs. Guthrie, Miss Hadwen, Mrs. Harte, Mr. C. Hancock, Mrs. Stephenson Hunter and Miss Hunter, Mr. and Miss Hill, Dr. George and Dr. Frances Hoggan, Rev. J. N. Hoare, Mr. S. Hopwood, Prof. Hughes, Miss F. and Miss R. Hill, Mr. and

REVIEW.

*A Letter to the Right Hon. John Bright, M.P.* By a "Lady in the Gallery." London: Printed by E. Matthews and Sons, 54, Berwick-street, and 377, Oxford-street, W. 1876.

Mr. Bright's speech, as might have been anticipated, has aroused deep feeling in the minds of his countrywomen, and the letter before us is an able and forcible expression of a generally prevailing sentiment. We give the following extract and recommend our readers to procure the pamphlet for themselves:—"Your main argument against our plea appears in the form of an indignant question why we should not be able to trust ourselves absolutely in the hands of our male relatives. Well, I may say in answer that you yourself consider these male relatives so 'fierce and unscrupulous' that you are unwilling even to allow us once in five years to be canvassed by them, lest the 'taint' of their social and political corruption should infect us. Do I speak too strongly? I only use your own words, 'humiliation,' 'shame,' 'disgust,' 'taint and pollution.' If these words are rightly applied to the political doings of our husbands and fathers and sons, we are sorry for them; but we don't understand why, under the circumstances, we should be called upon to give them, unhesitatingly, absolute control over the greatest interests and over the most secret actions of our lives. You cannot, I think, in consistency, tell us that men who would be willing to degrade us in order to obtain our votes, are yet sure to act towards us like chivalrous gentlemen in the House of Commons."

CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

Contributions to the funds of the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, 64, Berners Street, London, W., from May 1st to 20th, 1876.

	£	s.	d.
The Misses Garrett	5	0	0
Mr. Ricketts (special donation)	3	3	0
Mrs. Tebb	2	2	0
Mr. J. Staines Babb	1	1	0
Mr. Edrick Bayley	1	1	0
Miss Beedy	1	1	0
Mrs. Bruce	1	1	0
Miss Craig	1	1	0
Miss Ellis	1	1	0
Miss Estlin	1	1	0
Miss Newnham	1	1	0
Mrs. Charles Thomas	1	1	0
Mrs. Morgan Williams	1	1	0
Mrs. Askey	1	0	0
Mrs. R. Carpenter	1	0	0
Miss F. Power Cobbe	1	0	0
Mr. Serjeant Cox	1	0	0
The Lord Chief Baron Kelly	1	0	0
The Rev. E. Wyatt-Edgell	1	0	0
Mrs. Chesson	0	10	6
Miss Warren	0	10	6
Mrs. Abercrombie	0	10	0
Mrs. Craigie	0	10	0
Mrs. Lowe	0	10	0
The Miss Southalls	0	10	0
Miss Travers	0	10	0
Mr. Anderson	0	5	0
Miss Apps	0	5	0
Miss Blackburn (Walmer)	0	5	0
Miss Dunbar	0	5	0
Mr. Connor	0	2	6
Mrs. Wade	0	2	6
Miss Wade	0	2	6
Mrs. Cable	0	1	0
Mrs. Wayham	0	1	0

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CORRESPONDENCE.

LAW OF DIVORCE.

To the Editor of the Women's Suffrage Journal.

Madam,—Mr. John Bright's assertion in his speech on the Women's Suffrage Bill, that the rights of women were sufficiently taken care of by their husbands, fathers, and brothers, has received a very early contradiction in the reply of the Attorney-General (reported in yesterday's *Times*) to a query put by Colonel Egerton Leigh, in which he (the Attorney-General) not only admitted the inequality of the present law of divorce, but absolutely denied that there was any injustice to the women in it; or that it stood in need of reform. This fact speaks for itself, and require no comments from me.

INCOGNITA.

A Lancashire wife, possibly after some experience of the indigenous endearments practised in that county with the clog, thus addressed her spouse, "If I had ta'en thee i' numbers, I'd ne'er ha' had thee bund!"

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