THE

PRESENT ASPECT

OF

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

CONSIDERED.

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[*The following paper was delivered as a Lecture at a meeting convened by the London National Society for Women's Suffrage, on the 14th of May in S. Matthew's School, Great Peter Street, Westminster, when Mr. Roebuck, M.P., was in the chair. It has been printed with very slight alterations, chiefly consisting of some remarks on the debate which took place in the House of Commons last Session on the subject.*]

In opening the subject of Women's Suffrage, my first wish is to present it in such a light that it shall not at once awaken prejudices against it; and I should wish to approach it not as a novelty advocated by a distinct and necessarily aggressive party, not as at first blush it may be considered as merely an agitation, a battle maintained by a class whose view of their due position in the world is different from that which the world has hitherto been disposed to take, and who, therefore, can expect for a long time little save uncompromising opposition, contempt, or at least utter indifference.

I hope we have passed that stage; but I wish the question not to be regarded simply as one of Women's Rights—an unlucky phrase fostering bitterness. It is a question of men's and women's rights, the rights of both to the fullest good that our social and political system can yield. It is the complement of other advances—a part of an inevitable movement, of which there can be no more doubt than of the lapse of ages or of the movement of the heavens, or of the growth of the human individual. Carrying on the idea, I may say this claim for women is only one outgrowth in a general and manifold development which resembles a tree

budding forth in all directions. We find it linked with kindred with, almost all that is good and useful in public effort and in social renovation, with consciousness of women's needs, social, material, and moral, and of the needs of the community in general. This advance cannot be stayed; it springs from a law of nature more real and fixed than that which draws a hard and fast immoveable line between the spheres of the two sexes according to theories and usages of earlier and very different ages. This law that I speak of is that duties and spheres will change, expand, and modify according to the other changing conditions of human communities. In this case the recognition of this law coincides with the full operation of an established principle. What we now ask is, that the Constitutional system may be fully and fairly carried out—that the freedom and justice it is supposed to secure to all classes and individuals may not by legislative enactment be confined to about half the nation—that anomalies caused by artificial restrictions, not inherent in, not contemplated by, the original system, may be removed; the anomaly, for instance, of a large amount of the landed property of the country being in the hands of persons without political rights; we ask that men and women may not oppose but co-operate with each other in all great and wide objects for the national good.

I trust in all that I shall now say I shall appear to be speaking, as I feel, in a friendly and reasonable spirit. How, indeed, can I feel otherwise when I know how many good and wise men are helping us now; when I believe that we shall finally win our cause, and that it will be through the good will of *men* that we shall win it, of those men who compose the House of Commons—and moreover, when I see a most distinguished member of that House kindly consenting to do us the service of presiding at a meeting for the furtherance of our object.

I may as well just say what it is that we ask for—what we mean by Women's Suffrage. We mean simply Women-householder's Suffrage. That is, we ask it only for those women who have the same qualifications as give men a right to vote; for those who are house-

holders and ratepayers—nothing more. But we are argued against as though we were demanding the suffrage for *all* women; that would be Womanhood or Universal Woman's Suffrage. This would be to demand a complete change in the whole Constitutional system; and an absurd change, for it would give women the vote in cases where men would not have it. Some who perfectly understand us complain that the term, thus constitutionally limited, is misleading—False Women's Suffrage, they are pleased to call it. This seems to me rather unnecessary quibbling; the words are in fact as correct as the converse term of Women's Disabilities. But to men who reproach us with inconsistency because this definition excludes married women (all but a most minute fraction) we can only say that the laws which necessitate this exclusion by depriving wives of their property are not of our making. As to those very few who *are* householders independent of their husbands, I should myself think it just and desirable that they should have the franchise; but to ask this would be to raise quite a different question. The claim must be based on other than Constitutional grounds, and would involve all manner of issues that I cannot dwell on now. As it is, the principle that we are contending for—that sex should cease to be in itself a disqualification, will be once for all secured; and no line can really be drawn between the rights and interests of such interchanging sets of persons as the married and the single. In fine, we ask for what we can get, not for what we cannot; and we know, and those who reproach us know very well too, that to ask for more than this would simply be to ensure the total defeat of the whole bill under a storm of opposition.

To return to our general subject. This claim of the franchise has been objected to as a novelty—which no doubt it is, and as an innovation—which I shall hope to show that it is not. Every beneficial change was at first a novelty; even an innovation would be matter of alarm only till it ceased to be an innovation; and a political measure in particular becomes an accepted fact in a year or so. This fact in especial will have nothing politically revolutionary in it. It is not, as one might judge from

the language of its opponents, a new nation living apart, with laws, language, and ideas of their own, that it will admit within the pale of the Constitution ; it will only increase the number of voters within the classes already enfranchised, and in those mainly of the more educated section, that by circumstances most orderly and law-abiding. A small additional number 300,000 or 400,000—that is, less than a seventh of the whole electoral body—will share with men the privilege of having a voice in the nomination of the men who are to represent us in Parliament. This will not affect the action of the Constitution or the organisation of Government; the same system of men and measures will prevail, subject as now to the approval of the bulk of the electors.

But this proposal, though denounced as a departure from the usage of time immemorial, is in truth *no* constitutional innovation. It is against no early custom, was till 1832 against no existing statute, and is in fact rather a usage let drop than a claim to be newly conceded.

"Time immemorial," we know, does not protest against women having a vote, since the Parliamentary system has not existed above 600 years. Still less has "time immemorial" protested against women having a share, a good large share, in government, since from the earliest ages we have seen women-sovereigns, sometimes with absolute power.

In our own England we have, as the earliest form of a ruling council under the Sovereign, the Witenagemot, or *assembly of the wise*, which definition happily did not exclude women, as kings' wives, and mothers, and abbesses sat by prescriptive right in it. There was also local government, shire, borough, and parish courts, the basis of the later system of representation; and in these women had a vote, as since in our similar modern institutions. And when Parliamentary representation was established no limit of sex seems to have been thought of; freeholders simply are named as entitled to the franchise, and freeholds, we know, might be held by women. It was a principle expressed then by our kings that "what concerned all should be approved by all."

Whether the right was much used we cannot tell, as no registries of electors were kept in those days, but probably in times when political liberty was so imperfectly comprehended women thought no more of their vote than men did of theirs. In Henry VI.'s reign occurred the first limitation of the franchise to 40s. freeholders; the word used here to designate the voters is "people." In James I.'s reign, which was about the time when first the idea of civil liberty began to be associated with representation, we find on two occasions, when women's votes had been recorded, that the question was brought before the Courts in Westminster Hall, where it was decided that "a *feme sole*, if a freeholder, might vote for a Parliament man." And in the Record Office are to be found the names of several women-electors; women even figure as returning officers.

In William III.'s time Parliamentary representation first began to be a matter of party organisation, and the system fell into the hands of political cliques, of the great nobility, of the wealthy landowners. As whole classes and masses of men acquiesced in their exclusion from the suffrage, it was scarcely to be supposed that women would make any stir for *their* rights. Their claim, then, may be said to have been simply ignored. But before the question *was* agitated, the emancipation of women (on the supposition that a right long unexercised did not exist) was first demanded in 1826 by a meeting of working men! and some thinking men and enlightened women were already raising the question in other circles. So far was the question from being settled that a lady still living, with whom I am acquainted, then a young married woman, but of the family of a burgess, once gave her vote in a borough election with no further formula than the being caused to make affidavit before the mayor that she did it under no compulsion from her husband. But when the first Reform Bill, that of 1832, was passed, there was no claim for women made in the House; and those eligible for the suffrage were in the Bill qualified as male persons. In 1850 Lord Romilly's Act declared that all phrases betokening the masculine gender should be taken to include

women unless the contrary were expressly provided. And certainly in various Acts at the time the term "men" was used for both sexes alike, so that when in the second Reform Bill, that of 1867, the word "male persons" in the superseded Bill was changed to "men," it was resolved to put the question fairly to the test.

In the elections that followed a number of women applied to be put on the register and several recorded their votes. The case of those who had been refused registration was tried at the Court of Common Pleas and their cause was argued by several distinguished lawyers, among them the present Lord Coleridge, who held that the "women's vote was an ancient Constitutional right that had never been rescinded." And even the *Times* stated that should the plea be rejected "the nation would be distinctly committing itself through a judicial tribunal to the dangerous doctrine that representation *need* not accompany taxation." It did so however; it was decided that the word "men" used in different clauses of the same Act should include women for purposes of taxation, but should exclude them where a right and privilege was concerned. Thus legally foiled, the cause had to be fought out constitutionally.

This movement had already begun, though still in its infancy, when in 1866 a petition was presented to Parliament in its favour, and in 1867 it was nobly inaugurated in the House itself by that great and good man Mr. John Stuart Mill. He took advantage of the new Reform Bill then introduced to propose the striking out the words supposed to signify male suffrage only. It is said that at that time Mr. Mill was the only man who could have brought forward this claim in the House without exciting general laughter, and even he expected to find scarcely a single supporter. But to his surprise, and thanks to his splendid advocacy, seventy-three members followed him into the lobby. Since then the number of parliamentary supporters has been steadily though slowly rising. Through six successive sessions (from 1870 to 1876, omitting only 1874) the Bill has been regularly presented to Parliament by our faithful and able champions Mr. Jacob Bright and Mr. Forsyth. In 1875 the majority against it had diminished in a house of 339 members from 67 to 35

It is true that in the two last sessions the Bill was defeated, in 1876 by a larger majority than usual, and this year not by votes, but simply by a noise, the majority refusing to hear arguments on the other side, and thus literally roaring the question out. But in neither case did the House represent any change of opinion outside; the result must be attributed to special circumstances within—a very strong whip of a party which has lately proved itself exceedingly violent in its opposition to all Liberal views. But the number of its Liberal supporters had not diminished; and I believe Mr. Forsyth was right in saying that whatever the chances in this Parliament, in a new House the result could scarcely be doubtful. We shall see how public opinion has been growing if we look back the ten years of this movement. The only notice the public press at first took of it was to denounce it as the work of a few restless noisy agitators; though, as Miss Becker has well remarked in answer, in all great movements for the common good, it has invariably been the few who were restless and dissatisfied with a wrong state of things who first essayed to put it right. In private society there was at first a strong prejudice against it as there always is against anything quite new, and not well understood, a prejudice felt by women as well as by men. But there has been an active and rapid progress since, especially in women's minds, which I think every one who mixes at all in society of any kind or class can testify to, and of which the tangible signs are the increasing number of signatures to petitions in its favour. In 1874 and 1875 there were upwards of 400,000 of which about half were women's, about four times the amount of 3 years before; the two next years somewhat less, only because much less time was given to collect them, but as it is, we have had this year 235,832 signatures. Four thousand women signed a memorial to the Prime Minister in its favour, and numbers of women are coming forward to work for it in every way. These years of effort have meanwhile done us much good; they have made us fitter for the suffrage by teaching us to understand it better. We are thankful for the ridicule, even for the occasional abuse, that has been dealt out to us, it has braced us up

to prove it unjust and unwise, it has given ardour to the championship of a well abused cause. I don't mean that the persecution has been very cruel, but some amount of scorn, even of sneers and personalities, must be expected by those who come forward to maintain whatever runs counter to public prejudices. All we ask of favour is to be listened to, not shelved and ignored. We are thankful then for the bracing opposition—and still more thankful for the help which prevents this question from any longer being regarded as one of women *versus* men, the view with which it was first encountered. For men, many men, legal minded and statesmanlike men, of all parties, from the sincere Conservative to the fervent Radical, have joined our camp and accepted the charge of carrying our banner. Has it ever been known that a cause so begun, so seconded, so long and steadily and earnestly maintained by a growing number of good and able men and of the women best qualified to form a judgment, has failed of final success?

I attribute the increase of favour which this movement has met with, not only to its being better known and more talked of, but also to the increased and increasing need of it. The condition of women in England has been gradually but greatly changing with all the changes—social, political, commercial, material—of the last forty years. In this period of transition, as we may trust it is, the traditional state of dependence and protection for women is becoming less and less the rule, while freedom, power to act and the means of self support have not increased in like measure. The fact that there are nearly a million more women than men, and that fully three millions (that is nearly half of the adult women) are obliged to earn their bread, alone presents a case to which the old theory of "women's sphere" ceases to apply. The political enfranchisement bestowed by successive Reform Bills, joined with legislation promoting commerce and private enterprise, have very much benefitted the men of various classes in this country, have given them laws enabling them to protect their rights, obtain better education and higher wages, laid open to them more extensive and profitable fields of

labour, and raised them in dignity and importance in the political scale. Of course, as wives and daughters, women share more or less in the improved material condition of the men, yet legislation keeps them in the same state of thraldom and hopelessness which so often counteracts those benefits; while, as women having to support themselves, few of these advantages are shared by them. The opening of new spheres of employment to men leaves an immense number of women still to starve at shirt making for two-pence farthing the shirt, or at other almost equally unremunerative drudgery, while the higher and more honoured callings are still shut from them. And in such work as they do in common with men, even with equal qualifications and equal skill and sometimes with harder labour, they are almost invariably paid much smaller wages. Too often they are kept down by the illgrounded fears and jealousies of those very men who force their masters to give the women the most laborious and the worst paid part, or drive them from the business altogether, thus using their trades-unionism both to secure their own rights and deprive women of theirs.* Moreover the facilities for education have not been extended to women in anything approaching to like measure with men; and to crown all, that enlargement of Parliamentary representation which has so much helped to raise the position of all classes of men, leaves women the same political cyphers as before.

I do not suppose the strongest upholder of "things as they are," could point out a way in which keeping women out of citizenship will remedy such grievances as I have enumerated. But if I am asked what effect political emancipation would have on them, I answer

* Of this, if called upon to do so, I could give instances too many for citation here, but will only allude to the rules and regulations made and enforced by strikes or threatened withdrawal, all with the objects above mentioned, on the part of the workmen in various trades—as the wood engravers of London, the watchmakers, the carpet workers of Kidderminster, the factory weavers of Yorkshire and Nottingham, printers and type setters in Manchester, painters of pottery-ware in Staffordshire, not to mention such opposition as many members of the medical profession are still offering to women-students.

in general terms that in the first place, we believe the social status of women will be raised by the legislative acknowledgement of their complete equality with men. For—explain it as you will, the not having a vote, that is, the belonging to a class not considered fit to judge of or help to decide even its own affairs, is a slur and a brand which must affect the general estimation of women, joined as it is with legislation that in many points expressly affirms their inferiority. Justice to any class or individual implies, in my thought, liberty to make the most of their life, to develope all their faculties, be socially useful and personally independent. Legislation, political or social, that hinders this, is not in my opinion justice. We are not asking for legislation to favour women over men, or to force social regulations to their advantage; we only ask that it may not help to obstruct what, given free play, women may hope to do for themselves.

It is very true that a beginning *has* been made; some steps have been gained, thanks in great measure to the terrible force of necessity, and to the resolute purpose of women themselves in qualifying themselves for wider spheres, and their usefulness in some branches of public work begins to be acknowledged. But all this progress has been hampered by difficulties and opposition at every step, and I contend that the political inferiority of women renders their work much slower and more imperfect than it need be. I ask for a reform on principle to put an end to this curious, inconsistent state of things, a great advance in feeling and knowledge mingled with barbarous survivals that deny on one hand what is inevitably yielded on the other.

In two ways the exclusion from the franchise tells directly against women who have to work for their livelihood; their value as tenants is less to their landlords from their not having a vote, and cases are frequent in which they have not been able to carry on a business which had been their source of maintenance after a husband's or father's death. They have been turned out of a farm,* or a shop, or a public house, of

* The frequency of this case was denied in the late debate,

which perhaps they had been the real and successful managers; and this may often be a terrible hardship, amounting sometimes to ruin. Again, there is a growing tendency to legislate for women in restriction of their personal liberty, whether supposedly for their benefit or not, without any consulting of their wishes. One of these measures is intended as protective; women's working hours in factories and workshops have been shortened by law. For as the *Spectator* itself says of those natural rulers and protectors under whose reign of chivalry women are supposed to be so safe and happy, "experience shows that men will always make women work harder than they ought, harder than they do themselves." The consequences are that women's wages have been reduced, and workwomen often dismissed to be replaced by men. Men, not being meddled with by legislation, have been able to get their hours reduced and their wages not diminished.

The value of the political franchise for men has been so thoroughly recognised that every change has been in the direction of extending it, and the last Reform Bill admitted to it a great proportion of the working classes. By the advocates of "things as they are," the very same arguments were brought against this extension as are now urged against the women's franchise. It was said they did not want it; they were not educated enough for it; they would make a bad use of it; it was a revolutionary measure and would subvert the Constitution. But these fears have not been realised, the nation has not been revolutionised, the same class of men is returned as before, and the result is, more equitable Legislation, more attention in the law-makers to the needs and education of the people.

This just and simple principle, that all classes should join in choosing the men to make the laws which control them all as classes and as individuals, that some share in

though not, as far as I am aware, from any personal knowledge on the subject; but even supposing it to happen in comparatively few cases, it is worth citing as illustrating most vividly the violation of constitutional principle contained in this law of exclusion, which is therefore distinctly answerable for all the evil, be it more or less, involved in it.

regulating the State should be possessed by all who help to maintain it, who bear its burdens and obey its decrees—this principle is now being applied to the only class of men still excluded—the agricultural labourers,—by the proposal to assimilate the county to the borough franchise. The result of this measure, which will assuredly ere long be passed, will be that the government will consist of nearly all the men, the governed only of the women. I believe the extension of the franchise to be just and constitutional; I do not deprecate it, but I confess that unless this vertical extension is accompanied by a lateral one, I look forward to it with alarm. I think that the necessarily large masses of wholly uneducated electors that it will bring in require counter-balancing by the introduction of a class that will include more of education, responsibility, and cultivated morality; and I cannot but feel that the entrusting of the dearest, most delicate and most domestic interests of this latter class to those which include so many much less fit than themselves to judge of them, is a very serious prospect for women.*

It is commonly said that the interests of women are sufficiently represented in those of men. On many points no doubt they are so—but there are points on which the interests of men and women are, or seem to be, in conflict, and these have been hitherto decided in favour of men. Their interests do not really conflict; but when the laws that regulate the relations of two parties are made by one of them only, they will be found to embody the views of only that party, and much that is, in practice, harsh and inequitable, will be the result. "The laws of England," Mr. Gladstone remarked "have in many points been uniformly unfair to women." Though this unfairness is shown chiefly in the laws respecting wives and mothers, there are laws, as those of inheritance, which are unfavourable to all

* The well organised efforts which have been lately made to increase the Irish vote by putting on the voting register a larger proportion of Irish lodgers and small householders in the Metropolitan boroughs and elsewhere, will, without the necessity of waiting for further legislation, have the effect of extending the franchise to large numbers of uneducated electors.

women, postponing the succession of daughters to that of all the sons and their descendants. But I do not think, though hardships often result from this, that women are given to complaint about it. They are not ambitious to be the richest of their family, but all the more they ask not to be obstructed in honourably gaining their livelihood, and to have a wider field for independent exertion allowed them.

The strongest of these points are the laws affecting wives and mothers. Our marriage-law, which has been called, by one who is no friend to our cause, "the most barbarous in Europe" hands over the woman in person and property absolutely to her husband's power. By Common Law the wife possesses nothing of her own. This monstrous injustice dates from the reign of Henry VIII. It was made possible, however, in some measure to evade this law by the help of the Court of Chancery which invented for the use of the richer classes a contrivance called "settlements," whereby through special arrangements made before marriage the use of her own property could be secured to the wife, and the capital of such property was put out of the power of herself or her husband to dispose of by the institution of trustees. But wherever these special arrangements had not been made, the wife was helplessly dependent as before, and as the object of the Court was not at all to guard woman's rights but to protect the interests of property, the unjust and barbarous principle remained the law of the land. With great difficulty, and after long resistance, some further modifications have been obtained in a state of things generally acknowledged to be monstrous and unjust, by the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, which secured to wives the control of their own earnings, and the right to property inherited from an intestate. But this law, mutilated as it was by its opponents, is so imperfect and unintelligible, that on the whole, women are little better off than before; and the unsatisfactory device of "settlements" is still nearly all that they can resort to, expensive and troublesome as it is, often unknown to women whose ignorance of technical law is not surprising, but is a real hindrance to self-defence, and, as I said before, available only for especially privileged classes.

A husband is not liable for his wife's support while she is living with him beyond a plain bare maintenance, that is just so far as to keep her off the parish; but this law is hard to enforce, he can evade it by a petty fine, and parish relief is generally refused when it is known that the husband *can* maintain her; so that the wife may, and sometimes does, starve for want of necessaries under her husband's roof. And this law of maintenance has been made equally binding on the wife if he has squandered his means and she has either property or earnings of her own. That, in spite of the theory that the husband maintains the wife, which I have seen alleged against women's rights,* very large numbers of men live in idleness on their wives' earnings, is but too well known to those whose experience lies among the working classes.

Again, a man may, if he chooses, leave all his property away from his wife; she has no rights that can avail against his testamentary dispositions. If he dies intestate, the widow has but a half or a third, even though the whole property may have come originally from her, and the mass of it goes to the next of kin, perhaps an entire stranger.

Next, as to control over the wife's person. By the theory of the common law it is absolute, though of course some checks are provided against the abuse of it. But the husband can compel her to live with him, however bad his conduct, however wretched the place he would confine her to. He can reclaim her by force if she have left him; nay, even if he has deserted her for twenty years, leaving her all that time to maintain herself and her children.† In all these cases she is wholly in his power, unless she can prove that his violence causes her to go in fear of her life.‡ As for

* Mr. Goldwin Smith says "It must be remembered that the man remains responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children." Not legally—as many a starved wife and child know, whose "natural protector" is spending the money, which perhaps she has earned, at the public house.

† These instances are taken from decisions by police magistrates.

‡ I am told by a lawyer that a wife is not entitled to this release from a husband even in case of ill-usage if he is subject to *delirium tremens;*

those terrible cases which we now alas! so repeatedly see in the public papers of savage cruelty towards weak and helpless women, of murder by brutal husbands upon wives, I am unwilling to dwell upon them, shocked as our eyes and hearts daily are by their miserable details. But have not the laws encouraged such unmanly violence and tyranny by teaching men that their wives are their property? Do not these laws, that good men would abhor to make use of, seem meant as a warrant to bad men for ill-doing; and is the punishment inflicted by law anything like adequate to the offence? And has not the tone of conversation, of the public press, of the House of Legislature itself, been too often unfavourable to a serious consideration of the matter? Has it not been regarded as rather a funny subject than otherwise? Has not literature forgotten itself into a defence of the men who kick, pound, mangle, and massacre their wives? And when some good-hearted man brings forward in the house a motion for strengthening the inadequate legal protection for women, is he not sure to be met with jocularity, and the subject dropped as something too unimportant to proceed with?*

But perhaps the wrong that women feel most is the state of the law with respect to their children. The child is by law the father's alone; the mother has no legal right to it. He may take it from her and give it to the care of any one he will; the comparative fitness of the respective parties for the charge makes no difference. A late modification of the law (passed in 1873) enables the mother by an expensive and troublesome process—a suit in the Court of Chancery—to obtain the care of the child *if the Court see fit to award it;* but the principle of the father's paramount rights remains the same.† In a late terrible case in Scotland where a bad

because to constitute cruelty *will* and *intention* must be proved. and where this malady exists there can be neither.

* There has no doubt recently been legislative action concerning offences against the person; but this was immediately inspired by cases in which the violence had extended to men. The *Pall Mall Gazette* observed that the kicking to death of wives was often caused by the wives' own extreme ill conduct, "but now that *men* also," &c., &c.

† The first limitation of the law which recognises the father as the

father took from the mother an infant a few months old no redress could be had by Scotch law, and the Lord-Advocate opposed in Parliament any change in that law, on the ground that it was in principle the same as that of England.

Again, the mother is not by law the natural guardian of her child; the father can, living or by will, appoint any guardian he chooses; she, under no circumstances, can appoint one. We all know how this tells in cases where the parents are of different religions; if the father dies first, he can by will decide what religion the child is to be brought up in; nay, if he leaves no such directions the law still presumes the child is to be of the father's creed, and the relations may train it accordingly in spite of the mother's wishes. Can we wonder that mothers have been known to fly the country and hide themselves that their children may remain their own?

Now, in suffering this state of things to stand, I do not accuse men of wanton injustice; they have accepted the time-honoured institutions they have found, and, in true British character, are in no hurry to alter them—that is all. But to those who aver that women's interests are sufficiently cared for in a legislature of men, nay better than they could be by women themselves, I must needs point out that this state of the law is more or less acknowledged as wrong by almost every one, and that some few just minded and resolute men have, year after year, brought forward bills to remedy it; and that, year after year, the House is counted out, or the order of the day voted, or the bill thrown out, or so altered as to be spoilt and ineffective. The Act of 1870 for amending the law as to married women's property, imperfect as it is, took thirty years to get passed, and an attempt to enlarge and simplify it, by putting the law on a basis of equal justice, has just been rejected in the House of Lords.* "There is no reason," says Mr. Goldwin Smith,

only parent was enacted in 1833, empowering the Court of Chancery, on special application, to grant to the mother the care of her child, up to *seven* years only! The age is now extended to 16, but this remedy is to be secured only by the precarious process just named.

* As a specimen of the arguments that are found to tell against us, I may mention the suggestion that a married woman, if she had her

"why Parliament should not do justice in any practical question as to women's rights that may be brought before them." There *is* no reason, but that women's practical interests are not always the same as men's, and in the cases where they are not, of course the represented portion of the nation will be more attended to than the unrepresented. This is quite natural; it is, and has always been thus, in like cases. We all know how the unrepresented classes are apt to be legislated for. Such considerations are the very staple of the argument for enfranchising working men. In fact from the pressure of other business deemed more immediately important it is most unlikely that members will even make themselves acquainted with the claims and wants of women. "Wrongs will be redressed," says Mr. Bright, "when our legislators know of them;" but it is part of our complaint that they do not know of them.

Against members in general, as I have said, I wish to bring no charge. But with respect to those opponents who most vehemently rebut our plea for equal rights, it is a strong point on our side that none of these have, as far as I am aware, ever attempted to remedy any even of admitted abuses, nor shown a sign of sympathy with the sufferers, nor have, in short, ever come forward in any matter in which women are concerned, except to resist their appeal, and sometimes even with scorn and contumely. The very contrary is the case with those true Liberals and sound-hearted Conservatives who are helping us now.

Having thus stated the nature of our claim and some of the grievances that we desire to see remedied, I must now inquire what are the objections brought against it. Waiving those that I think have been answered in my previous statements, most of them may be summed up in what I may call the *ad fœminam* argument, as thus:—"All that you say as to unenfranchised classes and Con-

property in her own power, might leave her husband and set up in a shop or a business with a man whom she called her cousin for a partner. This argument, or whatever it may be called, seems to have a peculiar charm for our legislators, as it was repeated from a debate of some years ago in the Commons, where it met with equal success.

stitutional rights would apply to men, but not to women, on account of their sex." If you ask why, you are generally told that women are not fit to vote. To this perhaps a few words furnish a conclusive answer—women are held fit to possess property, and the possession of property is the only fitness required for the vote. But if we press for particulars, we are met by the great Nature-argument; we are told of the peculiarities of our nature, our conditions, our duties, and our character; that is, in other words, our physical and mental inferiority, our home sphere, and our political tendencies. I will endeavour to encounter each of these arguments in turn.

Now I do not, of course, deny the natural differences between men and women. I do not deny that certain works, especially those of which the sole, or chief qualification is physical strength, will best belong to men. That is so obvious, that there is no fear of such works being transferred to women, and we need not legislate to keep them in men's hands. I humbly think that Nature, so fondly referred to by our antagonists, has marked, and will always keep marked, certain broad general distinctions, and we shall realise much better what *are* the natural limits, when artificial restrictions are removed. Nor am I arguing that women can do all that men do; but I ask that what no one denies that they can do, they should not by law be hindered from doing.

But one would like to know when it is so glibly said that Nature is opposed to this or that, what is meant by Nature. Is it ancient usage or established convention, the law or custom of our country, training, social position, the speaker's own particular fancy or prejudice, or what? And when Nature has been defined, one would like to have defined what particular actions are, or are not, against that aforesaid Nature. It seems that for a woman to manage property, carry on large businesses, be a farmer, a merchant, a parish-overseer, a clerk in various capacities, a municipal elector, or member of a School Board, or even a Sovereign, is not against Nature, but to give a vote for a Member of Parliament is. I once heard that great, comprehensive,

tremendous statement, uttered loudly and emphatically at a great public meeting by a worthy gentleman—I cite him only as typical—that "the female suffrage was against the laws of God and Nature." But if it be not against, the laws of God and Nature for a woman to exercise the direct, simple, sometimes absolute power given by a seat on the throne as she has done "from time immemorial," to use the favourite phrase of one of our opponents, can it be impious and unnatural for a woman to have an infinitesimal share in regulating the machinery of the State which controls us all? She will not make laws, she will merely help to choose the men who will help to make laws for us. Our opponents say that this is a demand for women to govern men, but as this Bill would only add to the electoral body by less than a seventh, they must know very well that there is no possibility of that.

"I hate women who meddle with politics," said Napoleon to a witty French lady. Napoleon, we know, strongly maintained that nature forbade women to have anything to do with politics. "Ah, General," she replied, "you men sometimes have a fancy for cutting off our heads, and we women would like to know what it is for." She might well have said, too, that women might have something to say to State Councils that sent thousands and thousands of those they loved best to be massacred. Ours is not so extreme a case, but we feel that politics means legislation, and that legislation enters into questions in which we have a right and a necessity to be interested. We cannot separate domestic politics from social conditions of life. If then we are told that we have nothing to do with politics, we can but answer that politics have a great deal to do with us.

As for that mental inferiority imputed to our sex—the mind hopelessly closed to logic, the incapability of taking large views, the want of a sense of justice, are these considered an inherent peculiarity belonging to sex or not? If they are, it would be idle to suppose that any woman ever did, or could do, political work, or any large general work, at all; the point is settled irrevocably, in spite of all historical and present examples to the contrary; and

all the women who have shone in various departments of thought, science, and action, must be dismissed as monstrosities. But if it only means that by general experience there are more men found qualified for such work than women, then it is but a question of more or less, and as there is not a logical, nor any kind of intellectual, franchise for men, we may dismiss this argument as irrelevant. And it will also be open to question whether this supposed inferiority of ours, as difficult to prove as it is easy to affirm, is not the fruit of present, long-continued, but removable conditions. *We* ask that Legislation may cease, by positive restrictions, to make it impossible for us to judge of or to modify, those conditions.

The second argument drawn from our sex is that well-known one called by Mr. Jacob Bright, the "spherical argument." He reasoned excellently that we could not practically draw a hard and fast line between men's and women's spheres, they intermingle in the business of life, there is much occupation, many interests, much work necessarily in common. This phrase of "women's sphere" is the most indefinite of phrases, often the most inconsistent with facts. It varies with every age and every country. In India, for instance, we see it carried out with the most rigorous exactitude according to the men's notion, and the result is, that in the working classes women have all the toil and drudgery; in the upper classes they have the home-sphere in perfection—that is, utter confinement and seclusion.

With respect to the home as the woman's natural sphere, there is a semblance of truth in it which the fact belies. At least, that sphere is by no means her domain, for as wife and mother she has, as we have seen, no legal power, hardly any legal rights. Nor am I aware that our "women's sphere" friends mean anything more than that she is to be the chief working subordinate, by no means even an equal authority in it. So that this distinction seems to result in man's keeping the supremacy in every sphere to himself. But granting this "home" to be our sphere—as to many a woman it is a safe and happy one—our antagonists have failed to show how

the giving of a vote every four or five years, or even taking an interest in politics as much, let us say, as men commonly do, would take a woman out of her sphere, or prevent her fulfilling its duties. Moreover, since to a large and increasing number of women this sphere is denied, the restriction amounts for them to the exclusion from any. Mr. Goldwin Smith says that our business is now to distinguish between men's and women's spheres. Surely, this process has been going on with more or less rigour since the world began; in the face of the fact I have mentioned, and many others, it might perhaps now be useful to ascertain what is their common ground. No doubt, the home duties must be, and always will be, performed, but it is a misfortune, not a glory, if a woman finds it necessary to bound all her thoughts and cares to it; that is, to a very narrow range of personal interests. But every argument founded on the home importance of woman, as the educator of men, and her moral and social influence as man's companion, points to the necessity of her having a sense of wider responsibilities. She cannot educate men who are to be citizens without some knowledge of what citizenship is, or some feeling of citizenship herself.

I come now to the third class of alleged disqualifications of woman, her moral character, and her political tendencies. I have sometimes sat to hear Bills of Indictment drawn against women, to which it is almost a sufficient answer to say that a political dogma that rests on the depreciation of half the human race stands self-convicted of fallacy. And besides, our opponents contradict themselves, accusing woman alike of too much imagination and a want of it, of tenacity and fickleness, of cheese-paring economy and reckless expenditure, of selfishness, and unreasoning sympathy. Between all these I think we may strike a balance and conclude that her faults and virtues are those of human nature in general. But granting the favourite charge that she is more emotional and impulsive than man, what then? Can the more or less of qualities common to the race make the one half of a nation fit to be represented, the other not? Is the Irishman disqualified for a vote, because he is more impulsive than the

Englishman? And may not this variety in the proportion of qualities be an advantage rather than otherwise? May there not be a danger from the exclusive preponderance of a certain set of tendencies, and may not the infusion of a new moral element sometimes strengthen the higher considerations which might be in danger of being postponed to merely commercial, or other self-regarding interests? Women have no sense of justice, it is said, and will vote according to their feelings; is that worse than voting according to the sense of drink or to sensibility to a bribe? Will an occasional triumph of sentiment, as a moral feeling is generally called, in the region of politics be more fatal than the triumph of self-interest of the lowest kind?

But then there are the political tendencies of women, and here again our antagonists contradict each other; for some allege our political apathy and want of public spirit, and others our furious reactionary fanaticism. The metaphysicians have, in fact, stepped forward with certain philosophical theories, evolved, I think, from their own inner consciousness, and proving chiefly the desire to justify a foregone conclusion. The language of these theorists implies that man is, properly speaking, all human nature, with all his faculties perfectly balanced, and woman an imperfect anomalous accessory, a bundle of instincts always foolish, and mostly mischievous. I need not say that the opposite theory regards the two sexes with their, not contrary tendencies, but different proportions of the same, as making up human nature, and presenting such a unity in diversity as, co-operating in the world's work, must produce the finest results. But let us see to what conclusions the first mentioned theory, boldly pushed to its extremes in the hands of one of these philosophers, leads him. According to him *all* women are as *one* woman with no variety in thought, feeling, or opinion, and all—I am quoting his admired words—"by a deep and permanent cause, the sentiment inherent in the female temperament," at once Tory and reactionary, and also revolutionary and anarchic, and disposed to loosen the marriage ties. This abstract woman, who is like no concrete woman that I ever saw or heard of, has, it

seems "no love of liberty or law," desiring only the personal government which her weakness needs; therefore, all women will, as soon as the vote is granted them, band together to oppose those personal governors, and against *their* will and in defiance of *them* troop to the poll to "demolish free institutions," and "put an end to all franchises whatever."*

I imagine we shall, most of us, be a little startled at finding ourselves all classed together as one Conservative, priest-ridden, idiotic animal, who, if a modicum of power be granted it, will rise up an insane firebrand to "overturn the institutions on which the hopes of the world rest." But I venture to think that even if the mass of female voters were to be so incredibly silly as he gloomily pictures them, men would manage to outvote them. Ours is not a nation in which rampant folly on vital political questions is allowed to have it all its own way. However that may be, I think the general common sense will dismiss the whole grand rhetorical hypothesis as founded on an enormous assumption which no facts have yet justified. I believe, and I think most women, and men who are really acquainted with women, will agree with me, that women vary as men vary, that they are moulded and modified by the same diversified influences as affect men, birth, education, family-belongings, social atmosphere; and that, these variations apart, Englishwomen are of the same race as Englishmen, and partake of the same strong national character. So that, on the whole, Magna Charta is not likely to be repealed by the female descendants of those who won it for us.†

Finally, what these metaphysicians and rhetoricians seem to forget is that to the large majority of women-

* My readers must not think I am exaggerating. I have given the statement almost entirely in Mr. Goldwin Smith's own words. His article is full of equally astounding assertions as to historic or existent facts; but I have not space here to point them out Nor is it necessary, for that piece of rhetoric is, I imagine, nearly forgotten. But the above theory may, and does, reappear in various shapes.

† The results of the School Board elections have curiously falsified Mr. Smith's vaticinations. The *Spectator* attributes to the disappointment of the reactionaries the increased acrimony shown by the Tory party in the House against Women's Suffrage.

voters the claims of practical life will be much more present than political visions and abstract principles; that their votes will represent not only a sex, but members of classes with the interests belonging thereto, landowners, farmers, traders, shopwomen, and hand-workers, persons who are likely to be quite content with the general institutions of their land when they do not press too hardly and directly on their own moral and material well-being, which free institutions are much less likely to do than arbitrary ones.

Others of our opponents, as I have said, dwell on our incapability of sympathising with great causes, our natural apathy about politics, and, at the same time, our stagnant Toryism. This, one might say, is adding insult to injury. We are excluded from all practical share in politics, we are taught that they are not our concern, our "sphere" as it is called, we are brought up in perfect ignorance of them, and then we are reproached for our indifference to them! I might rather wonder that we care as much for politics as we do. It needs but for an intelligent man to be in the habit of talking in his family on such matters, for the simplest and most unassuming women to take an interest in them. But—want of sympathy with great national causes! Have there then been no patriotic women in England's history? Do not our hearts beat for our country, for its welfare and its greatness, for its defenders, for their sufferings, their perils, and their glory, just as strongly as any man's? I do not think many men who have themselves great causes at heart will echo such a complaint.

As for the indictment of universal Toryism, if it be true that there are more Conservatives among women than among men, this cannot to the true Liberal be a just reason for their exclusion. What business have we to make or maintain laws to exclude the political party whose views we dislike? Try and educate them rather to a better view of things is what we should say about an excluded class of men; and if our Bill pass, I dare say my liberal friends will look to this in future in their own families.* But it is no part of my argument to

* It is obvious that till a practical test of the political tendencies of women is arrived at by admitting them to record their votes, such generalisation is incapable of proof, but remains in the region of assertion and speculation only—as, for instance, when the Liberal representative of a Welsh county said that, though he *had been told* that in Wales women were mostly Liberal, he *had been told* also that in England they were all Conservatives. The contrary assertion has lately been made by many Conservative gentlemen in London, who *have been told* that women would generally be Liberals.

decry this phase of political opinion or this habit of political thought. It may well have its tender, its generous, its useful side. What I am concerned with is to show that it is with women, as with men, a phase dependent on their social and intellectual conditions, not on the "inherent temperament of sex." It would be more fair to say that in politics women ordinarily adopt the opinion of the men around them than that all women have but one opinion amongst them. If this leads generally to Toryism, we can only say that on Constitutional principles the party that has a majority in the nation has a right to a majority in the House. But conversation, books, journals, joined to all the quickening influences of varied society, are rapidly giving women the power of forming their own opinions; and it is a certain fact that for the most part the highly-gifted and enlightened women who, in their own spheres, lead public opinion, are thorough Liberals.

Even should a Conservative Government, in giving a vote to women, temporarily strengthen their own cause, we shall not be alarmed, believing, as we do, in those general permanent laws, which necessitate progress, yet restrain political excess, maintain, with us, in the long run, a due balance of forces, and have always rendered it impossible for even the most extreme partisans, when in the ascendant, to introduce a real and lasting reaction.

There is one more argument that I must notice which has been rather in favour with literary journals. It is this—that the basis of government is physical force, that is, personal strength, and therefore women being physically the weaker are unfitted for the franchise. This is alarming, for physical weakness, combined with legal inequality, seems to ensure not so much protection

as oppression. But what is meant by physical force being the basis of government? I have always thought that government was designed to *supersede* physical force, that civilization meant the reign of law instead of that of brute-strength. Public opinion, moral restrictions, mental power and organisation, make up now the forces on which government rests, compared to which bodily force is simply nothing. This would be going back to savagedom, indeed. Doubtless, before communities were formed, the man who could knock the other down would have most power. But, as soon as people began to live in an orderly way together, it was the strongest headed, not the strongest handed, man who became chief of the tribe. The titles of our first rulers, the eorls and ealdormen, imply not that they were the most muscular, but the oldest, and, therefore, the wisest, and our Witenagemot ("assembly of wise men") was formed on the same principle. Physical force is one of the instruments kept in reserve by government, and the government may be that of a woman or a weak old man, and be none the less secure. Our Cabinet ministers are not chosen from the men who can knock each other down. Depend upon it, it is something more than muscle that keeps society together, or we are living on the brink of a convulsion. If all the muscle of the nation were pitted against the brain, no doubt the women would go down, but so too would all the men of intellect. But I do not fear any such divorce between brain and muscle. The classes who most represent the latter have quite enough of the former to know that thelaw is still stronger than they; and they respect it accordingly.

And, after all, what connexion has this theory of physical force with Women's Suffrage? with the vote given by a small fraction of them, legally and constitutionally, in an orderly and settled state of things? Does it mean only that none are to be represented but those who can take by force what they want, or defend by force what others attack? This would exclude from the suffrage all sickly men, and most men above 60. But the embodiment of physical force, soldiers, sailors, and police, have no vote. It would be just as fair to

say that women ought not to have property, because, if men wanted to take it from them, they could not defend it by force.

But the philosophers have invented some curious imaginary cases to support this theory. They say that, if women have the vote, they will be sure to attempt to pass some absurd law. That they will force candidates to pledge themselves to it, the House of Commons to pass it, the Ministry to sanction it. That the physical force of the nation will rise in revolt to overturn the Government, and thus all Government will be rendered impossible. This prediction of skill in political organisation and combination beyond that of men, to be shown by the sex asserted to be least interested in and most incompetent for politics, and the assumption that, if half the nation are lunatics the other half must be imbeciles, I think, we may dismiss, in Miss Fenwick Miller's words, as "speculation run mad."

Perhaps I ought to take some notice of the speech made against us last year by our most distinguished opponent, Mr. John Bright. It will not require much notice, for I cannot think that he was speaking his best, or that his arguments would have much effect, except on minds previously biassed. He dismissed, however, the political objections, which he considered groundless, and rested his case on the "sentimental" argument. He dwelt on doubts and uncertainties as to what might follow from such a beginning. Surely, this is not the way in which he would regard concessions made to men. If the concessions are, in themselves, just and reasonable, he would trust to the same sense of justice and reason which caused them to be granted to prevent concessions which should be neither just nor reasonable.

In fact, the only two distinct objections that Mr. Bright brought forward were—first, that this demand is based on hostility to men, and will cause still more hostility; secondly, that electioneering is too vile a business for women to have anything to do with. As to the charge of hostility, it amazes me. We ask that we may help in the choice of men to maintain a masculine Government. We are not demanding the vote that we may elect women instead of, and in opposition

to, men. Hostility! Why, all we ask is to be gained from and through men, and men are helping us now—husbands and wives are working side by side. Is not the hostility shown rather more in the refusal than in the demand?

But Mr. Bright thinks that, as soon as men have shown their generosity, their justice, in raising women to a level with themselves, the women will be armed against the men, and there will be discord and enmity everywhere. To paint this discord in sufficiently alarming colours, he has to travel far beyond the four corners of the Bill. He pictures a household with the father and mother voting different ways, and the brothers and sisters quarrelling in consequence. Does he really mean that we are to legislate to prevent there being a difference of opinion between the men and women in one family, or, rather, to prevent women from expressing a different opinion from the men? At present, assuredly, the men and women in a household can differ about politics, and about things which interest them far more deeply than politics—religion, for instance—without quarrelling. What, then, is there in this vote—given at an interval of years, and done with—to change human nature so entirely? Love depends on the thousand daily incidents of life, not on the abstract opinions of people who, in nine cases out of ten, have no strong interest in such matters. If a man is a kind and just husband, he need not fear his wife's estrangement because he votes Whig and she votes, or would, if she had the power, vote Tory. Mr. Bright thinks the fact of our legislators having mothers, wives and daughters must prevent their ever being unfair to women. Yet, he will not allow that women's having fathers, brothers and sons will prevent their arming themselves against men.

But Mr. Bright's second objection—that against women having anything to do with the processes of choosing a member—raises more serious considerations. If such grossness, violence, and corruption are, as he says, inherent in the present political system, it becomes a question whether Representative Government is a thing that ought to continue, or whether *men* are fit to conduct it? I need not say that *I* do not admit either alternative at all; but, in taking for granted that the whole thing is necessarily so bad that even a man must feel shame in having had anything to do with it, Mr. Bright makes the most damaging admission I ever heard from the lips of a Liberal. But have we not found, to the credit both of men and women, that, on social occasions, whether of business or pleasure, the presence and participation of women have helped to soften, purify, regulate. Will it not be the case here? It is allowed that, since the ballot, the election day no longer presents the objectionable scenes that it once did. May we not hope that the previous process *need* not be such as it will disgrace a woman to have to do with? Let us never, no, not for a moment, acquiesce tranquilly in the necessity of evil accompanying the performance of any work, public or private. Let the desire and effort that women should concur in this work be a pledge of efforts equally strong to lift it above all that can tarnish or debase it.

The other speeches against us in the debate of 1876 do not call for much notice. The arguments were not new nor very profound, and were mostly such as, I think, have been sufficiently answered in the foregoing pages. One of these speakers, indeed, said that, when the majority of women wished for the vote it could not be refused them. But how are honourable gentlemen to discover that majority? The almost impossible task is set before women of *letting it be known* that the vote is wished for, without *showing* that they wish for it. No such paradoxical test was applied to *men* when it was decided that it was fit and just that the great majority of them should have the suffrage, whether they wish for it or no. But, in our case, petitions are scouted as no test; all agitation is regarded as the work of a few restless women, meetings and speeches are ridiculed; the many women of culture, thought, and feeling, of social energy and devoted benevolence, who desire it, are passed over as unknown, or put aside as exceptional, or branded as masculine. This last assertion has not, I believe, been made by any men whom we have reason to respect, nor will it, I

hope, deter us. The causes that move us in this matter lie deeper than such men's words and thoughts can fathom. And if to have a warm interest in great national and public concerns, and to wish to help in them with our best work, is to be masculine, then let us be masculine, and be proud of being so. No virtue ought to be monopolised by either sex.

The debate of last session presented no such distinguished opponent as Mr. Bright, and, as we have said, the state of mind of the House was not favourable to any calm and serious discussion of the claim. But of the speeches that were made, and the articles in the press that followed, all had this in common, that they ignored the Bill before them and its provisions, to dwell upon something that it did not contemplate. In fact, they could make out no case whatever if they did not do so. So they "rose upon a wind of prophecy," making general alarming assertions, which involved the three well-known assumptions—1st, that women would form the absolute and great majority of the voters; 2nd, that women, having, instead of human nature, a peculiar feminine nature, would always act as one woman, and opposed to men; 3rd, that political arrangements can change nature itself.

The fears that may be entertained by good-hearted and reasonable men of a deterioration in that which they love and admire, though we may think them erroneous, are entitled to respect; but we cannot yield a like deference to that noisy majority which made one ask whether we were governed by brains or by strength of lungs, and suggested the painful doubt that "masculine" and "manly" were not always convertible terms.

But there was somewhat more of novelty in some of the newspaper arguments on the subject, and I propose to examine those of two of them, the *Spectator* and the *Times*. That of the *Spectator* is indeed the old one of physical force, but now formulated into a very distinct political principle. The writer in this journal, who appears as our regular opponent, at any rate never drops the character of a man of culture and a gentleman; I desire therefore to answer him as seriously and cogently as I can. I will first quote his argument: "Women can

only obtain the franchise by persuading men to give it them . . and so long as men choose to refuse their demand, they have no means of enforcing it. This of itself constitutes, at all events, an initial difference between the cases of men and of women who are denied it. The nearer Parliament comes to a proportionate representation of the forces which, if there were no Parliament, would govern the country, the nearer it will approach to a perfect machine for its own purpose. . . When the middle class was refused the vote they demanded, they could threaten a march from Birmingham to Westminster. When the artisans were refused the vote they demanded, they could demolish the Hyde Park railings." It is assumed as usual, of course, that the women electors will be the majority, and that their vote will be given *en masse*, not divided like men's, and he further illustrates his point by a case which he assumes will be frequent, if not normal, in which it will be opposed to that of the majority of men's.

Put shortly, the above statement means that the paramount claim of any interests whatever to the attention of the Legislature is founded—not on force of reason, nor on the justice of the claim, nor on a numerical majority, nor on anything but the possibility of violence. The argument, then, leads to this or nothing—that no political class of measures may exist, save such as the classes disposed to violence (if such there be) may tolerate. On this showing, the government of England is the rule of a Parliament tempered by fear of mob-violence. Our political condition, such as it would be if there were no Parliament, which pathetical condition the *Spectator* tells us is to regulate the actual representation of forces within it, would be, of course, either personal and despotic rule, or anarchy caused by the predominance of the brute-force element, an element which I thought Parliament was instituted, not "proportionately," that is preponderantly, to represent, but to control. Carry out the above argument, and it follows that we must live under a mob-tyranny. For, of course, the working classes—I name them because it is of them that it is assumed that they would menace violence—could threaten a demonstration when they believe their interests assailed, whether they have

a vote or not; and in these cases, says the *Spectator*, "it is wise to yield rather than have a state of permanent civil war." Thus, if the lower classes were to demand Universal or Manhood Suffrage, they must have it because they can use force to insist on it. The *Spectator* admits that in that case we shall have a worse House of Commons, indeed he thinks it already worse in proportion to the lowering of the vote, but that it must be done because Parliament must "accurately represent the forces out of doors."*

I should have said that the allowing matters to come to such a pass as to necessitate hasty concessions to popular demands, in order to prevent civil war, exhibited not government in its normal action, but the absence of any real government at all. That our Constitutional system is so framed as to exclude any such alternative, is shown by the fact that the lower stratum of society have not exercised this power of rule by intimidation even in days when they really had just cause of complaint. Had those demands of the people, which the *Spectator* has instanced as successful, not been just and reasonable, it was the duty of the Government to resist them, to resist, if necessary, lawless mob force with organised and law-sanctioned force. It was not because the people threatened to march from Birmingham to London or broke Hyde Park railings, but because those demands were just, and, being just, were backed up by a great force of opinion in the educated and influential classes that the Government felt they could not take the responsibility of refusing them. This principle, as embodied in our practice, will I think sufficiently guarantee the safety of a Constitutional system of which women's votes should form a part.

But the *Spectator* writer gives us a test, which he seems to consider crucial, of the mischievous working of female participation in politics. Here is the great Eastern Question, and the national feeling about it. All women, it is asserted, would vote for the use of force

* May I suggest that certainly one element, that of the "roughs," was very "accurately represented" by the majority in the debate I have been speaking of.

in aid of the oppressed Christians—most men would be for neutrality, and thus a dead-lock or a riot, or, at the very best, a simple nullification of the women's vote must ensue. "For (he asks) do we suppose that in such a case the men would quietly submit to be forced to war by the women, the men who fill our armies and navies, and pay the taxes?" Does not this able writer forget that women too pay taxes, or have the same interest in the payment of them as men, that our armies and navies are voluntarily filled, and that *they* are not the classes that we find most averse to war? But, in short, it is utterly idle to talk of a direct opposition in this matter, or any like matter, between men and women; there is no such sharp division of opinion as it is, and not the remotest desire on any woman's part to go to war on one side or the other. Does he suppose that while the great mass of the nation is saying, "Let us keep out of war," a chorus of feminine trebles will rise in the midst to cry, "No, let us rush into it!"

But supposing that in any disputed question the small contingent of the women's votes should help to turn the scale, and this could only be if the party were a very considerable one already—what then? Is a good measure nullified because women may concur with men in passing it? Is a bad one less dangerous because men only have had the passing of it? And what is this more than the usual course of constitutional action as now regulated? Does it not constantly occur that the views of one class of voters will help to determine the preponderance of some line of policy? Have not the illiterates and the public-house customers in great measure returned this Tory House of Commons? It is true that the *Spectator* writer must in consistency approve of this, because *they* are the classes from which violence is possible; women belong to the classes which have neither the will nor the power to make a disturbance—they belong to the propertied, the pacific, the educated classes; therefore, they must not have a vote. But does not this apply to classes of men just as well as to women? Might we not on this ground eliminate clergymen, old men, and sickly men? We can make a class of them at once for purposes of disqualification.

Clergymen, especially, might be supposed likely to vote as a class, and not in accordance with working men, and are not likely to support their opinion by violence; yet we do not fear Constitutional ruin from their vote. Nor surely are our working classes such wild animals as to trample down law and society whenever they do not get their way, and crush the women to begin with, as the *Times* kindly assures us they will. Before this happens, England will be no longer England, and whether men or women have a vote, will then little matter.

The *Times*' article is too long and declamatory, and, I must say, too little to the direct purpose to quote; briefly, its assumption is that we always are, or are going to be, in a violent state of conflict, of either external war, "blood and iron," or of internal fury, stormy meetings, and the like, when a rough vote, not a gentle one, is wanted, and women must be put aside altogether as having nothing to do with the matter. This, of course, is an argument concocted to suit merely the present moment, and could not have even the semblance of force at any other. Such a state of things (if it ever exists) must, one would think, be quite exceptional in our age, in our country, under our system of government, amidst our well-organised community. The very principle of the Constitution is to give all interests free play. We were once told (as I have shown) by the *Times* itself that property must be represented; now we are told that the vote should be not for property, but for bodily force. We had hoped that in our present stage of civilisation brain as well as force would have its influence, that old men, feeble students, men of peace, might give their votes safely, and yield their best help to their country's councils. But, no! it is absurd to take into account anything but passion and violence and brute force. This, then, is the age of "Sturm und Drang" with a vengeance!

The *Times* further says, "Here are men wrestling in rude arenas, in stormy passion, in daily and nightly excitement, and women in domestic calm, quietly and theoretically revolving the questions which are arousing the deepest passions and interests of men." And it asks,

"Are both these classes to have votes alike?" and adds, "We submit that such a division of labour is preposterously unfair." Might we not paint the picture a little otherwise, as thus—"Here are men rioting, raving, and roaring in public-houses and the like, in strong irrational excitement; and here are women feeling, thinking, and suffering at home on matters which are of equally deep and vital interest to *them;* and is it a fair division of labour that they should have no part in the question but to suffer, while the roarers and ravers are to decide?" It seems to me that if women can think and feel earnestly on these subjects without going into a passion or a public-house, they have, so far, a better claim to be heard.

We know, indeed, very well that the noisy brawlers do not represent the real governing forces, least of all on occasions of critical importance. But the *Times* has, it appears, a particular objection, on occasions like the present, to what it calls, "gentle philosophical votes." It is new to hear women's political characteristics thus described, we have generally heard complaints of their preferring sentiment to reason, and of the danger of "hysterical" politics; but it seems we are to be hit hard on every side. Parties, it appears, are now furiously divided, some savagely disposed for war and bloodshed, others as fiercely bent on neutrality, for it is assumed that no men are, or ought to be, calm on this subject. Why we are to be especially given up to physical force on an occasion like this, which, as the *Times* justly observes, is "a matter for statesmen, not armies, to decide," I really do not know. We read of a Queen Elizabeth, who, like a statesman as she was, kept the balance between peace and war in far more perilous times.

But I am not the least disposed to admit that we are, or are going to be, in such a state of violent agitation and of discord between men and women, from expectation of a war which will drive all our peaceful civilians into the field, and turn the whole body of women into nuisances to be carted away. I see nothing in this, any more than in our normal state, that will make the vote of an orderly taxpaying law-obeying part of the community other than useful and proper.

The last point that I have to mention on the whole subject might as fitly have come elsewhere; it may be urged by others (as it is) as an objection to our claim, it may be urged by us as a social grievance. We are, it is said, not educated enough for the franchise. But what is the standard for a man? Not to be able to write his name, or even to read it when written, but to understand the mark made for it. That is all the education required for a male elector. Compared with this, the female standard will be that of high cultivation. No doubt women might be better educated (as well as men) but if in truth we are less fit than the humblest artisan, whose doing is it but that of the political and social legislation which has fixed our status for us, just as formerly the want of education of the lower orders, as they were termed, was the work of those higher orders who had undertaken to manage everything for them? The importance of education and of providing the means for it, whether for general culture or special training, has been recognised by public opinion for men, but not for women, otherwise than of the most imperfect and superficial kind. But women are not content with this, and are trying their best to improve it. They are struggling with immense difficulties—difficulties from that trades' unionism which shuts them out from established general institutions, from the means of special training, from the use of endowments lavishly applied for the other sex, difficulties from the indifference of the State, and still more from the indifference of the public. Yet, unhelped, at least* at first, save by the private exertions of some good and wise men, women have struggled on, showing alike in those who are working for others and those who are working to educate themselves, some of the most valuable qualities that could be applied to its own work by the State, such as will at least surely enable them to understand what they are doing when giving a vote.

I think the history of the long-continued, earnest,

* It is with pleasure that we notice the liberality of various public educational bodies in offering their advantages, as has recently been done, to women-students.

piteous struggles of women for an education which, for many, means absolutely bread to eat, which for all means usefulness, refinement, elevation, happiness, will justify me in saying that *not till women are of some political value will their education be regarded as a matter of national importance.*

THE arguments that I have now dealt with singly, may, I think, be summed up together as the expression of a not unnatural, though unreasoning prejudice, shaped either into a robust denial of facts, or a contradiction to that common sense which is applied readily enough to other subjects, or a chain of purely speculative and fanciful hypotheses. But there is one argument that has been less touched on than any other, which yet is more worthy of reply as having a wider scope and being built on more rational premises. It may be said—Mr. Bright, indeed, has said it—that a nation has a right to choose how it shall be governed, whether by one man, or by few, or by many. But the nation *has* chosen, long ago, and most decisively and permanently, that it shall be governed, not by one man, or by few, or even by many, but by itself—that is by *all*, as it understands the word *all*, which is, in fact, all who, as it is said, have a stake in the country; it remains then only to decide how that government by all shall best be organised But the objectors, those who wish to regard all institutions as yet on their trial, will argue that the condition to be first sought in a system of government is the selection of the best powers in the nation for the purpose of governing, that the representative system has in its very nature a tendency to make such a discovery and selection difficult, and to expand itself beyond its nucleus of the fittest, and that the larger the non-selective admission of popular elements is made, the less effective is the governing power; and that the exclusion of women as a body is to be justified on this principle.

To which we answer first, that a still greater and more vital principle underlies all our ideas of government, and that is the liberty of the governed, which appears to be essentially connected with that expansion from which the exclusion of half the nation is a mere anomalous departure.

Secondly, that if our system had been designedly framed on the principle of the selection for government of the best powers in the nation, which includes of course the rejection of the worst, and the exclusion of women had been decided on as part of that method, whether as a legitimate deduction from the premises, or on proof of unfitness from experiment made, there would at least be consistency in this view. But, in point of fact, as I have said, the object of our constitutional system was not to construct a machine for securing the best and choicest instruments of rule so much as to ensure to the ruled a share in the work with the rulers. And as no such principle of selection or construction was present at the first formation of national representation, nor in the further modelling and extension of it; as the exclusion of women has been an undesigned and accidental feature of the same, derived neither from reasoned conclusion nor from trial made, and inconsistent with its real first principle, the representation of property; as not exclusion but expansion has been the law of its growth, in accordance with all other national conditions—this exclusion of *one* element together with the ever-increasing admission of others still less select, to which the quality of the government resulting from their choice must more or less correspond, does not tend to the improvement of the representation, but does tend to the depression and depreciation of the one class that is thus marked as inferior to all classes of men, and so far to the unsatisfactoriness of the legislative result, and to the injury of national freedom.

Granting the inherent imperfections of a representative form of government, it is certain that it is the only one that the nation will recognise, that the result of all progress has been to strengthen and expand it, and that if the tendency of such expansion towards a democracy is regarded as dangerous, the exclusion of the only remaining element which would not be democratic is not more politic than it is just, anymore than is the deliberate rejection of social and civil powers which undoubtedly exist, from the field where they would have their highest as well as most defined and best limited exercise.

To go back briefly on the whole subject. These terrors expressed as to women's being in any way mixed up with men's affairs and with public business, all start from a point of view which we are passing away from. In fact, the barriers that once enclosed women are falling spontaneously and inevitably on every side, and what they *can* do, they will and must be allowed to do. When the ground has been conquered in so many other directions, when women have proved themselves worthy comrades of men in intellectual work; when they have a thought, a will, often a voice in large movements, beneficent organisations, social reforms, it really seems to be a kind of old-fashioned pedantry to refuse them this one sign of equality with men before the law—this proof that they too have a part in all that makes for a nation's greatness and prosperity.

And now to draw to a close. We have been told of women's indifference to politics, and especially to the possession of a vote. We hear of the "few women who desire it." I do not know that those who say so have taken any pains to ascertain whether they are few or many; I have already given some proofs that they are not a small number, and that they are growing.* I believe that those who think them few, and affirm that they find the "best women" against it, have inquired—if they have inquired at all—only amongst the strictly drawing-room class, the ladies at ease, with every comfort and enjoyment, and knowing perhaps but little, at any rate taking no account, of the classes who have none of their advantages. Without disputing their merits, I should say they are the women who have in general thought least upon the subject. I find indifference co-extensive with ignorance, and obstruction the result of indifference. I find that the two classes whose opinion ought to have most value on the subject are most in favour of it. These are, first the women of cultivated thought and practical usefulness, who have given their attention and

* Here, indeed, I might quote Mr. Mill, who says: "If only one woman in twenty thousand used the suffrage, to be declared capable of it would be a boon to all women."

their powers of work to women's needs, and to public and social questions as connected with them; secondly, the women who from their social position suffer most from that man-made law of which the object has been to enforce the rights of men at the expense of theirs. For this is not a "ladies'" question, it is a "women's" question, and I and many others know how the working order of women feel their practical grievances, and how they would hail any change that promised to amend them. And I am sure that those who are now indifferent, because uninformed, on the subject, will feel with me when they realise what is wanted, and what help can be given.

How can we help them? There are legitimate womanly ways by which women who have no desire, perhaps no power, to do what men call "descending into the arena," can further this movement for the benefit of their sex. They can sign petitions—this is the constitutional method provided whereby individuals and classes can, without any kind of agitation, violence, or publicity, make the Legislature acquainted with their wishes. Again, they may use their social influence in a way no one thinks unfeminine—they may persuade; I do not by persuasion mean coaxing, but appealing with our hearts in our words to men's reason, and best feelings. Let us remember the wife of Croke, one of the judges on Hampden's famous trial for his refusal to pay ship money. He would have yielded to fear, and given judgment for the King, but she adjured him not to sacrifice his conscience for fear of injury to his family, saying that she was content to suffer any misery with him rather than that he should violate his integrity. What she was in those fiery times that tried the metal of all hearts, let us be whenever occasion may arise—that is, helpers of others in the path of devotion to duty.

I conjure then all those, men and women alike, who have not thought much on this subject before, to think of it earnestly now. I conjure those who are already working to work on without discouragement, confident of the result. Let us think of the great causes that have been won by sheer hard struggling year by year,

begun by one or two high-hearted men, carried on by a determined band, secured at last by the voice and sanction of the nation; all won by the same process that we are now pursuing—steady, peaceful, constitutional effort. The Abolition of the Slave Trade, perhaps the purest and noblest cause ever striven for, was a work in which women aided men; the passionate humanity which dictated their efforts was common to both. Again, the first Reform Bill was a people's success; this cause was fought for with more partisan violence from the strong class feeling which the struggle excited. But what was notable in it was that such an extension of the suffrage as the creation of a £10 borough franchise, and a £50 rent county franchise was thought at the time so revolutionary as to endanger our ancient Constitution, yet it proved so insufficient as to be changed in thirty-five years for our present rate-paying, and £12 tenant's franchise. But the most perfect example of a legitimate and successful agitation for a political object was that of the Repeal of the Corn Laws, an act which gave bread to starving millions. All these great causes were triumphantly and gloriously won, and the secret of the success was the intense, glowing, inspiring zeal of those who believed in them. Let us have faith and fervour like them.

I believe the heart of the country is with us; but after walking among these safe, smooth social fields, we have to knock at the iron gates and pass through the thorny paths of the two Houses of Legislature; and there we may again be baffled for the time, nay most probably shall be. But till we have conquered we must not relax our efforts. I shall be content, as one of our supporters has said, "to die in harness," certain as I am—as certain as that the sun will rise to-morrow—that the progress of enlightenment, liberty, and justice, will not long continue partial and one-sided, that ignorance, frivolity, and unreasoning submission will cease to be the portion of one sex and the delight of the other, and that this subjection of half the race will, like other barbarisms, melt away into the darkness of the past.

ARABELLA SHORE.

TENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

OF THE

MANCHESTER NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,
NOVEMBER 7th, 1877.

MANCHESTER:
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1877.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

THE work of your Committee during the past year has been carried on with unremitting diligence, and they have every reason to feel assured that the question of the enfranchisement of women has received increased consideration and favour from all classes of society. The unexpected termination of the Parliamentary debate has, however, occasioned the loss of the usual means of testing the Parliamentary strength of the cause by a division, for which the friends of the measure were fully prepared.

The Bill was introduced in the House of Commons on February 9th, and the second reading fixed for June 6th. The names on the Bill were those of Mr. Jacob Bright, Sir Robert Anstruther, the Right Hon. Russell Gurney, and the Right Hon. James Stansfeld. On June 6th, the second reading was formally moved by Mr. Jacob Bright, who reserved his speech for reply. The rejection of the measure was moved by Mr. Hanbury, seconded by Mr. Cartwright (Oxfordshire), and the Bill was also opposed by The O'Donoghue, Sir W. Barttelot, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Beresford Hope, and Mr. Butt. The Bill was supported by Mr. Forsyth, Mr. Hopwood, Mr. M'Laren, Sir J. M'Kenna, Mr. Henley, Mr. Jacob Bright, and Mr. Courtney. The last-named gentleman rose at a quarter-past five to reply to the arguments of Mr. Butt, when the opponents of the measure burst into a tumultuous uproar and effectually prevented his utterances being heard. When it became apparent to the speaker that the opponents of the Bill would not listen to the arguments in reply, the purpose was formed of pre-

venting a vote. Your Committee hereby express their firm conviction, that, although the Bill might possibly have been rejected by a larger majority than that of last year, the numbers of votes recorded for it would have shown no diminution, and that the unreasoning clamour by which the mechanical majority strove to put it down would have exercised no adverse influence on the division list.

The friends of the measure had received promises of support from new and unexpected quarters, and had no reason to suppose that any of their former supporters would desert them. They would have accepted the larger numbers of the opposition if such had been forthcoming as a testimony to the growing strength of the movement, and they had every reason to believe that had a division been taken more votes would have been recorded for the Bill than it received last year.

In the absence of the crucial test of a division list, your Committee have no means of arriving at a complete estimate of their present strength in the House of Commons, since many changes have taken place in its composition since the division of 1876. The following list of constituencies whose members are favourable to the measure is corrected up to the present date, so far as their information enables your Committee to do so. Those members are counted as supporters who have either voted for the Bill or expressed themselves in favour of its principle :—

On this basis six of the three-cornered constituencies—namely, Birmingham, Buckinghamshire, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, and Manchester—give either their full vote, or each a majority of their vote, in support of the Bill. Thirty-four constituencies, as against twenty-four in the last Parliament, give their full vote of two each in favour of the Bill, namely :—

Blackburn	Cavan	Dundee
Bolton	Cork Co.	Durham, N.
Brighton	Devonport	Essex, E.
Bristol	Devon, E.	Exeter

Edinburgh	Meath	Southampton
Finsbury	Merthyr	Stockport
Galway	Newcastle-on-Tyne	Waterford
Halifax	Oldham	Wenlock
Kingston-on-Hull	Portsmouth	Wexford Co.
Leicester	Preston	Worcester
Macclesfield	Salisbury	York
Mayo		

Eighty-one constituencies, as against seventy in the last Parliament, gave their full voice of one each in favour of the measure, namely :—

Aberdeen, City	Dungannon	Leominster
Abingdon	Edinburgh and St. Andrew's Universities	Linlithgow
Ashton-u-Lyne		Liskeard
Athlone		Maldon
Banbury	Ennis	Malmesbury
Beaumaris	Evesham	Marlborough
Bewdley	Falkirk	Morpeth
Burnley	Fife	Newport, I.W.
Caithness	Flint Dist.	Newry
Calne	Forfarshire	Northallerton
Cardigan Dist.	Gravesend	Orkney and Shetland
Carrickfergus	Greenock	
Chatham	Grimsby	Paisley
Cheltenham	Haddington Dist.	Pembroke Dist.
Chichester	Haverfordwest	Perth
Cirencester	Hawick	Portarlington
Cockermouth	Helston	Richmond
Coleraine	Hythe	Rochdale
Darlington	Invernesshire	Stockton-on-Tees
Devizes	Inverness Dist.	Swansea
Dewsbury	Kidderminster	Tewkesbury
Droitwich	Kilkenny	Tynemouth
Dudley	Kilmarnock	Wakefield
Dumbarton	Kinsale	Wallingford
Dumfries	Lanark, S.	Walsall
Dundalk	Leith	Warrington

Westbury	Wick	Windsor
Wexford	Wigton	Youghal

Twenty-seven constituencies give one vote to the Bill, their other vote being neutral or unknown:—

Bedfordshire	Greenwich	Newcastle-under-Lyme
Belfast	Hants, N.	Queen's Co.
Carmarthen Co.	Hants, S.	Stoke
Devon, N.	Ipswich	Wilts, N.
Dover	Kildare	Worcestershire, W.
Dublin City	King's Co.	Yorkshire West Riding N.D.
Fermanagh	Limerick Co.	Yorkshire North Riding
Galway Co.	Londonderry Co.	
Glamorgan	Louth Co.	
Grantham	Marylebone	

Thirty-eight constituencies have given one vote for and one against the Bill, being twenty-eight on each side:—

Bath	Durham, S.	Northumberland, S.
Bedford	Gloucester, City	Penryn and Falmouth
Boston	Gloucester, E.	Reading
Bradford	Hackney	Scarborough
Bury St. Edmunds	Hereford, City	Sheffield
Cambridge	Kerry, Co.	Somerset, Mid.
Carlisle	Lancashire, N.E.	Southwark
Chelsea	Limerick, City	Staffordshire, W.
Coventry	Leicester, N.	Sunderland
Derby	Leicester, S.	Surrey, W.
Derby, E.	Newark	Wolverhampton
Devon, S.	Northampton	
Down	Northamptonshire, S.	
Dublin Co.		

Thus 118 constituencies, as against 94 last Parliament, give clear and full votes for the Bill; and 32 clear, though not full, votes for it. Therefore 151 constituencies appear as clearly ranged in favour of the Bill.

During the Session of 1877 there were presented to the House of Commons 820 petitions signed by 266,263 persons in favour of the Women's Disabilities Bill. This greatly

exceeds the number of petitioners for any other object during the Session. No petitions were presented against the Bill.

The petitions sent through the efforts of members and friends of the Manchester Society were 165, with 74,024 signatures. The petitions from Manchester received 17,764 and from Salford 13,463 signatures. Your Committee desire to urge upon their friends the extreme importance of keeping up the number of the general petitions so long as the Bill remains before the House of Commons.

During the past year, your Committee's Agent, Mrs. M'Cormick, has visited the following places:—Burnley, Southport, Durham, Sunderland, Stalybridge, Huddersfield, Preston, Ashton, Honley, Blackburn, Darwen, Derby, Lichfield, Burton-on-Trent, Hanley, Burslem, Stafford, Leek, Macclesfield, Scarborough, Liverpool, Wigan, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, Kidderminster, Kendal, Colne, Darlington, Middlesborough, West Hartlepool, Northallerton, Ripon, Thirsk, Hull, Grimsby (three times), Stockport, Worksop, Congleton, Peterborough, and Wellingborough. Mrs. M'Cormick arranged and attended the seven public meetings organised by your Committee; accompanied Mrs. Oliver Scatcherd to Grimsby and North Northamptonshire at the Parliamentary elections, and attended deputations to candidates; and devoted 156 days to office and other work in Manchester. Your Agent also collected subscriptions for the Birmingham Committee in April, and assisted the Central Committee (London) in arranging meetings in May.

Meetings have been held during the past financial year at the following places:—Sunderland, Durham, Halifax, Leek, Macclesfield, Stockport, Scarborough, Maryport, and Grimsby. The meetings have been remarkably well attended and successful. Your Committee desire to acknowledge with thanks the courtesy of the Mayor of Durham, in granting the use of the Town Hall for the meeting on December 12th, and of the Mayor of Grimsby for a similar act of courtesy with regard to the Town Hall on the occasion of the meeting on the 23rd of October.

The meetings have been followed up by other work, through which the Society has received a considerable increase in members and subscribers to the *Journal*.

At most of these meetings, your Secretary and Mrs. Oliver Scatcherd have attended as a deputation, and Miss Becker has also spoken at meetings organised by the Central Committee at Tower Hamlets; Kensington; Greenwich; Memorial Hall, City of London; and St. James' Hall, Piccadilly. Miss Becker and Mrs. Scatcherd also attended a drawing-room meeting, to discuss the speeches delivered during the debate, assembled at Langton House, by invitation from Lady Anna Gore-Langton.

In addition to these meetings, your Committee have also to report that Miss Becker was invited by the Council of the Social Science Association to read a paper on women's suffrage at the Congress held in Aberdeen in September, and that she attended the Congress on behalf of your Committee, and read a paper on "Some Social Aspects of the Women Suffrage Question," which was very well received by a crowded and influential assemblage.

On June 5th a deputation, at which your Committee was represented, waited on the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his official residence in Downing-street, to state their views with regard to the Bill which was to be discussed next day in the House of Commons. The deputation was introduced by Mr. Forsyth, Q.C., M.P., and was accompanied by Mr. Cowan, M.P., Mr. G. E. Browne, M.P., Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Bart., M.P., and Mr. Pateshall, M.P. Many other members of Parliament would have been present but for the unavoidable short notice that could be given of the hour appointed. The ladies composing the deputation included Lady Anna Gore-Langton, Mrs. Ashford, Miss Ashworth, Miss Lilias S. Ashworth, Mrs. Maurice Brooks, Lady Bowring, Miss Becker, Miss Tod, Mrs. Thos. Taylor, Mrs. Oliver Scatcherd, Miss Caroline A. Biggs, Miss Helen Blackburn, and Mrs. Scholefield, representatives from the metropolis, the West of England, Manchester, Belfast, Birmingham,

Dublin, Exeter, Oxfordshire, Leeds, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Mr. Forsyth having introduced the deputation, and several of the ladies having spoken,

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in reply to their request that he would give his support to the Bill to be discussed next day in the House of Commons, said:—He thought that the ground taken by Miss Ashworth was one which was quite sound and proper, and if the question of the franchise was merely to be looked upon as one to be decided upon the ground that everyone who is not unfit to exercise it has a right to exercise it, then in a very large number of cases the case of the women was an unanswerable one. He thought they had the same right which men have to exercise any right which is to be treated as a right belonging to the English people. But then we came to the question whether that is exactly the view to be taken of the Parliamentary franchise. Now undoubtedly that is a doctrine which the advocates of extreme views on the subject of Parliamentary representation have always put forward. They argue, for instance, in favour of an extension of the county franchise, on the ground that a man who lives in a country town has as good a right to exercise the franchise as a man who lives in a borough town. People who take that ground have no cause whatever for resisting women's suffrage. The view he had taken of the Parliamentary franchise was that it is an artificial arrangement in the constitution of the country for the purpose of producing the best possible, or at least the best attainable, constituency for the election of a governing body like our Parliament, and therefore he should be slow to admit the mere plea that either this man or woman has as good a right to vote as that man or woman. He must consider, first, whether the alteration would be beneficial, and, secondly, whether it is at any given moment sensible and proper to make a considerable electoral change. He quite admitted, and he cordially agreed to this extent,

that where you have the case of women who are householders paying taxes, it is on the face of it very unequal, and in argument and principle an indefensible ground to take to say that because they are of a different sex from the men they are to be excluded from voting, while they are liable to all the incidence of taxation, and so forth, which falls upon the latter. But the Bill would raise the question of the lodger franchise, and that is a serious one. You must bear in mind at the time the last Reform Bill was passed serious questions were raised and long discussions took place as to whether lodgers were or were not entitled to the franchise, and it was finally decided that upon the whole they were to have it. Many considerations might be urged against at once admitting women lodgers to the same right as is given to men in all cases. Many curious questions might be raised with regard to the operation of such a change in the case of the lodger franchise and others. He had also to consider what the effect of admitting such a doctrine as that might be upon other changes that might be proposed in the electoral system. If he admitted they have the right to claim this upon the ground that a woman has a right to vote with a man, he did not quite see how he was to answer any claims which might be put forward that the inhabitants of particular districts or small towns and so forth, which are not now "borough towns," have as good a right to vote as householders in Bath or Bristol, or elsewhere. It resolved itself with him into a question of time and expediency, and he was bound to say, speaking quite frankly, that he did not think the present a particularly desirable time for re-opening the great electoral question. If he found himself unable to vote for the Bill to-morrow, it would be upon that ground, and not from any of the hesitation of mind which is indicated by many of those opposed to the Bill. He dissented altogether from the views of those who oppose the Bill because women are not qualified to vote; but, on the other hand, he had considerable doubts that so large and sweeping a change as is now proposed is one that ought to be adopted without great

consideration. He had also a doubt, if you adopted it, that you would not introduce greater changes in the electoral system than he was prepared to assent to.

The reply of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is so far satisfactory that it seems to carry an intimation that he would be prepared to support the grant of the franchise to women householders, in case of any future amendment of the laws regulating the representation of the people.

The forthcoming season is one which will demand earnest and energetic work and persistent pressing of the question on the attention of the country. The proposed extension of the principle of household suffrage to the counties is rapidly rising to the front; and from the attitude assumed towards it by the leaders of the Liberal party, we may regard the introduction of a new Reform Bill as an event that may occur at no very distant date, and for which it behoves the supporters of women suffrage to be prepared. The moment when the doors of the constitution are being opened to admit a new class of voters would be a favourable one for pressing the claims of any excluded class; and should the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill not have become law before the introduction of a more general measure of Parliamentary reform, the opportunity should be taken of urging the claims of the women, as well as of the county householders, on the attention of those responsible for the introduction of such a Bill, and on the Legislature itself.

Meantime, it is the duty of all who are convinced of the justice of the cause to support the efforts of those who are engaged in promoting the movement, and to strengthen the hands of the Parliamentary leaders by a renewal and increase of petitions, public meetings, and all other recognised modes of influencing and manifesting public opinion.

Your Committee ask for a renewal of their trust with the earnest determination to spare no pains in carrying out its object, and with the confident belief that the fruits of the ten years' agitation of the question are beginning to appear in increased strength of opinion in its favour.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Of the Society, held in the Lecture Theatre, New Town Hall, Manchester, November 7th, 1877.

The Mayor of Manchester in the Chair.

The Treasurer read the Report of the Executive Committee and the Statement of Accounts.

Resolution I.—Moved by Mrs. Oliver Scatcherd, seconded by Mr. Robert Whitworth:

That the Report and Statement of Accounts just read be adopted, and printed for circulation under the direction of the Executive Committee.

Resolution II.—Moved by Mr. J. P. Thomasson, seconded by Mr. Arthur G. Symonds, supported by Rev. S. A. Steinthal:

That the cordial thanks of this meeting are hereby rendered to Mr. Jacob Bright, the Right Hon. James Stansfeld, the Right Hon. the Recorder of London, Sir Robert Anstruther, Bart., Mr. Forsyth, Q.C., Mr. Hopwood, Q.C., Mr. M'Laren, Sir J. M'Kenna, the Right Hon. J. W. Henley, and Mr. Courtney for introducing and supporting the Women's Disabilities Bill, and this meeting respectfully request their Parliamentary friends to take steps for the re-introduction of the Bill at an early period of the forthcoming session.

Resolution III.—Moved by Dr. Watts, seconded by Mr. Alderman Baker, supported by Mr. Councillor Windsor and Mrs. Edward Parker:

That the following persons be the Executive Committee for the ensuing year:—Miss Maria Atkinson, Miss Becker, Miss Carbutt, Thos. Chorlton, Esq., Mrs. Joseph Cross, Thos. Dale, Esq., Mrs. Gell, Rev. B. Glover, Mrs. Lucas, Dr. Pankhurst, Mrs. Oliver Scatcherd, Rev. S. Alfred Steinthal, A. G. Symonds, Esq., J. P. Thomasson, Esq., Mrs. J. P. Thomasson, with power to add to their number.

The Chair was taken by the Rev. S. Alfred Steinthal.

Resolution IV.—Moved by Miss Maria Atkinson, seconded by Miss Blackburn:

That the best thanks of the meeting be given to the Mayor of Manchester for granting the use of the room and for presiding on the present occasion.

MANCHESTER NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

STATEMENT of INCOME and EXPENDITURE for the YEAR ENDED 31st OCTOBER, 1877.

Dr. INCOME.

				£	s.	d.
Balance ...				156	2	2
Subscriptions and Donations ...				1,241	6	2
Journal ...	£115	17	8½			
„ Postage ...	32	8	3½			
„ Advertisements ...	91	12	6			
				239	18	6
Pamphlets, &c. ...				6	5	3
Tickets Sold (Public Meetings) ...				13	8	0
Bankers' Interest ...				0	19	6
Waste Paper Sold ...				0	1	6
Bazaar Articles Sold ...				1	6	0
				£1,659	7	1

EXPENDITURE. **Cr.**

				£	s.	d.
Salaries and Office Expenses ...	£534	12	1			
Office Furniture, Rent, Gas, Coal, &c....	36	10	7			
				571	2	8
Postage and Telegrams ...				184	10	5
Public Meetings ...				164	18	5
Canvassing ...				198	18	0
Printing ...				306	15	8
Deputation Expenses ...				72	10	4
Commission on Advertising...				9	9	2
Reporting Debate, &c. ...				8	18	3
Agents' Expenses (Collecting) ...				32	16	6
Other Expenses— Bankers' Commission ...				2	13	11
				£1,552	13	4
Balance: In hands of Treasurer...	£106	15	9			
Less Amount owing to Secretary ...	0	2	0			
				106	13	9
				£1,659	7	1

Audited and found correct, November 9th, 1877,
LOUIS BORCHARDT, M.D.

November 7th, 1877.

	£	s.	d.
Liabilities ...	£206	0	0
Subscriptions, etc., received since the accounts were made up ...	£13	14	6
Amount owing to the Society ...	54	18	7

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS.

FINANCIAL YEAR, 1876-1877.

	£	s.	d.
A Friend	100	0	0
Mitrailleuse	100	0	0
Donation towards Meetings	50	0	0
A Friend (Huddersfield)	1	1	0
R. W.	1	1	0
S. Y.	1	0	0
M. L.	0	10	0
W. A. (Huddersfield)	0	10	0
J. R.	0	10	0
W. C. (Leek)	0	10	0
A Lady	0	6	0
R. G.	0	5	0
H. E. (Huddersfield)	0	5	0
Delta (York)	0	5	0
Sigma ,,	0	5	0
N. W. J. (Lichfield)	0	5	0
H. S.	0	5	0
J. G.	0	5	0
A. C. (Colne)	0	5	0
X Y Z	0	2	6
B. B.	0	2	6
M. C.	0	2	6
A Lover of Justice	0	2	6
B.	0	2	6
A Friend (Leeds)	0	2	6
J. S. (Blackburn)	0	2	6
Beta	0	2	6
M. D. (Stafford)	0	2	6
G. B.	0	2	6
V. H.	0	2	6
Adamson, Miss	1	0	0
Addison, Mrs. (Preston) (2 years)	1	0	0
Ashworth, Mrs. John	1	0	0
Atkinson, Mr. John	1	0	0
Abbey, Mr.	0	10	6
Atkinson, Miss	0	10	0
Atkinson, Miss Maria	0	10	0
Addison, Mrs. (Chathill)	0	7	6
Allan, Mr. W.	0	5	0
Alexander, Mr.	0	5	0
Awde, Mrs.	0	5	0
Akers, Mr. H. T.	0	5	0
Ayre, Mrs. (Northallerton)	0	5	0
Ayre, Mr. W. (Thirsk)	0	5	0
Alward, Mr. Jas.	0	5	0
Alward, Mr. G.	0	5	0
Archibald, Mr. R.	0	5	0

	£	s.	d.
Adams, Mrs.	0	3	0
Alston, Mr.	0	2	6
Abernethy, Mrs.	0	2	6
Atherton, Mrs.	0	2	6
Ayre, Mrs. G. (Thirsk)	0	2	6
Ayre, Mr. T. (Northallerton)	0	2	6
Atkinson, Mr. H. (Grimsby)	0	2	6
Anderson, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Allen, Mr.	0	1	0
Brooke, Miss Edith	20	0	0
Barence, Princess Mele	5	0	0
Boucherett, Miss Jessie	5	0	0
Briggs, Mr. W. E., M.P.	5	0	0
Browne, Mrs. S. W.	3	0	0
Birchenough, Mr. H., M.A.	2	2	0
Backhouse, Mr. Ed.	2	0	0
Buchan, The Countess Dowager of	2	0	0
Brooke, Mr. Thomas	2	0	0
Benson, Mr. R.	1	1	0
Brooke, Mrs. Edward	1	1	0
Barran, Mr. John (Leeds)	1	1	0
Baines, Mr. Edward	1	1	0
Buckton, Mrs.	1	1	0
Brough, Mr. E.	1	1	0
Barlow, Mr. J.	1	1	0
Burton, Mr. E. J.	1	1	0
Borchardt, Dr.	1	0	0
Bradney, Mrs.	1	0	0
Burtt, Mr. Jon.	1	0	0
Biggs, Mr. H.	1	0	0
Browne, Miss Annie	1	0	0
Bowman, Mrs. Chas.	1	0	0
Bevington, Mr. A.	0	10	6
Blakiston, Mr. M. F.	0	10	6
Brankston, Mrs.	0	10	6
Brown, Mr. Wm.	0	10	6
Baynes, Mrs.	0	10	6
Bowey, Mr. Frax. M.	0	10	0
Bingham, Mrs.	0	10	0
Berry, Mr. Jas.	0	10	0
Bramwell, Mr., Recorder of Durham	0	10	0
Brooke, Miss Octavia	0	10	0
Bruce, Mr. H.	0	10	0
Brough, Mr. Joshua	0	10	0
Brough, Mr. Wm. S.	0	10	0
Burrows, Dr.	0	10	0
Box, Mr. A. M.	0	10	0
Bayliss, Mr. M.	0	10	0
Brown, Miss M. A. (Wigan)	0	10	0
Blacker, Mr. G. O.	0	5	0
Baldwin, Mr. Wm.	0	5	0
Barrow, Mr. John (Southport)	0	5	0
Bell, Mr. J. H. (Darlington)	0	5	0
Bleackley, Mrs.	0	5	0
Baker, Mr. Alderman (Stalybridge)	0	5	0
Brooke, Mrs. C. J.	0	5	0
Booth, Mr. E. H.	0	5	0
Blackburn, Mr.	0	5	0
Baron, Mr. W. (Blackburn)	0	5	0
Boult, Miss Lucy	0	5	0
Binns, Mr. R.	0	5	0
Bramley, Mr.	0	5	0
Baron, Mr. (Burnley)	0	5	0
Brough, Mr. John	0	5	0

	£	s.	d.
Blumer, Mr. J. G.	0	5	0
Brown, Miss R. (Wigan)	0	5	0
Barwise, Mr. John	0	5	0
Boddington, Mr. Thos.	0	5	0
Brown, Miss Helen (London)	0	5	0
Boston, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Bulpit, Mr.	0	3	0
Bracewell, Miss	0	3	0
Brine, Mrs.	0	2	6
Butler, Mrs. (Leeds)	0	2	6
Burmeston, Mrs.	0	2	6
Bannister, Mrs.	0	2	6
Byers, Mrs.	0	2	6
Busby, Mrs.	0	2	6
Beckwith, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Baker, Mr. J. B. (Scarborough)	0	2	6
Blamires, Mr. William	0	2	6
Biggs, Miss C. A.	0	2	6
Blinkhorn, Mr. Thomas	0	2	6
Beale, Mr. A. W.	0	2	6
Brooke, Mr. William (Kidderminster)	0	2	6
Barralet, Mrs.	0	2	6
Brooks, Mr. H.	0	2	6
Barton, Mr. M.	0	2	6
Brocklesby, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Brocklesby, Mr. C.	0	2	6
Bygrave, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Bates and Quash, Messrs.	0	2	6
Bell, Mr. (Middlesborough)	0	2	6
Braithwaite, Mrs.	0	2	0
Bell, Mrs. (Leeds)	0	2	0
Bates, Mr.	0	1	0
Banks, Mr. E.	0	1	0
Crook, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph	10	0	0
Chorlton, Mr. Thomas	3	3	0
Cropper, Mr. J.	2	2	0
Cholmeley, Rev. C. H.	1	2	6
Challinor, Mr. A.	1	1	0
Crapper, Mr.	1	1	0
Clark, Mrs. Helen Bright	1	1	0
Cooke, Mr. I. B. (Liverpool)	1	1	0
Cross, Mrs. Joseph	1	1	0
Carbutt, Mrs. E.	1	1	0
Crowther, Mr. A.	1	0	0
Carbutt, Miss	1	0	0
Carslake, Mrs.	1	0	0
Courtauld, Mr. S.	1	0	0
Colling, Miss E.	1	0	0
Chandler, Mrs.	1	0	0
Clark, Mr. C. F. (Wolverhampton)	1	0	0
Crawford, Miss Mabel Sharman	1	0	0
Cudworth, Mr.	1	0	0
Cook, Mr. J. R.	0	10	6
Carlill, Mr. B	0	10	6
Cross, Dr.	0	10	6
Corbet, Mr. Miller	0	10	6
Cowgill, Mr. G.	0	10	0
Cameron, Mr. R.	0	10	0
Common, Mr. Andrew	0	10	0
Coppock, Mrs.	0	10	0
Cronkshaw, Miss	0	5	0
Clarke, Mrs. (Headington)	0	5	0
Carter, Miss	0	5	0
Cameron, Dr. (Huddersfield)	0	5	0

	£	s.	d.
Copestick, Mr. T.	0	5	0
Carpenter, Mr. Thos.	0	5	0
Cogan, The Misses	0	5	0
Cooke, Mr. H. J.	0	5	0
Cross, Mr. John. J.P. (Wigan)	0	5	0
Cheetham, Miss M. E.	0	5	0
Chapman, Miss	0	5	0
Cohen, Mr.	0	5	0
Cormack, Mr.	0	5	0
Class, Mr. P.	0	5	0
Crosbie, Rev. W.	0	5	0
Crawshaw, Mr.	0	3	0
Chatterton, Mr.	0	2	6
Crosland, Miss	0	2	6
Constantine, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Cox, Mr. J. T. (Stafford)	0	2	6
Cross, Mr. H. M.	0	2	6
Cockerill, Mr. H. M.	0	2	6
Cooper, Mr. Thomas (Wigan)	0	2	6
Christie, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Capstick, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Court, The Misses	0	2	6
Carr, Mr. W. H.	0	2	6
Clarkson, Mr. G. F.	0	2	6
Cousins, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Clayton, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Cooke, Mr. Thomas (Grimsby)	0	2	6
Cochran, Mr.	0	2	6
Cooper, Mr. (Northallerton)	0	2	0
Chorley, Mr. George *(Journal)*	0	2	0
Casson, Mrs.	0	1	6
Chattaway, Mrs.	0	1	0
Dale, Mr. Thomas	1	1	0
Dalton, Mr. H. S.	1	1	0
Dalby, Mr.	1	0	0
De Hersant, Mrs.	1	0	0
Denham, Mr. Alderman	1	0	0
Dick, Miss	1	0	0
Dale, Mr. David (Darlington) (2 years)	1	0	0
Dowsing, Mr. Alderman	0	10	6
Daniell, Mrs.	0	10	6
Dyer, Mr.	0	10	6
Donkin, Mrs.	0	10	0
Douglas, Mr. George	0	10	0
Dawson, Mr. James (Macclesfield)	0	10	0
Dean, Dr. (Burnley)	0	5	0
Dean, Messrs., and Son (Durham)	0	5	0
Duxbury, Mr. W.	0	5	0
Drewry, Miss Ellen	0	5	0
Drewry, Mrs. W. H.	0	5	0
Dawson, Mrs. (Wigan)	0	5	0
Dixon, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Davies, Mr. Hugh (Wrexham)	0	5	0
Duke, Mr.	0	5	0
Dobson, Mr. George	0	5	0
Dunn, Mrs.	0	3	0
Davies, Mr.	0	3	0
Dodd, Mr. Thomas	0	2	6
Dunlop, Mr.	0	2	6
Dawson, Mr. (Failsworth)	0	2	6
Dewe, Miss	0	2	6
Dixon, Rev. J. M.	0	2	6
Dunkin, Miss	0	2	6
Dowson, Mr.	0	2	6

	£	s.	d.
Eastwood, Mrs.	1	1	0
Eccles, Mrs. (Darwen)	1	1	0
Edmondson, Mrs.	1	1	0
Every, Mr. John	1	1	0
Eccles, Mr. James (Blackburn)	1	1	0
Ellis, Mr. E. (Derby)	0	10	0
Earp, Mr. F.	0	5	0
Empson, Mr.	0	5	0
Earle, Miss	0	5	0
Elam, Mr. E.	0	5	0
Ewing, Miss	0	5	0
Ellis, Mr. William	0	3	6
Evans, Miss M. A.	0	2	6
Ebdell, Mrs.	0	2	6
Ellis, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Ellis, Mrs.	0	2	0
	0	1	6
Ford, Mrs.	1	1	0
Ford, Mr. J. R.	1	1	0
Fisher, Mr. R.	1	1	0
Firth, Miss	0	17	0
Falconer, Mr. Thomas	0	10	6
Fletcher, Mr. Peter	0	10	0
Fowler, Mr. Alderman	0	10	0
Fowler, Mr. Councillor	0	10	0
Frost, Mr. W. (Macclesfield)	0	10	0
Fordyce, Mrs.	0	10	0
Fisher, Mrs. (London)	0	5	0
Foster, Mr. George	0	5	0
Fretwell, Miss	0	5	0
Flint, Mr. F. L.	0	5	0
Fox, Mr. W. J. R.	0	5	0
Fox, Mrs. B. J.	0	5	0
Fuller, Mrs.	0	5	0
Fisk, Rev. Thomas	0	5	0
Fothergill, Mr. W.	0	5	0
Frost, Mr. Alfred	0	5	0
Furness, Mr. T.	0	5	0
Fogget, Mr. W.	0	3	0
Folds, Mrs.	0	2	6
Franks, Rev. E.	0	2	6
Furnivale, Mrs.	0	2	6
Fisher, Mr. S. G.	0	2	6
Fothergill, Mr. S.	0	2	6
Fawcett and Acomb, Misses	0	2	6
Fairburn, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Fairburn, Mrs.	0	2	6
Francis, Mr. J.	0	2	6
French, Miss	0	2	0
Gell, Mrs.	5	0	0
Goldschmidt, Mr. P.	5	0	0
Gill, Mr. R.	1	1	0
Gwynne, Mrs.	1	1	0
Glover, Mrs. R. *(Journal)*	1	1	0
Glaisyer, Mr. Councillor	0	10	6
Grist, Mr. J. J.	0	10	6
Gilman, Messrs. T. & R.	0	10	6
Goodwin, Mr. Stephen	0	10	6
Gregson, Mr. Thomas	0	10	6
Graham, Mr. Jos.	0	10	0
Gillett, Mr. J.	0	10	0
Gammage, Dr.	0	10	0
Gowland, Mr. Geo. H.	0	10	0
Greg, Miss Amy	0	10	0

	£	s.	d.
Goffey, Mr. Thomas	0	10	0
Grey, Mr. W. (West Hartlepool)	0	10	0
Glover, Mr. J. (Hull)	0	6	0
Glaholm, Mr. Thomas	0	5	0
Gradon, Mr. Geo.	0	5	0
Garrett, Mr. Geo.	0	5	0
Greatrex, Mr.	0	5	0
Gibson, Mrs. (Stafford)	0	5	0
Gibson, Mr. S., jun.,	0	5	0
Goouch, Miss	0	5	0
Gerard, Mrs. H. C.	0	5	0
Grundy, Mr. James	0	5	0
Gee, Mr. W. T.	0	5	0
Gibson, Mr. Thomas	0	5	0
Gasquoine, Rev. Thomas	0	5	0
Gibbs, Mr. G. S.	0	5	0
Gregson, Mrs. S. E.	0	5	0
Guthrie, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Grange, Mrs.	0	5	0
Greensmith, Mr.	0	5	0
Gray, Mr. T.	0	5	0
Gidley, Mr., senr.	0	3	0
Gidley, Mr., junr.	0	3	0
Gibbon, Mr.	0	2	6
Girt, Miss	0	2	6
Girt, Miss A.	0	2	6
Gurney, Miss Amy	0	2	6
Gurney, Miss Mary	0	2	6
Gillard, Mr.	0	2	6
Gendall, Mr. Alderman	0	2	6
Golding, Mrs.	0	2	6
Guest, Mr. E.	0	2	6
Guthrie, Mrs. A.	0	2	6
Hallett, Mrs. Lilias Ashworth	11	11	0
Hunter, Mrs. Stephenson	5	5	0
Hargreaves, Mrs. William	5	0	0
Hall, Miss Rose	2	2	0
Heywood, Mrs. Abel	2	2	0
Holland, Mrs. Charles (Liscard)	2	2	0
Hamshaw, Mr.	1	1	0
Haworth, Mrs. Jesse	1	1	0
Haworth, Mr. Abraham	1	1	0
Hetherington, Mrs.	1	1	0
Heyworth, Mr. Eli	1	1	0
Holden, Mr. E. T.	1	1	0
Hutchinson, Miss R. P.	1	1	0
Hart, Mr. H. S.	1	0	0
Haslam, Mrs. William	1	0	0
Haydin, Mrs.	1	0	0
Higginbotham, Mr. W.	1	0	0
Holland, Mrs. C. M. (Chester)	1	0	0
Horrocks, Mr. L.	0	10	6
Holloway, Mr. Alderman	0	10	6
Hughes, Mr. Thomas (Burslem)	0	10	6
Hall, Miss Emily	0	10	0
Hall, Mr. John (Leek)	0	10	0
Hargreaves, Mrs. (Halifax)	0	10	0
Hills, Mr. John	0	10	0
Horan, Mr. James	0	10	0
Hunter, Rev. J. (York)	0	10	0
Hindle, Mrs. (Blackburn)	0	10	0
Hurtley, Mr. R. J.	0	10	0
Heal, Mrs.	0	5	0
Haddock, Mrs.	0	5	0

	£	s.	d.
Howorth, Miss	0	5	0
Hurtley, Miss	0	5	0
Hartley, Mr. Francis	0	5	0
Hall, Dr. and Mrs.	0	5	0
Hodgson, Rev. S. H.	0	5	0
Hibbert, Miss	0	5	0
Heath, Mrs.	0	5	0
Holland, Miss C.	0	5	0
Hill, Mr. J. (Blue Pits)	0	5	0
Hey, Ven. Archdeacon	0	5	0
Hall, Mr. W. (Derby)	0	5	0
Howarth, Mr. G.	0	5	0
Hickes, Miss Frances	0	5	0
Henderson, Mrs. J.	0	5	0
Husband, Mr. Alderman	0	5	0
Harding, Mr. W.	0	5	0
Hutchence, Mr. W. A.	0	5	0
Hinton, Mr. A.	0	5	0
Hargreaves, Mr. J. (Middlesborough)	0	5	0
Heaton, Mrs. (Wigan)	0	4	0
Heap, Mr. Thomas	0	4	0
Heap, Mr. James (Burnley)	0	3	6
Hargreaves, Mrs.	0	2	6
Henry, Mr. John	0	2	6
Howell, Mrs.	0	2	6
Haigh, Mr. Joseph	0	2	6
Harris, Mr. Henry	0	2	6
Hopkinson, Mrs.	0	2	6
Hughes Miss (Blackburn)	0	2	6
Hall, Mr. S. (Derby)	0	2	6
Hobson Mr. W.	0	2	6
Hunt, Captain, R.A.	0	2	6
Hadley, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Hopps, Rev. J. Page	0	2	6
Hildyard, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Harvey, Mr. J. P.	0	2	6
Haller, Mr. Thomas	0	2	6
Hutchinson, Mr. E.	0	2	6
Hodgson, Mr. C.	0	2	6
Hall, Mr. J. W. (Thirsk)	0	2	6
Harris, Mr. E. (Grimsby)	0	2	6
Hawke, Mr. J. O.	0	2	6
Hood. Mr. W.	0	2	6
Hill, Mr. T.	0	2	6
Hilton, Mr. E.	0	2	6
Huntrod, Mr. E.	0	2	6
Hill, Miss	0	2	6
Heaton, Mr. W.	0	2	0
Holt, Mrs.	0	2	0
	0	1	6
Ireland, Mr. A.	1	1	0
Irwell, Mr. H.	0	5	0
Imrie, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Ingham, Mr. D. T.	0	2	6
Jaffrey, Miss	1	0	0
Jennings, Mr. J.	0	10	6
Jacques, Mr. (Wigan)	0	10	0
Johnson, Miss	0	10	0
Jordison, Mr. J.	0	10	0
Jubb, Mr. Samuel	0	10	0
Jones, Miss (Wrexham)	0	5	0
Jeffs, Mr. George, jun.	0	5	0
Jackson, Mr. Councillor (Grimsby)	0	5	0
Jackson, Mr. S. B.	0	5	0

	£	s.	d.
Jones, Mr. Jos. (Derby)	0	2	6
Julian, Mr.	0	2	6
Jacques, Mr. (Thirsk)	0	2	6
Jones, Mr. John (Wolverhampton)	0	2	6
Jones, Miss E. (late of Weare Gifford)	0	2	0
King, Mrs. E. M.	1	1	0
Knott, Miss E. A.	1	1	0
Kitching, Mrs.	1	0	0
Kenderdine, Mrs.	0	10	0
Kitchener, Mr. F. E.	0	5	0
Kitchener, Mrs. F. E.	0	5	0
Kipling, Miss E. J.	0	5	0
Kelsall, Mrs.	0	5	0
Kilmister, Mrs.	0	5	0
Kippax, Mrs.	0	2	6
Kirby, Mr. Thomas	0	2	6
Langton, The Lady Anna Gore	20	0	0
Lightbown, Mr. H.	3	3	0
Long, Mrs.	2	0	0
Lawson, Mr. William	1	1	0
Lister, Mrs.	1	1	0
Longbottom, Mr.	1	1	0
Longdon, Mr. Alderman J., J.P.	1	1	0
Lucas, Mrs.	1	1	0
Lupton, Mr. Darnton	1	1	0
Lupton, Mr. Joseph	1	1	0
Liddell, Hon. Mrs. Thomas	1	0	0
Lascaridi, Mr. P. T.	0	10	0
Lomas, Mr. Alderman	0	10	0
Leaf, Mrs.	0	10	0
Lucas, Mr. George (Sunderland)	0	10	0
Layton, Mrs.	0	10	0
Luccock, Mrs.	0	10	0
Lovatt, Mr. J. J.	0	10	0
Lupton, Mr. E. A.	0	10	0
Lytton, The Dowager Lady	0	10	0
Lee, Mrs. J. B.	0	5	0
Lambert, Rev. Brooke	0	5	0
Lucas, Mrs. (Sunderland)	0	5	0
Laycock, Mr. William	0	5	0
Lawson, Mrs. (Leeds)	0	5	0
Lamb, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Loyd, Mrs.	0	5	0
Livens, Mrs.	0	5	0
Lyon, Mr. J. A.	0	5	0
Leslie, Mrs.	0	5	0
Lupton, Miss H.	0	5	0
Lea, Mrs. W.	0	5	0
Latham, Dr.	0	5	0
Littlecott, Rev. T. G.	0	5	0
Longmaid, Mr. W. H.	0	5	0
Leech, Mrs.	0	5	0
Leather, Mrs.	0	2	6
Lucas, Miss Alice (Sunderland)	0	2	6
Lucas, Miss Clara	0	2	6
Lundy, Mrs.	0	2	6
Lohner, Mad. Emilie	0	2	6
Lawson, Mrs. (Blackburn)	0	2	6
Liddell, Mrs. M. J. P.	0	2	6
Lambert, Mrs. (York)	0	2	6
Mason, Mr. Hugh	10	10	0
Mather, Mr. W.	2	2	0

	£	s.	d.
Mills, Mrs. (Tooting)			
Measham, Mr. H. (2 years)	2	2	0
Muir, Mrs. (2 years)	2	2	0
M'Crea, Mr. H. C.	2	0	0
March, Mr. J. O.	1	1	0
Mathers, Mr. J. S.	1	1	0
Marshall, Mrs. John	1	1	0
M'Culloch, Mrs.	1	1	0
M'Kinnell, Mrs.	1	1	0
Marsden, Mr. James (Wigan)	1	1	0
Mander, Mr. S. S.	1	1	0
M'Kerrow, Rev. Dr. (2 years)	1	1	0
Marriott, Mr. Councillor	1	1	0
Mason, Mrs.	1	0	0
Milne, Mr. J. D.	1	0	0
Melling, Mr. W., J.P.	1	0	0
Muirhead, Dr.	1	0	0
Marshall, Mr. F. (2 years)	1	0	0
Myres, Mr. Alderman	1	0	0
Marshall, Miss	0	10	6
Marshall, Mr. Stephen	0	10	0
Mactaggart, Mrs.	0	10	0
M'Donald, Mr.	0	10	0
Martin, Mr. (Longsight)	0	10	0
Medley, Mr.	0	10	0
Moore, Mrs.	0	10	0
Moore, Dr. (Liverpool)	0	10	0
Mozley, Mr. J. R.	0	10	0
Müller, Miss	0	10	0
Machlachlan, Dr.	0	10	0
Massey, Mrs.	0	5	0
Mackenzie, Miss	0	5	0
Maw, Mr. W. N.	0	5	0
M'Crossan, Mrs.	0	5	0
Martin, Mr. J. B.	0	5	0
M'Kenzie, Mr. A. G.	0	5	0
M'Ilquham, Mrs.	0	5	0
M'Lean, Mr.	0	5	0
Martin, Mr. Thomas H. (London)	0	5	0
Melling, Mrs.	0	5	0
Melling, Mr. S.	0	5	0
Meadows, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Middleton, Mr. R. M.	0	5	0
Milner, Mr. R. S.	0	5	0
Maude, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Minshull, Mr. P. H.	0	5	0
Moody, Mr. W.	0	5	0
Moss and Son, Messrs.	0	5	0
Molyneux, Mr.	0	5	0
Moxon, Mrs.	0	5	0
Mudd, Mr. H.	0	5	0
Munroe, Dr.	0	5	0
Murray. Mrs. (Dumfries)	0	5	0
Mylne, Mrs.	0	5	0
M'Kitrick, Miss	0	5	0
Marshall, Mr. G. W.	0	3	6
M'Kerrow, Mrs. (Southport)	0	3	0
Marris, Mrs.	0	2	6
Martin, Miss	0	2	6
Markland, Mr.	0	2	6
Mackareth, Mr. Thomas	0	2	6
Mackie, The Misses	0	2	6
Melhuish, Mr.	0	2	6
Mellor, Mr. B.	0	2	6
Merritt, Mrs.	0	2	6

	£	s.	d.
Monkhouse, Mrs. (Huddersfield)	0	2	6
Monkhouse, Mr. Thomas (York)	0	2	6
Moorhouse, Rev. Thomas P.	0	2	6
Moore, Mr. T.	0	2	6
Morrison, Miss	0	2	6
Monkhouse, Mr. J. (Kendal)	0	2	6
Mudd, Mr. S.	0	2	6
Murgatroyd, Mr. R.	0	2	6
M'Kerrow, Mrs.	0	2	0
Nicholson, Mr. J. O. (Macclesfield)	2	2	0
Nicholson, Mr. R., Mayor of Southport	2	0	0
Newman, Professor F. W.	1	1	0
Nicol, Mr. Henry	1	1	0
Nicholson, Mr. Joshua (Leek)	1	0	0
Nicholson, Mr. Arthur	0	10	0
Nevins, Dr.	0	5	0
Nivins, Mr.	0	5	0
Nutter, Mr.	0	5	0
Neville, Mrs.	0	3	0
Newton, Mr. W.	0	2	6
Nettleton, Mrs.	0	1	6
Oates, Mrs.	2	2	0
Ogden, Mrs.	2	2	0
Oxley, The Misses	0	10	0
Oldham, Mrs.	0	5	0
Owen, Mr. James (Derby)	0	5	0
Osborne, Mr. R.	0	2	6
Osborne, Mr. T.	0	2	6
Pease, Mr. Arthur	10	0	0
Pease, Mrs. Gurney	5	0	0
Palmer, Mr. J. Hinde	1	1	0
Pankhurst, Dr.	1	1	0
Peiser, Mr. J.	1	1	0
Potter, Mr. T. B., M.P.	1	1	0
Phythian, Mr. Joseph	1	0	0
Pickup, Mrs.	1	0	0
Peel, Mr. Thomas	0	10	6
Parker, Messrs. J. and Sons (Batley)	0	10	0
Phillips, Mr. G. H.	0	10	0
Petrie, Mr. J.	0	10	0
Pratt, Mr. J.	0	10	0
Plimsaul, Mrs. (2 years)	0	10	0
Parker Mr. (York)	0	5	0
Parsons, Miss	0	5	0
Parker, Mr. W. Coor (Darlington)	0	5	0
Pearson, Mr. R.	0	5	0
Peck, Mr. Geo.	0	5	0
Philips, Mrs.	0	5	0
Pierson, Miss	0	5	0
Plaistow, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Pontifex, Mr. F.	0	5	0
Porter, Miss M. E.	0	5	0
Porter, Mr. A.	0	5	0
Prideaux, Miss G. M. (Darlington)	0	5	0
Proctor, Miss	0	5	0
Preston, Mr. John	0	5	0
Procter, Mr. John	0	5	0
Pyle, Mr. T. T., M.D.	0	5	0
Parkinson, Mr. G. (Blackburn)	0	2	6
Paterson, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Park, Miss A.	0	2	6
Pearce, Mr.	0	2	6

	£	s.	d.
Pick, Mr. D.	0	2	6
Pope, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Pratt, Mrs.	0	2	6
Pulleyn, Mr. E.	0	2	6
Purcell, Miss	0	2	6
Prideaux, Miss E. B. (Brighton)	0	2	0
Phillipson, Mr.	0	1	6
Powell, Mrs.	0	1	0
Roe, Mr. T., jun.	2	2	0
Reckitts, Mr. James	1	1	0
Rhys, Mrs.	1	1	0
Richardson, Mrs. H.	1	1	0
Rigbye, Miss H.	1	1	0
Rowbotham, Messrs. J. and C. H.	1	1	0
Rushton, Mr. Enoch	1	0	0
Renals, Mr. Alderman J.	0	10	6
Rentoul, Rev. J. L.	0	10	6
Ritson, Mr. W.	0	10	6
Robson, Mr. E. C.	0	10	6
Roper, Mr. W. B.	0	10	6
Ritson, Mr. F	0	10	0
Roby, Mrs.	0	10	0
Rowley, Mr. C., jun.	0	10	0
Ready, Mr. Thos. W.	0	5	0
Rhoades, Mr. James	0	5	0
Ridgway, Mr. M.	0	5	0
Rimmer, Mrs.	0	5	0
Roberts, Mr. D.	0	5	0
Robertson, Mr. W. L.	0	5	0
Robinson, Mrs. (Timperley)	0	5	0
Robinson, Mr. G. (Huddersfield)	0	5	0
Robinson, Mr. J. (Kendal)	0	5	0
Rotherford, Mrs.	0	5	0
Rous, Miss	0	5	0
Rowlinson, Mr. R.	0	5	0
Rowntree, Mrs. W.	0	5	0
Russell, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Rawson, Mr. James	0	4	0
Ritchie, Mrs.	0	3	0
Raddings, Mr.	0	2	6
Raven, Mr. G.	0	2	6
Rawson, Mr. P. L.	0	2	6
Ridgway, Mr. Jos.	0	2	6
Robins, Mr. John	0	2	6
Robinson, Mr. H. (Hull)	0	2	6
Rollin, Mr.	0	2	6
Russell, Mr. John	0	2	6
Ransley, Mrs.	0	1	6
Scatcherd, Mrs. Oliver	15	0	0
Siddon, Miss	5	0	0
Smithson, Mrs. Edward	5	0	0
Scholefield, Mrs.	4	4	0
Shore, Miss Arabella	2	2	0
Sibthorpe, Mrs. Shurmer	1	10	0
Smale, Mr. W.	1	1	0
Smith, Mrs. William (Huddersfield)	1	1	0
Steinthal, Rev. S. Alfred	1	1	0
Storey, Mr. S., Mayor of Sunderland	1	1	0
Sharman, Mrs. W. Pearce	1	0	0
Simpson, Mr. Charles (Lichfield)	1	0	0
Shepherd, Miss	1	0	0
Spence, Mrs. A.	1	0	0
Steains, Mr. A.	1	0	0

	£	s.	d.
Samuelson, Mr. James	0	10	6
Shadforth, Mr. R.	0	10	6
Stuart, Mr. James (Hull)	0	10	6
Sugden, Mr. W.	0	10	0
Senior, Mr. William (Batley)	0	10	0
Shaw, Mrs. (Colne)	0	10	0
Simpson, Mr. William	0	10	0
Smarey, Miss	0	10	0
Smith, Mr. James (Liverpool)	0	10	0
Smithson, Mr. E. W.	0	10	0
Spence, Mrs. A.	0	10	0
Swaine, Miss	0	5	0
Sager, Mr. Thomas	0	5	0
Scanlan, Mr.	0	5	0
Senior, Mr. George (Barnsley)	0	5	0
Shepley, Mr. Thomas	0	5	0
Shenton, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Sherwood, Mrs.	0	5	0
Shaw, Mr. Thomas	0	5	0
Sibthorpe, Mr. Stephen	0	5	0
Silvester, Mr. W.	0	5	0
Smethurst, Mr. Councillor, sen.	0	5	0
Smethurst, Mr. Councillor, jun.	0	5	0
Smethurst, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Smith, Mrs. Alfred (Ripon)	0	5	0
Smith, Mr. B. (Thirsk)	0	5	0
Smith, Rev. J. H. (Ossett)	0	5	0
Somervill, Mr. John	0	5	0
Sproster, Mr. John	0	5	0
Stainsby, Mr. J.	0	5	0
Stephenson, Mr. Thomas (Grimsby)	0	5	0
Stewart, Mr. C.	0	5	0
Sutcliffe, Mr. R.	0	5	0
Sutcliffe, Mrs. R.	0	5	0
Sinclair, Mr. F.	0	4	0
Salsbury, Mr.	0	2	6
Sergeant, Mrs.	0	2	6
Shadforth, Mr. William (Durham)	0	2	6
Shatwell, Miss M.	0	2	6
Sheard, Mrs. Preston	0	2	6
Shelton, Miss	0	2	6
Simpson, Mrs. Jane H.	0	2	6
Sims, Mrs. George	0	2	6
Sinclair, Mr. R.	0	2	6
Simpson, Mr. T.	0	2	6
Smith, Mrs. (Kettering)	0	2	6
Smith, Mr. J. P. (Burnley)	0	2	6
Smith, Mrs. (York)	0	2	6
Smith, Mr. F. H. (Hull)	0	2	6
Smith, Mr. R. (Grimsby)	0	2	6
Smith, Mrs. Edward (Sunderland)	0	2	6
Southern, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Stone, Mrs.	0	2	6
Strawson, Mr.	0	2	6
Stroyan, Mrs.	0	2	6
Sutcliffe, Mrs. Jack (Grimsby)	0	2	6
Snow, Mrs.	0	2	0
Thomasson, Executors of the late Thomas, Esq.	200	0	0
Thomasson, Mr. and Mrs. J. P.	180	0	0
Thomasson, Mrs. J. P.	29	18	2
Todd Miss (Chester)	5	5	0
Trevelyan, Mr. A.	2	0	0
Thomson, Miss Dora (2 years)	2	0	0
Taylor, Mrs. Henry	1	1	0

	£	s.	d.
Taylor, Mrs. Thomas	1	1	0
Tennent, Dowager Lady Emerson	1	1	0
Tozer, Mr. Alfred	1	1	0
Tatham, Mr. George	1	0	0
Tewson, Mrs.	1	0	0
Taylor, Mr. C. T. (Preston)	0	10	6
Taylor, Mr. John (Blackburn)	0	10	0
Thompson Miss (Ashton-on-Ribble)	0	10	0
Thompson, Mr. R. (York)	0	10	0
Thorpe, Mr. F. (Preston)	0	10	0
Taylor, Mr. J. (Burnley)	0	5	0
Thompson, Mr. J. (Burnley)	0	5	0
Thompson, Mr. (Kendal)	0	5	0
Teale, Mr. J. W., M.A.	0	5	0
Thomas, Mrs. (Broughton) (2 years)	0	5	0
Thorpe, Mrs. F. (York)	0	5	0
Thorpe, Mr. James	0	5	0
Tootal, Miss Clare	0	5	0
Tugwell, Mr. A. J.	0	5	0
Turner, Mrs. H.	0	5	0
Theedam, Miss	0	5	0
Thwaites, Mr. Charles	0	2	6
Thompson, Mr. Alderman J. (Blackburn)	0	2	6
Thompson, Mrs. (Dudley)	0	2	6
Tongue, Mr. Barnabas	0	2	6
Turner, Mr. Thomas (Dudley)	0	2	6
Turton, Mr. George	0	2	6
Timpson, Mr.	0	2	6
Thompson Mrs. (Ripon)	0	2	0
Uttley, Mr. (deceased)	0	10	0
Unwin, Mrs.	0	5	0
Villiers, Right Hon. Charles Pelham, M.P.	1	1	0
Vero, Mrs. David	0	2	6
Vero, Mr. William	0	2	6
Vincent, Miss Mary	0	1	0
Winkworth, Mrs. Stephen	55	0	0
White, Mr. Alderman, Mayor of Macclesfield	2	2	0
Wintringham, Mr. J., Jun.	2	1	0
Wintringham, Mrs. J.	1	1	0
Winder, Mrs. Robert	1	1	0
Walker, Mrs. Edward (Leeds)	1	1	0
Walker, Mr. J. J. (Hanley)	1	1	0
Whitaker, Mr. W.	1	1	0
Whiteley, Mr. N.	1	1	0
Woodhead, Mr. Alderman, Mayor of Huddersfield	1	1	0
Worthington, Mr. T. (Hanley)	1	1	0
Woodall, Mr.	1	1	0
Walker, Mrs. C. (Leeds)	1	0	0
Weiss, Mrs.	1	0	0
Whitehead, Mrs.	1	0	0
Wilson, Mr. and Mrs. H. J.	1	0	0
Ward, Mr. A.	0	10	6
Wintringham, Mr. Alderman W. T.	0	10	6
Worthington, Mr. Alderman	0	10	6
Watson, Mr. John	0	10	0
Whittaker, Mr. John	0	10	0
Whyatt, Mr. A. R.	0	10	0
White, Mr. G.	0	10	0
Wintringham, Mr. Alderman John	0	10	0
Wilkinson, Misses (Leeds)	0	10	0
Wilkinson, Misses (York)	0	10	0
Wilkinson, Mr. E. T. (York)	0	10	0

	£	s.	d.
Wilson, Mr. J. Whitewell (Kendal)	0	10	0
Walsh, Mr.	0	5	0
Walton, Mrs.	0	5	0
Walton, Miss	0	5	0
Watts, Mrs. Alfred	0	5	0
Welch, Mr. W. E.	0	5	0
Whitehead, Mr. D. (Durham)	0	5	0
White, Mr. G. (Scarbro)	0	5	0
Whitmell, Mr.	0	5	0
Whittle, Dr.	0	5	0
Whitelegge, Miss	0	5	0
Willan, Mr. James	0	5	0
Winfield, Mr. John S.	0	5	0
Wildman, Mr.	0	5	0
Wilks, Mr. Job	0	5	0
Witty, Mr. Thomas	0	5	0
Woolley, Mr.	0	5	0
Worthington, Rev. A. W.	0	5	0
Wright, Mr. S. (Middlesborough)	0	5	0
Wright, Mr. Thomas	0	5	0
Wright, Miss L.	0	3	0
Walker, Mr. T. (Huddersfield)	0	2	6
Walton, Mr. (Grimsby)	0	2	6
Webster, Mr. J. (Darlington)	0	2	6
Wenney, Mr.	0	2	6
Willis, Dr.	0	2	6
Willan, Mr. John	0	2	6
Withall, Mrs. H. A.	0	2	6
Whyte, Mr. J.	0	2	6
Woodhouse, Mr. S. (Scarborough)	0	2	6
Wood, Mrs. (Dewsbury)	0	2	6
Wright, Mr. E. A. (Cork)	0	2	6
Ward, Mr. Jos.	0	2	0
Wheeler, Mrs.	0	2	0
Whalley, Mr.	0	1	0
Yates, Mrs.	2	0	0
Yeoman, Mr. P.	0	2	6

Subscriptions received since the Accounts were made up.

	£	s.	d.
Ormerod, Mr. Thomas	1	1	0
Ormerod, Mrs. Thomas	1	1	0
Bowling, Miss L. A.	1	0	0
Haddock, Mrs.	0	5	0
Owen, Mrs. J.	0	5	0
Lomas, Miss	0	2	6
Holland, Mrs.	0	2	6

MANCHESTER NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

RULES.

I. The object of the Society is, to obtain for Women the right of voting for Members of Parliament on the same conditions as it is, or may be, granted to men.

II. Approval of the object of the Society, and an annual subscription of any amount shall constitute membership.

III. The subscriptions are due on the first day of January for the current year.

IV. An Executive Committee shall be appointed at an Annual General Meeting, which committee shall have power to add to its number.

V. The Committee, at its first meeting subsequent to the Annual Meeting, shall appoint a secretary and a treasurer.

VI. A General Meeting of the Society shall be held once a year, to receive the report, the statement of accounts, to appoint the committee, and transact any other business which may arise.

VII. A Special General Meeting of the Society may be called at any time by the committee; and, at the written request of twenty-five Members, the secretary shall call a Special Meeting. At such meeting no subjects shall be discussed but those mentioned in the notice summoning the members.

VIII. No General Meeting of the Society shall be called without eight days' public notice of such meeting.

IX. These rules shall not be altered except at a General Meeting; and no rule shall be altered at any meeting unless a month's notice of such proposed alteration has been given to the committee.

MANCHESTER NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

Members of the Society and others are earnestly requested to aid the movement for procuring the passing of the Bill to remove the electoral disabilities of women.

1. By collecting signatures to the petition, forms of which may be obtained from the Secretary.

II. By bringing the question under the notice of Members of Parliament, whenever they appear before their constituents.

III. Should notice of any motion, friendly or hostile, be given in the House of Commons—by writing letters, asking the local Members to support the principle of Women's Suffrage.

IV. In case of an election, by calling on every candidate to declare whether he will, if returned, vote for the Bill to remove the electoral disabilities of women.

V. By trying to procure insertions of facts and arguments bearing on the question in the local press.

VI. By communicating to the Secretary any information likely to be useful to the Society, and the names of such persons as may be disposed to assist the cause.

VII. Where there are three or four members in the same place, by uniting to form a local committee.

VIII. By endeavouring to increase the number of members.

IX. By promoting the circulation of the Women's Suffrage Journal.

X. By extending the organisation of the Society through the medium of corresponding members or local committees. All persons willing to render such assistance are earnestly requested to communicate with the Secretary.

Further information will be willingly afforded to all who may desire it.

LYDIA E. BECKER, Secretary,
28, Jackson's Row, Albert Square, Manchester.

THE

Earnings of Married Women.

WE have received from a legal correspondent some information which serves to show that the protection to the earnings of married women supposed to have been secured by the Act of 1870 is much less complete than was imagined by the promoters of the measure or intended by the Legislature, and that it amounts practically, in cases where the wife is living with the husband, that is, in the vast majority of the cases where it was designed to operate, to no protection at all.

There can be no doubt, says our correspondent, that the promoters of the Bill intended by clause 1 to protect the earnings of married women in any business or occupation of their own in which their husbands were not engaged, but it seems clear that section 1, as framed, falls short in carrying this out. The condition is, that the business or occupation shall be carried on "separately from her husband," *i.e.*, from *him*. But, to carry out the promoters' wishes, the section should have declared, separately from her husband's *business*, *calling*, or *engagement*. At least one legal decision upon the section referred to bears out this remark. Shortly after the passing of the Act, a case in which our correspondent was concerned was decided under the Equity Jurisdiction conferred by the County Courts. The facts were shortly these:—The husband was a cashier, the wife a ladies' dress and mantle maker. The latter business was carried on by the wife and her own assistants, and the proceeds applied by her as she thought proper, she hiring and paying assistants, making purchases and giving receipts, at no time accounting to her husband, but contributing without any arrangement to do so to the general maintenance of the family. The husband, for some reason of his own, took upon himself to search his wife's boxes for papers, and found a sum of £90, the savings of the wife out of the business referred to. The husband kept the money, and the wife's solicitors instituted proceedings under the Married Women's Property Act to compel restitution to her. Of course the allegation was that the money belonged to the wife as separate earnings. Our correspondent was acting for the husband, and his contention was, through counsel whom he

instructed, that, as the parties were living together during the carrying on of the business, the husband having access to it and all pertaining to it as a business, it could not be said that it was carried on separately from *him*. It was quite true the business was carried on separately and apart from his *business*, but the Act did not go so far as to give the wife the right so long as the business was not separate from *him*—the individual. The Court adopted this view, and dismissed the wife's claim to the money.

There can be no doubt, continues our correspondent, that it should have been the object of the legislature to clearly protect the wife's earnings in such a case as this, and that case alone is sufficient to show the possible hardship to the wife in a thousand similar instances where this section might have to be applied. Two other cases were at some time later similarly decided, but were probably not reported. They may have been heard *in camera*, as was the case referred to, being in the nature of ex-parte motions.

No appeal was lodged against the decision referred to, and the logical effect of it is, that no wife is safe in carrying on a business or occupation if the husband can by any means have frequent access to the place where it is carried on. If living with the wife, the husband can scarcely be deprived of such access, and eventually he may, by his own continued wrongful interference with it, be enabled thereby to show it has not been carried on *separately* from *him*. The section, therefore, to give effectual protection to a wife's earnings, makes separation next to, if not absolutely, a necessity. Of course it is a question of fact in each particular case, to be ascertained what has been done separately from the husband.

Whether the decision referred to by our correspondent is or is not a correct interpretation of the Act, and there seems no reason to doubt that it is correct, the fact that the Courts have given such a judgment destroys a safeguard supposed to have been provided. It throws an additional element of confusion and insecurity into the existing chaos of laws regulating, or rather disturbing, the property of married women, and furnishes a fresh proof of the necessity for some such amendment in the law as that to be proposed by Lord COLERIDGE on the re-assembling of Parliament.—*Reprinted from the "Women's Suffrage Journal," November, 1876.*

A. IRELAND AND CO., PRINTERS, MANCHESTER.

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OPINIONS OF THE PRESS

ON THE

PROPERTY OF MARRIED WOMEN.

REPRINTED FOR THE MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY COMMITTEE.

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1877.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

GLASGOW HERALD.

Tuesday Morning, April 17, 1877.

Mr. Anderson's Bill for the Protection of the Property of Married Women in Scotland, which comes on for second reading on Wednesday next, proposes to concede a long-delayed measure of justice to a much-enduring and much-oppressed class of the community. To some persons who may be still of an antique way of thinking the proposal will probably appear to be weakly romantic, as unnecessarily interfering with a system of use-and-wont, under the operation of which the country has made a considerable amount of progress—has produced, in fact, in all ranks of life those saints and heroes whose virtues and thoughts and achievements demonstrate the higher possibilities of human genius. Why seek to disturb laws which have not been able to prevent so large an amount of good? The answer is simple enough. It is true that with most barbarous laws the world has always got on somehow, often not unprosperously. But human progress has been made to a large extent in spite of evil and defective laws, and on account of the fact that men have been individually superior to the laws they have not hesitated to enact in their corporate capacity. Besides, while hardly any system, however base and bad, not even the vilest slavery itself, has had power altogether to crush out goodness and greatness, or the sense of justice, from the human spirit, it is quite certain, on the other hand, that the progress of society has been much retarded and distorted by barbarous customs and unjust laws.

What evil, for instance, has not been done by the single law of "husband and wife" which Mr. Anderson's Bill proposes to abolish, and by which a woman in becoming a wife may also become the victim of a man who, in becoming a husband, has the power, if he has the will, to render her life one long scene of wrong and misery? By that law, or *jus mariti*, which is part of the precious heritage left us by the wise legislators of antiquity, a wife practically is or may become little better than a slave. A woman may be rich, but after she has become a wife she owns nothing. The husband is the proprietor both of herself and her children, and may, if he please, not only rob her of her fortune and squander it and reduce her and her children to beggary, but after that, if by the exercise of her abilities she earns money for her own and her children's support, the noble animal, her husband, may step in and rob her even of that hard-won money, and no law can touch him, unless his starved and neglected children come upon the parish. This utterly brutal law has long been practically abolished among the upper classes, who take care by ante-nuptial contracts to secure the wife's estate for her separate use. A bad husband in the upper ranks may do much to torture his wife, but he cannot touch her money or estate without her legally ratified consent. It is different with the humbler classes, among whom marriage contracts are as rare as coronets. A wife is her husband's, body and goods; and, indeed, should she unwittingly marry a brute, she can hardly call even her soul her own. All men of any experience must have seen the dismal operation of this fine piece of wisdom of the ancients. Our own city could furnish some terrible examples of women who, having been driven by the riotous folly of their husbands back to the mills and factories from which they were married to earn bread for their children, have been driven still further to distraction by having their wages stolen from them by their husbands, and consumed in drunkenness. It is for the protection of such women especially, and of all women, high or low, who may hereafter be exposed to the danger of such a fate, that Mr. Anderson's Bill is intended. We have not forgotten that at present women with brutal husbands may

obtain from the sheriff "protection orders" to secure to herself and her children the wages she has earned, often with pain and difficulty. But as a matter of fact, as this is simply a permissive affair, women seldom resort to it; and if they do, the protection order often comes when there is no longer anything to protect—when the very furniture, even although paid for by herself, has been sold by her irresponsible lord and master. Mr. Anderson's Bill, if passed into law, as it certainly ought to be, will remedy this monstrous and inhuman state of things.

It should be remembered that the Act of 1870 gives to a married woman in England and Ireland, whether married before or after the passing of the Act, the right to her own earnings—earned after marriage and after the passing of the Act. It enables her to retain to her separate use any moneys invested in savings banks or post-office savings banks, and any property in the funds, any fully paid-up shares in a joint-stock company, and any shares in an industrial or a provident society. That Act also gives her other rights and privileges; and all property secured to her by the Act she can dispose of by will, independently of her husband. Mr. Anderson's Bill proposes to give similar rights to married women in Scotland, and one can only wonder that such a measure was not passed long ago. . . . . Such are the chief provisions of a measure which we hope to see placed upon the statute book this session. It will give imperatively to the humbler race of women those rights which are voluntarily rendered among the wealthier classes. It will protect women from the rapacity of cruel and heartless husbands; it will prevent children from being robbed, starved, and ruined; and we believe that its profoundest and noblest effect will be to create in the course of time in the community a truer and purer feeling as to the genuine claims and rights of women under the higher legislation of Divine mercy and justice. The law as it stands is a scandal and an atrocity which ought to be superseded by something more in accordance with our Christian civilisation. Mr. Anderson's measure seems to contain all the necessary provisions for effecting the long-deferred reforms.

NEWCASTLE DAILY CHRONICLE.

Thursday, April 19, 1877.

Husbands and Wives.

The peculiar lull in Eastern movements and the usual Parliamentary Wednesday made the proceedings at Westminster yesterday rather tame from a purely political point of view. Mr. Gorst, however, drew from the Government a pledge to take some action soon on the question of jurisdiction in territorial waters; and Mr. Anderson succeeded in reading a second time, without resistance, his measure dealing with the property of married women in Scotland. This is a question attended by no popular excitement, but which yet means much hardship to many hundreds of women who are helpless in the face of a harsh and unequal law. Previous to 1870, married women, according to the common law of England, could not hold property at all. Wealthy parents, indeed, evaded the law by special contracts which vested the property of their daughters in the hands of trustees, so as to limit the authority of husbands to the usufruct or interest accruing. In the case of a wife acquiring property by bequeathment, the Court of Chancery would, on proper application, order the husband to make a settlement on the wife, that is to say, would override the law in order to do for the wife what her parents or guardians would have done had she been in possession of the property prior to marriage. This palpable injustice to woman is traceable to the barbarous ages, in which woman was regarded and treated as a slave to all intents and purposes. The ancient Romans adopted this principle, but as soon as they became a really civilised people they placed the sexes on a footing of equality, except that a woman could not alienate immovable property without her husband's consent. More than 2,000 years later in the world's history, it required the organisation of a special society or committee, and repeated application sustained by earnest and skilful pleading, to induce the Parliament of England to

mitigate the degrading slavery which wedlock entailed upon woman. But after all the reforms effected by the Acts of 1870 and 1874, the principle of inequality between husband and wife remains, while the former Act abounds in anomalies which only too clearly indicate the reluctance of Parliament to look the question full in the face and give to it an honest solution. Lord Coleridge, however, is about to introduce a Bill for England and Ireland, the object of which is "to secure to a woman the same rights with regard to her own property as are secured by law to a man with regard to his own property." As the law of Scotland is different from that of the other two portions of the country, yet also calls for amendment, a separate measure has been drawn up and entrusted to the hands of Mr. Anderson, the member for Glasgow, who, it may be remembered, obtained in 1874 a small instalment of the emancipation he now proposes to complete. This is the Bill which passed the second reading yesterday. Both measures are designed to prevent marriage from altering the relations which a woman, when single, sustains to either creditor or debtor.

THE INVERGORDON TIMES.

Wednesday, April 11, 1877.

The proposed enactments of the Bill brought into Parliament by Mr. Anderson and other Scotch members of the House of Commons for the protection of the property of married women in Scotland appear to be, not only unobjectionable, but in every respect reasonable and proper. The first, second, and third clauses provide that in the case of marriages which take place after the Bill becomes law the husband's right of administration of personal estate or heritable property belonging to the wife shall be excluded; but that the Act shall not apply to cases of marriage which have taken place before its passing, except so far as relates to personal or heritable estate acquired after its passing. The fourth clause provides that in the case of a marriage which has taken place before the passing of the Act the husband and wife may voluntarily come under its provisions. The

fifth clause protects the earnings of married women. The remaining clauses relate to the rights of the husband and children on the death of the wife, the liability of the husband for the wife's ante-nuptial debts, and the liability of the wife's estate after marriage for debts contracted by her. The effect of the Bill on its becoming law will be to give the wife the full control of her property during her life, and to enable her to dispose of it by will in the same manner as the husband has the power to dispose of his property.

BLACKPOOL GAZETTE.

April 13, 1877.

The fact is, the slavery laws of antiquity are the origin of the Common Law on this subject, and the existing laws respecting married women are relics of slavery. Judging from the character of a number of cases that are continually cropping up at our police courts—and which give but a very slight indication of the kind of thing that is constantly going on up and down the country—it would appear that a Bill to protect women from the personal violence of depraved and brutal husbands is a measure that is more urgently required than even Lord Coleridge's Married Women's Property Bill.

. . . . . .

Still, there is a glaring injustice in the law as at present. A great wrong is at any time likely to be perpetrated, from the fact that when a woman is married the Common Law should step in and enable the husband to confiscate all her property and the property of her children to his own sole and separate use.

DAILY NEWS.

April 19, 1877.

Mr. Anderson's Married Women's Property (Scotland) Bill was read a second time in the House of Commons yesterday without real opposition, though exception was taken to some of its details. Lord Coleridge has promised to introduce at an early date, into the House of Lords, a measure having

the same general object. We may well question whether the most stubborn opponent of women's rights would not admit that in its present shape the law is a jumble of things good and bad, and that it is advisable to infuse at least order, to say nothing of a little more justice, into what is now a mighty maze without a plan. The beautiful simplicity of the old Common Law—simplicity summed up in the saying that the husband and wife are one person, and that one is the husband—is gone. Not to speak of the perplexing modifications made by Equity in the concise doctrine that the husband took everything, the Legislature has been busy for some years in effecting changes which are subversive of the whole system, but which do not supply a complete equivalent. The question no longer is whether we shall retain the Common Law theory which vested in the husband everything the wife had or could get. This is done with. The Married Women's Property Act of 1870 put an end to it, and the Amendment Act of 1874, though passed in the interest of the stronger sex, really carries one still further from that Common Law which is revered long after it has ceased to exist. The real question before the Legislature in these circumstances is not whether it will evacuate a position held for centuries, but whether we shall be content with a compromise which is full of inconsistencies, and which, as we all know, was the result of patching and repatching. Having parted company with a system which had ceased to govern the concerns of any but the poorer classes, we must grope our way to some better arrangement.

Certainly it has not yet been found. The Act of 1870 abounds with curious inconsistencies and anomalies. It gives married women certain privileges, and withholds for no ascertainable reason others. It protects their earnings up to a certain point, and then stops without any good cause. Why bequests under £200 shall be treated in one way, and bequests over that amount shall be treated in another, we fail to understand; and it would require a clever casuist to show that, while a woman may receive by the intestacy of a relative any amount, however large, to be held in her own right, a bequest of the same sum will be inopera-

tive to produce the same effect. A man dies intestate; one of his daughters who happens to be married will hold her share of the estate as if it had been settled upon her to her sole use. But let him come to the conclusion that she is particularly deserving of his bounty, so that he makes her the object of a special donation in his will; the law will in these circumstances intervene to defeat this wish, and will pass the entire bequest to the husband. We do not know whether this anomaly was faced in 1870, but we can scarcely suppose that the Legislature then anticipated some of the curious consequences of the measure. It was not intended, we may presume, that a married woman who was free to earn wages shall be free to break her engagements with complete impunity; and yet this is a result which the Court of Queen's Bench has extracted from the Act as it stands. Certain magistrates had inflicted a fine of twenty shillings upon a married woman who had broken the Masters and Servants Act. On an appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench, Mr. Justice Blackburn and Mr. Justice Mellor were unanimously of opinion that the conviction was wrong, and they therefore quashed it. This, it is needless to say, is an unfair encouragement to the undeserving; but it operates indirectly to the disadvantage of the meritorious. A careful employer desirous of filling an important post would take into account the existence of this privilege; he would endeavour to avoid placing himself at the mercy of one who was free to walk out of his shop and to leave pressing work unfinished without a moment's warning. And this is not the sole piece of injustice which is embedded in the Act. Take the case of a woman who has run in debt and who then marries. On her marriage her personal property, on the strength of which she perhaps procured credit, passes to her husband. She cannot be sued; she is no longer a *femme sole*, and she may truly say that she has nothing wherewith to pay her debts. Under the Act of 1870, the husband could have been sued; but the Amendment Act, diverging from the Common Law doctrine, declares that he cannot. The poor creditors are thus left out in the cold. They may see the couple enjoying the proceeds of their

fraud, but the creditors are helpless. A woman who is over head and ears in debt, and who marries in that state, may earn hundreds by her pen. She may laugh her unpaid milliner to scorn; her earnings, however large, cannot be touched. It is indeed alarming to think how many frauds are possible and legal by the skilful combined use of matrimony and the Married Women's Property Act. Employers who hire in their mills and shops women, and shopkeepers who supply them with goods on credit, have cause to complain of the unfair influence of the Act on them. But, of course, the chief objection to the acceptance of it as in any respect a final measure is the capricious and irrational distinction which it draws between things essentially alike; the refusal to act out principles which are recognised in certain clauses; the cumbrousness of the process by which the boons granted by the Act can be obtained; the quite unreasonable preference given to savings bank investments; the formalities necessary to protect other investments; the distinction drawn between bequests and estates devolving by descent—all these are matters which require re-examination and revision. The introduction of Lord Coleridge's Bill will furnish an opportunity to take stock of the not very favourable experience of the working of the present Act.

Mr. Anderson, in the Bill which was read a second time yesterday, has offered a solution of the difficulty so far as Scotland is concerned. The Scotch law is a trifle more lenient than the English, which stands alone in its severity. In lieu of the right of dower, which can here be so easily defeated, a widow has a right to the *terce*, or one-third of her husband's heritable property, and to the *jus relictæ*, or a share in his personality; and, unless barred by ante-nuptial settlements, or by the acceptance of some provision in exchange, this right cannot be defeated. Perhaps it is also a point in favour of the Scotch law that it veils harsh facts under pleasant names, and that if it does not create a true communion of goods between husband and wife, it often speaks of one. Mr. Anderson's Bill not only proposes to abridge the husband's rights in all future marriages, but applies in some of its provisions to people already married.

It is scarcely fair by *ex post facto* legislation to upset existing arrangements made in accordance with the law as it stands. What will be the tenor of the English Bill may be surmised in some degree from Lord Coleridge's emphatic speeches on the subject. As Attorney-General, he once asked, "Was it not right to provide for married women generally the protection which every prudent man secured for his daughter by means of trustees and the Court of Chancery?" Apparently he is desirous that the poor should have the same marriage law as is in point of fact enjoyed by the wealthier classes, who are able to fee lawyers and to pay for the preparation of settlements. And this, no doubt, would be an excellent starting-point for legislation. Indeed, were the subject looked at from this point of view with some persistency, the case for reform would be admitted to be unanswerable by a mass of persons who deprecate change. It is a curious anomaly, which would be ridiculous if it had not a sad side to it, that the marriage law of property, which governs the educated classes of society, is one which gives the husband no such power as that which regulates the affairs of the poorest and ignorant classes. When a lady possessed of property marries, care is taken to protect her interests and those of her children. Her husband submits to minute restrictions, the practical effect of which is to give his wife almost as much power over her separate estate as if she were unmarried. On the other hand, the reckless, ignorant husband is entrusted with powers denied to his superior morally and intellectually, and the property of his wife is handed over to him subject to no restrictions. Both systems cannot be right, and it is clear with which the advantage lies.

GLASGOW EVENING CITIZEN.

March 29, 1877.

There should be no great difficulty in securing both popular and legislative assent to a measure which is in great part only an assimilation of Scotch law to that already in force in England and Ireland. The probability is that the relation-

ship of husband and wife to property which is at present in force will remain practically unaltered. The administration of property, in whatever form it exists, must, for purposes of domestic convenience, remain under the control of one hand, and that the hand to which the more intricate business of life is entrusted. While this will, we believe, continue, by the mutual agreement of the vast majority of men and women, it still remains a fact that cases of extreme hardship, caused by the existing law, are of frequent occurrence. Most people are familiar with instances in which feminine fortunes have been dissipated by the action of husbands unrestrained by law; and it is well known that the weekly earnings of hard-worked women are often sacrificed to the laziness or greed of sluggards, who have more than nine points of the statute in favour of possession. Any measure which deals practically with this social injustice must receive a large amount of support from men of all shades of politics.

BLAIRGOWRIE ADVERTISER.

March 31, 1877.

Married Women's Property.

We have had sent us a copy of the Married Women's Property (Scotland) Act, introduced into Parliament by Mr. Anderson, the second reading of which is fixed for Wednesday, 18th April. The object of the measure is to secure to a married woman her own property, and make her liable for her contracts relating thereto, and her own debts, as if she were a single woman. . . . . .
The Bill is fairly described a simple attempt to deal with the property of married women, so far as Scotland is concerned, in a broad and equitable manner, accepting the principle of a wife's right to her own property, already recognised with regard to English and Irish wives by the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, but avoiding those mistakes and defects of that measure which Lord Coleridge proposes to remove by his forthcoming Married Women's Property Bill.

GREENOCK TELEGRAPH.

March 29, 1877.

A Bill has been introduced by Mr. Anderson, M.P. for Glasgow, to obtain the sanction of Parliament for the creation of a law for Scotland similar to the Married Women's Property Act for England, now over six years in operation. We should not in this northern section of the kingdom possess a less liberal share of what is given by way of legislation than our compatriots of the south. Especially should this not be the case as regards the amenities under which women live, and the Bill referred to is greatly needed as an instalment of those rights hitherto denied to the fair, we dare not call it the weaker, sex. The protection of the property of married women is a fair subject for legislation, and giving the power to women of administering the property they possess is a very clear and simple duty. . . . . The spirit of such legislation having already been admitted by Parliament as reasonable and just, it only requires a little energy to secure the passing of this Bill into law, an achievement to which we look forward with good and earnest hope.

KILKENNY MODERATOR.

Saturday, April 14, 1877.

It must be admitted that the Married Women's Property Act of 1870 was a well intended, although weak, attempt to remedy a gigantic evil. But it is so vague and bristles with so many anomalies that it has proved ineffectual for the purpose which it was designed to serve. A radical amendment of the law relating to the property of married women has therefore become a pressing necessity. The claims of the wives and mothers of the United Kingdom to the control of that which is their own can no longer be ignored. They constitute one of the chief grievances under which female society is suffering in our day, and call loudly upon Parliament and the country for redress. On the just settlement of these claims, and the removal of disabilities which are a disgrace to society, a vast amount of future human happiness depends, for there is involved in it the material prosperity of the nation itself and of generations yet unborn.

THE DUMBARTON HERALD.

March 29, 1877.

Married Women's Property.

A copy of the Married Women's Property (Scotland) Bill is before us, and its endorsation shows that it has been prepared and brought in by Mr. Anderson (Glasgow), Sir Robert Anstruther (Fifeshire), and Mr. Orr Ewing (Dumbartonshire). In many respects the measure is so framed as to secure the cordial approval and hearty support of all the friends of progress, whilst its being based on the principle of assimilating the law of Scotland to that of other parts of the kingdom will protect it from being opposed as extreme or revolutionary. . . . . .

In so far as it is thus proposed to equalise the rights and responsibilities of husbands and wives, we have only to say that the measure must be regarded as thoroughly satisfactory. The civil rights of men and women, married or single, ought, we hold, to be reciprocally equal. Hitherto the law in many respects has placed women in an exceedingly false position and as yet her grievances have been only partially redressed. But our contention always has been that rights imply duties, and that, if women are placed on an equality with men, as they should be, as to rights, then their responsibilities should be correspondingly extended. We regret that, in some degree, the Bill under consideration fails to recognise fully this latter view of the subject, and that a good cause is in danger consequently of being injured by proposals to put women not merely in as good a position as men, but in a better one. Why, for instance, having had her personal estate secured to her, should the wife's liability for household

expenses be less than that of the husband? In most of cases she takes a more active part in the incurring of debts of the class adverted to than her husband, and if she knew that to the extent of her means she was responsible equally with her husband for their payment, she would be all the more apt to be economical whilst under the limited liability system: if the husband's means are ample, the wife may, if she is so disposed, be as extravagant as she pleases, with pecuniary impunity. Let it be understood it is in the interest of the women that we refer to this phase of the question. With woman as the social equal of man we are thoroughly satisfied the state of society would be immensely improved. With the former either as the inferior or as the superior of the latter, in respect to legal rights, the interests of both are sure to suffer.

THE COMMERCIAL WORLD.

The Bill to be introduced by Lord Coleridge is intended to remedy these anomalies, which are so glaring that we do not see how they can be defended or maintained, except on the principle that inconsistency and confusion are necessary elements of English law—a principle from which right, reason, common sense, and true expediency alike recoil. It can only be in the best interests of the community, and surely to the credit of our legal system, that the anomalies above described should at once be removed. The question is not one of principle—the principle is already conceded—but of consistency. The principle on which the Married Women's Property Act is based was well defined by Sir George Jessel (the Master of the Rolls) in his speech in the House of Commons on the 14th April, 1869, when the Bill was under discussion:—"In considering what ought to be the nature of the law, we cannot deny that no one should be deprived of the power of disposition, unless on proof of unfitness to exercise that power; and it is not intelligible on what principle a woman should be considered incapable of contracting, immediately after she has, with the sanction of the law, entered into the most important contract conceivable."

DAILY TELEGRAPH.

19th April, 1877.

Few things strike a stranger more than the jealousy with which the House of Commons regards a Bill based on a series of self-evident propositions. Yesterday, for example, there were submitted to the popular branch of the Legislature two measures at which it would have been thought no sensible Englishmen would have cavilled much, for nobody could seriously dispute the principle upon which they appear to be founded. Yet they both gave rise to grave if not animated debate. Indeed, one of them had to be withdrawn; and, as for the other, it was only read a second time after a protest from the Home Secretary, who avowed his intention of opposing it in Committee if it were not made to assimilate to a like measure applying to a different part of the United Kingdom. The first of these Bills that came before the House was introduced by Mr. Gorst; the second was submitted by Mr. Anderson. Mr. Gorst's scheme is entitled the Territorial Waters Jurisdiction Act, and Mr. Anderson's is styled the Married Woman's Property Protection (Scotland) Act. Both Bills yesterday stood for second reading, and, as the principle of each is not questioned by practical politicians, it is hard to see why a whole sitting should have been wasted in talking over their minute details. . . . . .

Mr. Anderson's Bill, though it passed the second reading, encountered much opposition. Since 1870 we have had in England a measure achieving, though in a less complete manner, the object at which Mr. Anderson aims. Why, then, especially seeing that the Bill is supported by a majority of the Scotch members, should Englishmen object to married women north of the Cheviots having the same civil privileges as their countrywomen in the South? The only way in which the Bill appears to differ "seriously" from the English Act is in respect of some clauses which are unimportant matters of detail. The customs, laws, and in many respects social institutions of the two countries, however, vary widely; and

it would, therefore, be seldom possible to make every Bill relating to Scotland identical with a similar measure provided for England. Nobody should know that better than Lord Advocate Watson, who deplored the want of identity between Mr. Anderson's proposal and that of Mr. Russell Gurney; but objections of this character relating to minutiæ can be more conveniently and effectively urged in Committee. The rights which Mr. Anderson's Bill would confer on the poor are already enjoyed by the rich, who protect the ladies of their family by the device of marriage contracts—a luxury too expensive to be of any avail in the case of women belonging to the humbler ranks of life. Again, it was urged against the Bill by Mr. Roger Montgomerie, an advocate of some reputation in his own country, that the measure is not needed, because in Scotland there are fewer bad husbands and more bad wives than most people suppose. With regard to the latter assertion, we, of course, cannot speak, as to test it intimate local knowledge is obviously necessary. But we may say the fact that a wife is bad does not render it right to allow her husband to confiscate her earnings when he wants to buy more drink than usual, or when, after a period of desertion, he returns to strip her wretched home of its scanty furniture in order that he may start on a fresh career of debauchery. For our part, we see nothing very alarming in the Bill, which merely provides that a married woman in Scotland shall have full power over her own estate, movable or personal, and her own earnings, and that on the wife's death her husband and children shall have the same rights to participation in her property as she and her children have in her husband's, unless we presume it to be otherwise arranged by a will. Then, again, while husbands are not to be liable beyond the amount of their wives' dower for their ante-nuptial debts, the wife's estate is to be subject to process of attachment for her post-nuptial debts, and debts arising from domestic expenditure, in so far as her husband's assets are not sufficient to meet such claims. Freedom to make different arrangements by mutual contract is preserved; and these, it seems to us, are the leading provisions of the Bill. The House evidently

thought that, on the whole, the measure was not a dangerous one; and even with Ministerial menaces of future opposition ringing in their ears, they read the Bill a second time without a division.

LIVERPOOL MERCURY.

April 24, 1877.

The present session promises a busy time for the Married Women's Property Committee. They have already one Bill before the Commons; in a few days they will have another before the Lords. The cause of this double-barreled attack upon the Legislature lies in the fact that the law relating to the property of wives in Scotland differs so materially in technical details from the corresponding law in England and Ireland that it has been found impossible to include Scotland in any measure applying to the other two countries. Accordingly, Mr. Anderson, one of the members for Glasgow, who has already done good service in the cause in former years, was requested to bring into the Lower House a Bill dealing with the Scotch law; while Lord Coleridge voluntarily undertook to attack the Upper House for the first time with a Married Women's Property Bill for England. What may be the fate of these two measures it is impossible to foresee; but that a speedy amendment of the existing law on the subject is a crying necessity, all just men agree in averring. It is quite true that more than one Married Women's Property Act has been passed during the last few years, but it is equally true that each and all of them have been utterly inadequate to meet the evils they were designed to remedy. So great is the indisposition of the Legislature to reform abuses, and especially those relating to the rights and status of women, that, even when a measure of justice is at last conceded, it is bestowed with so niggardly and grudging a hand as to turn the gift into an obstacle to further progress rather than to render it a complete and satisfactory solution of the difficulty in hand.

. . . . . .

What is wanted is some simple, sweeping, and direct measure,

which will secure to a woman the same rights with regard to her own property as are secured by law to a man with regard to his own property. We are glad to think that the measure which Lord Coleridge is introducing into the House of Lords answers this description; and we trust that the Married Women's Property Committee will not cease agitating till it becomes part and parcel of the law of the land.

A. IRELAND AND CO., PRINTERS, PALL MALL, MANCHESTER.

SPEECH

OF THE

RIGHT HON. LORD COLERIDGE

IN THE

HOUSE OF LORDS

ON THE

MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY ACT (1870) AMENDMENT BILL,

June 21st, 1877.

Printed for the Married Women's Property Committee.

PRINTED BY A. IRELAND & CO., PALL MALL, MANCHESTER.

1877.

MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY ACT (1870) AMENDMENT BILL.

HOUSE OF LORDS, *June* 21, 1877.

MY LORDS,—I begin what I have to say to your Lordships with the earnest statement that certainly, except to remedy what seems to me a great and practical injustice, I should not think of interfering with a subject which awakens so many prejudices as the condition of married women in respect to property. It is indeed a subject happily removed from party prejudice, and I believe that in your Lordships' House there is less prejudice, and a far better prospect of a perfectly judicial determination upon it than in any other assembly in the kingdom. I venture, therefore, to ask you to consider this Bill, which does indeed propose to alter the law—but to alter it according to ancient principles, and on lines already laid down. I cannot deny, I do not wish to deny, that in some families it will, if carried, alter family relations; but, I believe, only in those families in which all your Lordships would admit that, if they alone were to be affected, these relations sorely need altering. In the great majority of cases things will go on as they did before, but that is no argument against the measure. Laws which have conduct for their subject are directed against wrong and injustice; and in this country most of such laws affecting the relations of man with man or man with woman, if you leave the power of contract entirely unaffected, operate only in the minority of cases, and redress evils which are the exception not the rule. A law against stealing does not imply that every man wants to be a thief; a law against murder does not mean that all men are prone to violence; and so a law to protect the property of married women does not mean that all husbands desire to oppress their wives. It may perhaps be convenient if I state very shortly the present condition of what I suppose I must call this controversy. The existing Act of Parliament was first carried, after many previous defeats, in 1870. It was carried from the general sense in this House and in the other House of Parliament, that there was great and cruel injustice in the existing law. It came up to your Lordships' House a much wider measure than it left it; and I believe that my noble and learned friend upon the woolsack who undertook its conduct here had much to do with imparting to it the shape which it finally assumed. I had

not then the means of knowing the reasons which acted upon the mind of my noble friend; but though I could have wished the Act otherwise, I have always been most thankful for the boon which he was the means of conferring upon many married women, and I urged most strongly its acceptance in the House of Commons when some hotter spirits were for rejecting it altogether in vexation and disappointment. I am quite sure we acted wisely in accepting it; but no one will wonder, considering the large limitations it underwent in your Lordships' House, that it did not satisfy those who had supported it in its broader character in the House of Commons. And a great deal having been granted as an experiment, and the experiment having succeeded, the time I conceive has come when we may safely ask, and your Lordships, and Parliament, may safely grant a great deal more. Now, the Act of 1870 contained two sets, so to speak, of parallel and kindred, though separate clauses. It contained an absolute protection for a woman's earnings; it contained an absolute protection for property to which she might succeed or become entitled up to £200. Next, it contained a variety of clauses altering and, in many respects, improving the condition of married women in respect of property; but all short of giving her the full immunities of a single woman as to property, and declaring that in this respect marriage should make no difference. Moreover, there is throughout the Act this great drawback on all or almost all its remedial clauses. The Act puts upon the married woman the duty of claiming in manner pointed out by the Act the relief granted her by the law. It is not hers, as it is the husband's without any action of hers, and by the simple operation of the law itself. And no one who knows what women are, what Acts of Parliament are, even the clearest of them, what even men are when they have to pursue a statutory remedy, will think this a light or trifling drawback. Take, for instance, sec. 3,* and see what a differ-

* 3. Any married woman, or any woman about to be married, may apply to the Governor and Company of the Bank of England, or to the Governor and Company of the Bank of Ireland, by a form to be provided by the governor of each of the said banks and company for that purpose, that any sum forming part of the public stocks and funds, and not being less than twenty pounds, to which the woman so applying is entitled, or which she is about to acquire, may be transferred to or made to stand in the books of the governor and company to whom such application is made in the name or intended name of the woman as a married woman entitled to her separate use, and on such sum being entered in the books of the said governor and company accordingly the same shall be deemed to be the separate property of such woman, and shall be transferred and the dividends paid as if she were an unmarried woman; provided that if any such investment in the funds is made by a married woman by means of moneys of her husband without his consent, the Court may, upon an application under section nine of this Act, order such investment and the dividends thereof, or any part thereof, to be transferred and paid to the husband.

ence it makes from enacting simply that her property shall remain her own. Make the case your own and you will feel it in a moment. Still I have said, and I do not wish to qualify my admission, the Act of 1870 with its necessary amending Act of 1874, which I need not stop to describe, effected no doubt a great and real improvement. It has led, however, to all sorts of questions. A woman, *e.g.*, wanted to transfer some stock into her own name to which she was entitled. No, said the Master of the Rolls, not unless and until you have pursued the course marked out by section 3. A woman trading, as she has a right to trade, in the city of London, has her cheque improperly dishonoured by her bankers. Can she maintain an action? After argument, the court to which I belong held that she could. But it is impossible to foresee what may be the fate of that decision if it ever comes to be considered in a Court of Appeal. Possibly it may be set aside—possibly, or even probably, with the observation that the matter is unarguable, and that no man in his senses could have so decided. Other points, of which these are but specimens, have been raised, and will be raised, by the language of the Act; and the limit of £200 imposed by its provisions, as the limit of protection to a married woman, does not, I must confess, appear to me to be capable of defence. Because this is not with me a question of rich women and poor women—it is a question of women in general and of justice in the widest sense. I propose, therefore, to enact simply that married women shall not be losers of their property by the marriage contract—at least, that they shall not be so by law; taking care, of course, to protect the husband, as I freely admit he ought to be protected, against his wife's debts, where his wife has property. This is the Bill as it left the House of Commons. This I conceive to be the true principle, and I am sure it is the ancient principle. In old times, when real property was practically the whole of the property of the country, much protection was thrown around a married woman who possessed or became entitled to such property. True, that by virtue of the marital control over the wife the husband could enjoy its profits, because he could take them from her; but he could not take the land itself—he could not alienate it—it was not his, it was hers. And in those days, the right of dower standing not on contract but on law was a real and valuable right; a substantial testimony, on the part of our ancestors, to the independence of the wife—to the justice of providing for her by right and law, and to her capacity for holding property. In later days, as the wealth of the country increased, and when long leases became common, the position of married women in England, in regard to property, was seriously worsened. All mere money passed at once into the husband's absolute power; the lawyers dis-

covered that a lease for 1,000 years was less than a fee, and was personal property too: so that if a married woman succeeded to £100,000 and £10,000 a year in leaseholds, her husband could by law rob her of every shilling of her money; and by the simplest act could, at the same time, bar her of that right of dower which the justice of ancient times had conceded to her, and of which the ingenuity of modern times has effectually deprived her. I cannot think, and I ask your Lordships to deny, that even as amended by the Acts of 1870 and 1874, the present state of the law is worthy of the boasted justice and civilisation of this country. It is not wise, it is not just, it is in all its harshest features peculiar to England. I would rather state in words not my own, in language simpler, nobler, stronger than any I can command, in the language of a great man, once a great ornament of your Lordships' House, what is with some qualification, the present state of the law. Speaking on the second reading of the Divorce Bill, on the 20th May, 1856, Lord Lyndhurst said:—"First, with respect to property. "What is the law at present on this subject? Why, if a "woman is separated from her husband by sentence of separa- "tion, and a legacy is left to her, or if she succeeds to personal "property in consequence of intestacy, or in any other way, "such property belongs to her husband. He can receive and "appropriate it, and generally does so; and he may appro- "priate it altogether independently of his wife. Again, if the "wife succeeds to real property by a devise, or by inheritance, "to whom does the property belong? The husband occupies "it during the lifetime of his wife, and may take the income "from it notwithstanding a separation in consequence of mis- "conduct. But much worse than this, if the wife tries to eke "out a scanty existence for herself and her children by the "exercise of any art in which she is proficient, or by instruc- "tion, the husband can seize upon the proceeds of her industry "and bestow them upon his mistress. These are the claims "which the husband has upon the property of his wife. Let "us look at the other side, and mark the position in which "every wife is placed. With the exception of a scanty allow- "ance in the shape of alimony, whatever personal property "belongs to the husband he may appropriate as he thinks "proper: he may assign it, or bequeath it by will, and leave "his children destitute. There is no reciprocity in such a "case. It is said, however, and with some justice, that settle- "ments executed previously to marriage may restrain the "husband in the exercise of these rights; but the system of "settlement does not extend to the great mass of the people. "Nine-tenths of the marriages in this country take place "without any settlements, and are governed, as to the rights

"of property, by the common law. I now come to another "view of the question. A wife is separated from her "husband by a decree of the Ecclesiastical Court, the "reason of that decree being the husband's misconduct—his "cruelty it may be, or his adultery. From that moment his "wife is almost in a state of outlawry. She may not enter "into a contract, or if she do, she has no means of enforcing "it. The law, so far from protecting, oppresses her. She is "homeless, helpless, hopeless, and almost destitute of civil "rights. She is liable to all manner of injustice, whether by "plot or violence. She may be wronged in all possible ways, "and her character may be mercilessly defamed; yet she has "no redress. She is at the mercy of her enemies. Is that "fair? Is that honest? Can it be vindicated upon any prin- "ciple of justice, of mercy, or of common honesty?" Next let me read you Lord Campbell's account of it. "A Bill was "pending in the House of Lords which originated from the "report of a Royal Commission over which I had the honour to "preside, appointed to consider the subject of divorce. We had "recommended that the law should remain as it had practically "existed for near 200 years,—according to which a husband "whose wife had been unfaithful to him, without any fault on "his part, could obtain a dissolution of the marriage, but the "corresponding right was only given to the wife if the husband "had been unfaithful under circumstances of aggravation, which "rendered it impossible that they should afterwards live together "as man and wife. The proposed change was chiefly in the "manner of obtaining the dissolution of the marriage, viz., by "the decree of a regularly constituted judicial tribunal, instead "of an Act of the Legislature, passed in each individual case "after an action at law for criminal conversation, and a divorce "*a mensa et thoro* in an ecclesiastical court. The first session "in which the Bill framed on this principle was introduced "Lyndhurst did not object to it, but now he denounced it as "shamefully inadequate. In the first place, he denied that "adultery was the only ground on which marriage ought to be "dissolved, and he insisted that cruelty, desertion, conviction "upon a charge of felony, and other causes, which rendered "cohabitation of husband and wife inexpedient should be "added. Then he contended that whatever was good cause of "divorce for the husband should equally be good cause of "divorce for the wife, so that the two sexes should be placed "on a footing of equality. The next exposed very forcibly, "and very truly, the injustice of the common law of England, "which gives absolutely to the husband all the personal pro- "perty of his wife, so as to enable him, after he has deserted "her, to seize the earnings of her honest industry, that he may

"supply the extravagant wants of his mistress. But not con-
"tenting himself with providing the means of enabling the
"wife to obtain a judicial separation, and thenceforth pro-
"tecting her property and her person against the husband, he
"proposed that the personal, as well as the real, property of
"the wife should always remain exclusively hers, and that, as
"far as property is concerned, husband and wife should always
"be two distinct persons, who may contract together, specially,
"how their property is to be enjoyed during the coverture, and
"in what proportion they shall respectively contribute to the
"maintenance of their household and the rearing of their
"common offspring. He likewise dwelt, very pathetically and
"with very sound reason, on the reproach to our jurisprudence,
"caused by the action for criminal conversation, and the mon-
"strous hardship this throws upon the wife, who, although
"innocent, cannot be heard in defence of her innocence."
So far Lord Campbell's; I now come to my own experience. Not long ago, a lady of high rank and most exalted character applied to me to ascertain whether any redress could be afforded by the law of England in the case of a wife who was living with her husband, who, without doing anything which would have made an application to the Divorce Court likely to be successful, was making her life miserable, was plundering all the property she possessed, and making anything like a decent living or education of their offspring absolutely impossible. I replied that, as far as I knew and could understand the case she had laid before me, it was a hard case, but one for which by the law of England there was no redress—that as the property to which the wife had succeeded was personal property, untrammelled by any trust or by anything which could protect it from the husband, no protection, as far as I could see, could be given to the wife. It grieved me to receive this letter from the lady who consulted me. "Once in
"my life I took some trouble in persuading a couple to marry,
"and to legalise a union which had lasted for many years. I am
"sorry to find that the woman who lives unmarried with a man
"has legal rights and protection, which she loses when she
"marries." There was lately another case in which certainly no one who hears me can have the slightest sympathy with the woman who is the subject of it, but it is a curious illustration of the law as regards husband and wife in respect of property. It was the case of a woman who married by advertisement. There was a settlement in the case providing, as the woman thought, that her property was to be secured for herself in case of a separation. A separation took place not many years after the marriage ceremony was solemnized, when the woman discovered that the settlement, instead of giving her a life estate in her

property, had passed every farthing of her property away from her. Recourse was had to a court, and the Vice-Chancellor who heard the case, being of opinion that the settlement was not drawn up in accordance with the woman's intention, set it aside, and the woman got her money. But in the case of a husband, no recourse to a court would have been necessary. The money would have been his of common right. Take a stronger case that was a short time ago before myself in the Court of Appeal. It was a case in which a woman had carried on a considerable and successful business. She had saved money. She had a lucrative business which she was carrying on at the time of the marriage. She married an old man without a settlement. In three or four months he died, and by the ordinary operation of the law of England all her money, all her stock-in-trade, would have passed absolutely to his creditors, for he died insolvent. The Supreme Court was able to interfere, on the ground that there had been sufficient permission on the part of the husband after the marriage to the wife to continue the business in her own name, and to constitute him in the view of a court of equity a trustee of the wife; and therefore in that particular case the wife had a right to the business and the stock-in-trade. But no such contest would have been necessary, no such attempt at robbery would have been possible, in the case of a husband. It may be said these stories are sensational stories, and that it is unwise to legislate upon them. Well, it may be very unwise to legislate upon sensational stories; but to me the first question is not, are these stories sensational, but are they true? If true, is a state of the law which permits them one which can be in sober argument defended? I think not. It is easy sneering at sensations, but depend upon it those who sneer would be the first to cry out if they were themselves the victims of the sensation they sneer at. Furthermore, as far as I know, England is the only country in which this state of things is still maintained. In all the civilised countries of Europe—nay, in all the countries, because in this respect Turkey is the same—the English rule that the husband and the wife are one person, and that person, as a clever woman said, *the husband*, does not prevail. They follow in this respect the later Roman legislation of Justinian. The *control* of the husband, while they live together, over the property of the wife is in various countries very various; it is strongest in Holland, and in countries (some of our colonies, *e.g.*) where what is called the Roman-Dutch law prevails; but even there the wife has redress, and can bring her husband before the tribunals if he mismanages it. It is her property; he manages it for her, and through the

courts he is liable to her. Many of our great colonies such as Canada and the great American Republic, and, I think, a certain part of Australia, have departed widely from the precedent set by the English law; and I cannot give any better illustration of that than one or two extracts, containing important evidence, from the speech of my right honourable and learned friend, Mr. Russell Gurney, when he advocated this measure in the House of Commons. My lords, I do not think that I can do better than, with your Lordships' permission, read the following extracts from Mr. Russell Gurney's speech on this subject, which he delivered in 1870. That learned gentleman said: "We have, however, "something better than theory or conjecture to guide us as to "the probable effect of the change which I propose. There is, "I believe, no civilised country which has adopted the law "which prevails here. It did, indeed, exist for a time in the "United States of America, as a part of the English law, "which the founders of those States carried with them across "the Atlantic; but in State after State it has been repealed, "and in none have the ill consequences followed which are "apprehended by our opponents." My lords, we have the strongest testimony upon this point from American witnesses. Mr. Dudley Field, of New York, tells us that, "Scarcely any "one of the great reforms which have been effected in this "State has given more entire satisfaction than this." Mr. Fisher, from Vermont, says: "I do not believe that I have "ever seen an individual in the State who wanted to go back "to the old law." Mr. Washbourne, a professor of law at Harvard University, says: "I regarded the first inroad upon "the common law with apprehensions that it would cause "angry and unkind feelings in families. I am so far convinced "of the contrary that I would not be one to restore that com-"mon law, if I could." The law has also been changed amongst our fellow-countrymen in Canada; and Mr. Rose, the Canadian Minister, says: "I have not heard any desire on the "part of either men or women to return to the old law." My lords, I am also supported in my proposal to effect this change in our law by high authority on this side of the Atlantic. It is a very striking authority, that of the Indian Code. Some years ago a Commission, consisting of very eminent persons, was appointed to prepare a Code for India, and I find in the report of that Commission the following recommendation: "It has been "necessary for us in one or two cases to introduce provisions "affecting rights as between living persons. We propose that "a man shall not, through the mere operation of law, acquire by "marriage any interest in his wife's property during her life; "but that she shall continue to possess the same rights with

"reference to it as if she were unmarried, and shall have full "power to dispose of it by will." My lords, that recommendation was signed by Lord Romilly, Sir W. Erle, Sir E. Ryan, Mr. Lowe, and Mr. Justice Willes, and it now forms part of the Code of India. There is only one other authority on this subject with which I shall trouble your Lordships. It is an authority which all of your Lordships will admit to be a very high one. The only person in this House who perhaps will not think it so very high is the noble and learned lord upon the woolsack, because it is his own. But this is how the Lord Chancellor expressed himself in the course of the debate upon the second reading of the Married Women's Property Bill on the 21st of June, 1870: "Our law differed "in this respect from that of most other countries. In all "Continental countries, to a greater or less extent, laws had "been adopted more favourable to married women; and if we "look to those great communities across the Atlantic that had "sprung from ourselves—the United States and Canada—it "would be found that they had abrogated our common law in "this matter, and had adopted legislation similar to or in "the direction of the present Bill. . . . The third and only "remaining course was that proposed by the Bill; namely, to "alter the general rule of law, to leave settlements to be made "where advisable, but in other cases to make the property of "the married woman her own until she chose to part with it. "If she pleased she might make a gift of it to her husband." My lords, it is upon these authorities and in this state of the case that I venture to ask your Lordships to make the change in the law which the Bill now before your Lordships proposes to effect. It is a change which I believe to be perfectly just, and which I believe may be effected with perfect safety. I conceive myself that the experience of other countries entirely disproves the reality of the dangers which many people, in argument at all events, are apt to assume will arise out of the alteration which I ask your Lordships to effect in the law. Have these laws, where they prevail, produced evil effects in family relations, and impaired the purity and happiness of married life? Men must answer this question according to their own notions; but, for my own part, I must confess that I do not believe that the domestic purity or domestic happiness of England is greater than that of many other countries where a different rule prevails; nor if we be purer and happier, do I believe that it is the consequence of English husbands being able to rob English wives of the property which belongs to them. Moreover, the existence of settlements and of the Court of Chancery is a perpetual standing protest against the injustice of the ordinary law. The Court of Chancery existed for centuries to

redress amongst other things the intolerable injustice of the common law as to the relation between husband and wife; and no prudent man, in marrying his daughter, would ever dream of leaving her to the tender mercies of the common law. Why should we hesitate to make the law for all women what every-one of your Lordships would make it by contract, in the case of every woman whom you love. I regard this, as I have said, as a just measure, and a perfectly safe one. The dangers apprehended from it I believe to be chimerical; and I ask you to affirm its principle, being quite ready to discuss its details here or elsewhere, if it is to its details rather than to its principle that any objection is entertained. I beg leave to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

A. IRELAND AND CO., PRINTERS, PALL MALL, MANCHESTER.

[Copies of this Pamphlet and of all other Papers issued by the Committee may be had from the Secretary, Mrs. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY, Congleton, Cheshire.]

DEBATE ON THE SECOND READING

OF THE

MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY (SCOTLAND) BILL

IN THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

WEDNESDAY, 18TH APRIL, 1877.

Printed for the Married Women's Property Committee.

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DEBATE.

Mr. Anderson, in moving the second reading of this measure, said: It is to give to married women in Scotland the same privileges as those possessed in England—in fact, to extend to Scotland some of the protection given in 1870, by the Act passed through Parliament, mainly through the exertions of the learned Recorder of London. The object of the Bill, briefly described, is simply to enable a woman, even if she is married, to call her own her own. The law on this matter in Scotland is exceedingly bad. The only protection a married woman has for her property or her earnings is through the Court, and then it is only given in the case of a wife who has been deserted by her husband. The result of this state of the law is that unpleasant husbands, who would be far better away, do not desert their wives, but remain within reach, and so get hold of their earnings whenever it suits them. As for protection of property, there is none at all. The state of the law would be absolutely intolerable if it were not for the fact that bad husbands are the exception and not the rule. The protection orders obtained in the Court are an insufficient protection. It is a very invidious thing for a wife to apply to the Court for protection against her husband, and she would submit to a great amount of injustice before she does it. For that reason I think her property ought to be made her own by common law, and that she should have the remedies of the common law to protect her rights. At present our law is actually a bribe, and confers a large premium upon unprincipled men to endeavour to get wealthy young women to run away with them. If men can induce girls to do that, probably there are no marriage settlements, and the result is that, as soon as they have married, the personal property of the woman, as well as all that will subsequently come to her, becomes the husband's. Real estate does not become the property of a husband in this way, but he can deal as he chooses with the earnings, though he cannot make away with the property. He may thus, if he turns out a bad husband, dissipate all his wife's personal property—gamble it away, spend it in riotous living, spend it on mistresses if he likes; and this greater iniquity may happen—he may will it away, and it may tran-

spire that the wife, when she finds herself a widow, may also find that her husband has willed away all her property to his mistress, and that she herself retains but a widow's portion of that which was really and entirely her own. Whether that depth of infamy is reached or not, the relatives of the husband may come in and take away a share of that which was her property. This state of the law is a remnant of the old Roman law, by which a woman was simply the chattel of her husband, and not entitled to hold anything of her own—by which the woman and her possessions passed into the ownership of the husband. We have changed that condition in the matter of sentiment, and the time has now arrived when it should be changed in the matter of law as regards property. It seems anomalous that we should consider a woman, because she is married incapable of administering or dealing with her property. So long as she is a spinster she is able to deal with it, but the moment she becomes a wife she is incapable of doing so; and then, again, the moment she becomes a widow she is once more able to deal with it. Married life in Scotland is treated as if it were a state either of temporary insanity or a term of penal servitude, for it is only lunatics and felons who are similarly incapacitated from dealing with their property. All civilised nations except Scotland have changed this law long ago. It is thirty years ago since America relaxed it in some of the States, and I believe now that all the States, or nearly all of them, deal with the property of married women in the most liberal manner, and that most of those who were opposed to the change at the time are of opinion that it has worked extremely well. In our own colonies we have worked in the same liberal way. It is twenty years since the law was relaxed in Upper Canada. Seven years ago Victoria relaxed it, and England did the same a similar time back; but still the law in Scotland remains unchanged. That would not have been the case if women had had a little more influence in the matter of our legislation, and I appeal therefore to those hon. members who vote against giving women the franchise, and I say it is doubly incumbent on them to show that they are willing to protect the property of women, and save them from every possible injustice, seeing that they refuse to allow them to have some share in the legislation by which they are to be bound. The English law of 1870, although it made considerable progress in the way of protecting the property of married women, was not sufficient. So much is that the case that Lord Coleridge is about to introduce a measure into the other House, which in due time no doubt will be here, for remedying the defects in the English law.

The English law affords protection in these respects: it gives married women all their wages and earnings, and all the investments they may have been able to make out of these. It protects for her all deposits in savings banks, all moneys in the funds above £20, and all shares and debentures in joint-stock companies and benefit societies. It protects all the personal property, however large, that may come to her from an intestate, and all real property, however large, that she may receive in the same way. There is a strange anomaly here, however, because where the property does not come from an intestate—that is to say, if it is bequeathed to her—then, if there are no special provisions in the will, the husband gets all except £200 personalty. This is a strange anomaly, for which I cannot account. Under the Act to which I refer a married woman can insure her own life, or may insure her husband's life for her own benefit; she can maintain actions at law, and, in short, exercise all the rights of property. Further than this, under the English Act a husband is no longer liable for his wife's debts except to such an extent as he may have received property from her. That is one of the provisions I have introduced into the present Bill. The other provisions I will briefly describe. After the passing of the Act women are to have a separate estate in their movable property, and the rents arising from real property are also kept separate. Marriages contracted before the passing of the Act are to be exempt from its provisions, except with regard to property vesting after the Act passed. There is, however, a provision that in the case of marriages before the passing of the Act those married people may come under the Act voluntarily on giving a certain notice and sufficiently guarding the rights of creditors. The fifth clause arranges for the protection of the earnings of married women, and is very much the same as the English law; and the sixth provides that upon the wife's death the rights of the husband and the rights of the children shall be the same in regard to the separate estate of the wife as they would have been if the estate had not been taken away from the husband. The husband will no longer be liable for the ante-nuptial debts of his wife, except so far as he has received property from her. The wife's estate will be liable for household expenses, but there will be no interference with ante-nuptial contracts, either as to making them or carrying them out, but the only effect is to give to those who are so imprudent as to marry without ante-nuptial contracts, something of the same protection as if such contracts had been made. If, therefore, a rich girl runs away, and gets into the hands of a man whom her friends consider

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

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

Mr. M'Laren: After the speech of the hon. and learned

member, who admits that there is a great deal of justice in the demands of this Bill, I think it is unnecessary to go into all the details of the measure at this stage. He says great changes ought to be made in the law, and also that great changes ought to be made in the Bill. Well, that is a question for Committee, and I am sure that my hon. friend the member for Glasgow is quite prepared to adopt any reasonable proposals that may be made by the Lord Advocate or by other members of this House. There are one or two remarks which were made by the hon. and learned member who has just sat down that I think should be noticed. He has stated as one of his objections to the Bill that the bad husbands were very few in number. Well, the law is always made for the evil-doer and not for the good man. (Hear.) Laws are made to punish the forger, the murderer, the swindler; they are not made for honest men. Therefore, this Bill seems to me to be the only proper course, because if we admit that there are husbands who abuse the property of their wives, we must admit, I think, that the law should be made to remedy that evil, and that is all that is required of the State. As the law stands at present, a woman, on the death of her husband, is entitled to a third of his movable property and a third of the rents. Scotchwomen are thus in advance of their sisters in England; to this extent, however bad their husbands may be, they cannot deprive them of that share, while English husbands can. On the other hand, if a woman in Scotland brings a large property to her husband on their marriage, she is entitled at his death to only one-third of her own. Why should the husband have a right to take away from her the other two-thirds? I think the principles of this Bill are most just, and I hope that when the details are arranged in Committee, there will not be left one sore point. I am very glad to think that the Lord Advocate is not going to oppose the Bill on the second reading, reserving the right to propose amendments in Committee, and, therefore, I do not think it would be wise for me now to take up the time of the House by going into any question of detail.

Mr. Orr Ewing: Mr. Speaker, this Bill has been humorously described as essentially a Bill to take off the petticoats from the woman and place them upon the man, and to take the "breeks" off the man and put them upon the woman. (Laughter.) I am sure that my hon. friend who has introduced this Bill, however extreme his views may be on some subjects, has no intention of carrying out so extreme a measure as that description would indicate. The fact is, that my hon. friend only desires by this Bill to make the operation of the law similar to that of the ante-nuptial con-

tracts—that is, to protect those poor people who have neither the intelligence nor the opportunity to enter into such contracts in the same manner as they would be protected if they had these contracts. His desire is that the law of Scotland should be assimilated to the law of England as it is at the present moment, and it is to me a matter of surprise that my hon. friend's desire to extend to Scotland the principles of a Bill passed in 1870 granting protection to married women in England should meet with any opposition. I am sure it is not intended by passing such a measure as this to produce any insubordination in the relations of husband and wife, where otherwise harmony would exist. An ante-nuptial contract does not cause any want of harmony between husband and wife; it only gives to a married woman the protection of the law in the possession of her property, and that is all that is desired by those who are proposing this Bill. I am quite sure my hon. friend will be prepared in Committee to make any amendments that may be possible to meet the views of the hon. and learned member for North Ayrshire. I hope Her Majesty's Government will, at all events, allow the Bill to be read a second time, and to go into Committee, so that it may be made suitable to obtain the end for which it is framed. (Hear, hear.)

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

was undesirable to introduce greater confusion in the laws of the two countries by passing this measure as it stood. (Hear.)

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

Sir E. Colebrooke: We owe a debt of gratitude to my hon. friend for bringing this Bill so far in the direction of assimilating the law of Scotland to that of England. We are not bound to tie ourselves down by too strict a line, because it must appear to many that there are circumstances in this Bill which are worthy of great consideration. The law of Scotland is at present different from that of England, and I think that when we make any alteration, we are bound to consider to some extent the interests of the people of Scotland. There was one point alluded to by the hon. member for Ayrshire, as to the rights of wives to the personal property of their husbands. I was under the impression that the law does already give them that right, and if it is so, I think it is time it should be amended. A wife may not have contributed in any degree to the property during her husband's lifetime, and yet she and her relatives share in it on his death. There was a case where a wife had not contributed a penny to a man, who had in fact married a servant, and on his death all her people came on his farm. These were cases that ought to be remedied. I object entirely to that part of the Bill which goes beyond the law of England, and which denies the claims of a wife until other claims are satisfied. If there is not to be joint-stock, let them be separately liable, and do not let the wife fall back on saying that is the husband's property. There are spending wives as well as spending husbands, and separation of interests ought to be an offence against the law. I will only say in support of the suggestions of another hon. member, that this is a Bill that might fairly go to a Select Committee. If there are so many points brought before this House my hon. friend will have little chance of carrying his Bill, but if it is sent to a Select Committee it may be put into a form that would enable it to pass this session.

Mr. WHEELHOUSE: Perhaps the House will permit me to make a few observations on this subject from that which may be denominated an English lawyer's standpoint. So far as the law of both countries is concerned, that of England, however satisfactory to Englishmen, may undoubtedly be improved. I do not say that it is not right that the Scotch should have some of the powers they possess, but what I wish to provide for is, that in dealing with the civil rights of both countries, appertaining to married persons, there should be one general practice—or at any rate one general idea—for the whole, so that England and Scotland may be brought much closer in accord than they are at this moment. Certain I am that I speak my own heartfelt sentiments, and I have every reason to believe that I also express those of a very large number of other people, when I state to the House that I, individually, have often felt great pain—pain, I am sure, shared by all sensible persons, when we have seen the scandal, or something very closely approximating to the scandal, that a person should be legitimate by the law of the one country, and become illegitimate immediately that he crosses the border. And this, considering the question in its merely personal aspect; but how much more intensified is the practical evil whenever questions of succession or inheritance arise, as they must constantly do, out of such a state of things. Let us, by all means, endeavour to obtain an assimilation of the law of our country to that of the other, if possible, and I cannot but think and hope that this object may be satisfactorily gained. No one can doubt that there are clauses in the proposed Bill—for example the 5th and the 8th—which are absolutely necessary. It is not only right, but it is fair, just, and equitable, that where the wife is compelled by force of domestic circumstances to become the bread-winner of the family that she should be entitled to take care of her own earnings; but while admitting this, I must confess that I should think it very injudicious indeed to give a married woman sole control over all her property, and by so doing to make her practically independent of her husband in every sense of the word; especially seeing that the effect of this Bill as it now stands, should it become law, would be to entitle the married woman to insist upon the husband providing out of—and, it may be, entirely exhausting—any resources strictly his own for the conjoint wants and requirements of his wife and family, and, indeed, his whole domestic *mènage*, before he could make any property of the lady's available for that end, even if he could ever put a finger upon it, which under the proposed legislation I see much reason to doubt. I know quite well that such a state of

matters would not be tolerated in this country for a moment, and therefore I think it unwise to go so far as this Bill does to promote such a condition of things in Scotland. On the other hand, if we can only so assimilate the marriage laws of both countries as to remove inequalities and anomalies on the one side or the other, it will unquestionably be a step in the right direction. (Hear, hear.)

The LORD ADVOCATE: Mr. Speaker, in reference to this Bill, I desire to say, first of all, that I am of opinion that some alteration should be made in the law of Scotland with regard to the estate of a wife; and in the second place, that any alteration so made should be upon the lines of the English Bill of 1870. I should certainly not have dreamt of opposing a Bill brought into this House with a view to effect changes in the law of that kind, but if it had not been for the explanations which have been very frankly given by those who introduced this Bill in supporting it in this House to the effect that they do not intend to press this Bill as a measure of the extreme character which it certainly is, I should have been inclined to ask the opinion of the House as to whether the Bill should be read a second time. But after the expression of intentions upon one side of the House, and the opinions that have come from the other side, I cannot say that I consider it would be a proper act to offer any opposition to the second reading. At the same time, perhaps the House will permit me to make one or two observations that occur to me at the present moment in reference to the point from which any amendment of the law of Scotland upon this very delicate and intricate matter ought to be approached; and in the second place, in regard to the mode in which certain principles—which, I think, are bound to be considered—are violated by this Bill. I will not refer to what appeared to me to be the rather strenuous advocacy of the hon. member for Glasgow, founded upon the supposed frequency of abduction, or something very like it, in Scotland of rich heiresses by penniless gentlemen, who afterwards dissipated their property. I doubt whether that practice exists to a very great extent; and I doubt, also, whether there is any general opinion or feeling in Scotland that married women are in the position either of criminals or of lunatics, or that anyone entering into matrimonial relations incurs in the remotest degree any suspicion of insanity. It is necessary to keep in view that the disposition of the property of the spouses in Scotland is very intimately bound up with the obligations which the law lays upon them—obligations which, I am informed, do not exist in England, because whereas, there being no marriage contract, a man in England can leave his

wife and her children penniless,—in Scotland having received his wife's property, the husband comes under an obligation from which he cannot escape, but must leave his wife and family, if both survive him, two-thirds of his movable property, or, if only a widow and children, one-half. I wish to say further that I should not like the House to approach this question with any such idea as was suggested by the observations of my hon. friend the senior member for Edinburgh. I cannot regard the law upon this subject as a sort of criminal code for the purpose of holding in check and punishing bad husbands. On the contrary, it has always appeared to me that there will be a great many cases where there is no marriage contract existing between married parties where both spouses are perfectly well-behaved towards each other, and are subject to no imputations. Those who are familiar with the exercise of the profession of the law are perfectly aware of that circumstance. It rather occurs to me that the proper principle of legislating upon this subject is to make a fair and reasonable disposition of the property as between the spouses and the issue of the marriage in those cases where there is no marriage contract. That is what has been done in the case of legal succession. There are bad fathers just as there are bad husbands, and you make certain rules of legal succession in order to regulate the descent of property in the event of no will being made. I venture to say, however, that very few people die intestate. But it would be a very fallacious conclusion to arrive at, that because people leave wills the law of succession is a bad or an unjust law; and I believe it would be equally fallacious to conclude that, because the great majority of persons possessed of means do make marriage contracts, therefore the law which regulates the rights of spouses in the absence of such contracts is a bad and an infamous law. I do not know that I am entitled at this stage to say any more upon the subject to the House. I wish simply to point out that the whole effect of this Bill may be summed up in a single sentence—it gives to a married lady precisely the same control over her estate after marriage that she had before it. Her husband takes no share of it—he gets no control over it—he has not even control over his wife; and any designing person who obtains a deed from the wife has a good deed, although it has been executed against the will of her natural adviser. The hon. member for North Ayrshire suggested that it would create a divided empire. I will go further than that, and say that if the Bill were to pass in its integrity it would subvert the empire as it at present exists. It would create an empress who would reign in spite of the emperor—because this Bill confers upon the wife a

right and privilege which I dare say none but bad wives would exercise at all, but the privilege of incurring apparently an amount of domestic expense, for all of which the husband's estate is liable from the first, because her estate is not to be held liable except in the case of proved deficiency on the part of the husband's estate to meet these debts. Then the lady has the better of it in this respect, for whilst the husband must pay in the first instance, she, although she may have a large estate, is quite safe, for the husband's estate must be quite exhausted before a penny can be taken from hers. Not only that, but the husband—poor man—must go to prison, whilst the lady, upon the footing accorded to her in the present state of the law, and by this Bill is exempted from all personal inconvenience whatever. I have ventured to advert to one or two of the objections to this measure; but in respect to our not opposing the second reading of the Bill, I wish to make it perfectly clear that the Government gives its assent on the understanding that the Bill is to be substantially upon the lines of the English Bill, and that we are not to discuss these extreme questions which have been alluded to to-day, because that, I think, would be violating the understanding upon which the Bill is not to be opposed. I will consider the advisability of referring it to a Select Committee. I have had a conversation with the hon. gentleman who has moved the second reading of the Bill, and I am glad to say that he concurs with me in thinking that its consideration in Committee should not be taken until such bodies in Scotland as are naturally very much interested in the measure, and who are certainly possessors of very much greater information in regard to the practical working of the present system than any other class of persons in Scotland, have had an opportunity of considering the Bill, and communicating with their friends in Parliament.

Sir G. Campbell said he came down to the House to-night prepared to vote against the Bill, and he must confess that he was rather sorry he should not have an opportunity of doing so. It did seem to him that the learned Lord Advocate had given excellent reasons why the Bill should not be accepted by the House. He thought that if this Bill was to pass in its present state, it would simply amount to this—that marriage would be reduced to a chumming together without any community of goods or community of interests. He had seen a good deal of the operation of a law of that kind, for the law which it was now proposed to introduce into Scotland was simply the Mohammedan law. According to the Mohammedan law, a woman after marriage occupied, in regard to her property

and civil rights, exactly the same position as if she were single. He had seen a great deal of the operation of that law in India, and he was bound to say that it worked very ill. Marriage was simply a limited civil contract according to Mohammedan law, and the consequence was that a man and woman were not bound together in a community of interests. They were constantly squabbling and constantly going to law. It followed, almost of necessity, that Mohammedan law afforded facilities for dissolving marriages, because if a man was bound to live with a woman under these conditions the man would rebel, and would naturally insist that, as other contracts were dissolved at will, marriage should also be dissolved in the same manner. He was altogether opposed to this Bill as it stood at present, but, after what the Lord Advocate had said, he thought it was in very safe and good hands, and if Her Majesty's Government thought fit to give a second reading to the measure, he for one should not take it on himself to divide the House against it.

Mr. Shaw Lefevre said it appeared to him that the arguments which had been used by the Lord Advocate and Sir George Campbell against this measure would apply equally to the Act of 1870. (Cries of "No, no.") The Act of 1870 not only gave security to married women for their earnings, but also secured to them separate property in many other cases. It rested with those who objected to the principle of separate property to married women to show that some bad results had followed from that measure. He recollected the same kind of arguments being used in 1870, but he had not heard of any bad results following that Act in the shape of family discord or other evils which were predicted. The Act of 1870 had recognised most fully the principle of separate property in the married woman. The principle could not be carried further than it had, as illustrated by a recent case before the law courts the other day, when it was decided that a married woman was entitled to keep a racehorse separate from her husband, and have the winnings of that racehorse for her separate use. As regarded separate property other than the earnings of a married woman, the Act of 1870 was in a very confused and complicated state. For instance, if property came to a married woman by descent, then it became hers absolutely for her separate use; but if property was left to her by will under her name as a married woman, then it went to the husband, unless the will provided that the property should be for her separate use. He ventured to say that the Act of 1870 was a most incomplete measure, and he presumed his hon. friend the member for Glasgow felt that in extending the provisions of the Act of 1870 to Scotland

it would be reasonable to review that Act, and see whether they might not go beyond that Act and secure a greater meed of justice to the married women of Scotland, even if the House should not be prepared to go so far as the original Bill of 1870, or the Bill before the House as it now stands. He ventured to suggest that the Bill should be read a second time and referred to a Select Committee, that Committee to take into consideration the present state of the law of Scotland, and how far it would be wise to go beyond the Act of 1870.

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

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

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

Mr. Shaw Lefevre said he only suggested that the Com-

mittee should inquire whether it was desirable to go beyond the Act of 1870.

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

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

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Married Women's Property Committee.

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MR. ARTHUR ARNOLD.	MR. WILLIAM MALLESON.
MRS. ARTHUR ARNOLD.	MRS. MOORE.
MR. JACOB BRIGHT, M.P.	MR. H. N. MOZLEY.
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Treasurer: MRS. JACOB BRIGHT, Alderley Edge, Cheshire.

Secretary: MRS. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY, Congleton.

THE Committee have great pleasure in announcing that it is proposed to introduce in the House of Commons early next session, the Married Women's Property Bill, introduced last session in the House of Lords by the Right Honourable the Lord COLERIDGE.

The Married Women's Property (Scotland) Act, 1877, which received the royal assent on the 2nd of August last, simply secures to a married woman all wages and earnings acquired or gained by her after the 1st of next January, and limits the liability of a husband for his wife's debts contracted before marriage to the amount of the property acquired by him through the marriage. The question of property in its wider sense has been left untouched by the Act, and the Committee, therefore, rejoice that Mr. GEORGE ANDERSON, M.P. for Glasgow, has given notice that he will, early next session, again introduce the Married Women's Property (Scotland) Bill.*

* Mr. Anderson succeeded in passing, in 1874, a Bill which made it easier for deserted wives to obtain protection for their earnings, but the Married Women's Property Bill, which he introduced last session, was the first attempt made in a British Parliament to deal with this question, so far as Scotland is concerned, on a broad and equitable principle.

The object of both the English and the Scotch Bills is to secure to a married woman her own property, and to make her liable for her own contracts, as if she were a single woman.

The Married Women's Property Act of 1870 (which applies to England and Ireland) is full of the most absurd anomalies, and its provisions are so complicated that it is impossible the mass of women should be made acquainted with the right it confers. For instance, whilst giving a married woman a right to her own earnings, earned after marriage, and after the passing of that Act, it does not give her the right to her own property acquired either by inheritance or by gift, unless she inherit under an intestacy, or the bequest be less than £200. A woman may therefore inherit, absolutely free from the control of her husband, any sum, however large, if it has come to her by the accident of intestacy; but should anyone *bequeath* to her a similar sum she cannot touch a penny of it unless the amount is under £200. Also, although it is certain that the intention of the Legislature was to protect the earnings of wives, whether separated from or living with their husbands, an obscurity in the wording of the Act of 1870 has caused some adverse decisions to be given.

Again, although by this Act a married woman is enabled to retain to her separate use any moneys invested in savings banks or post-office savings banks, and, by going through a special formal process for each separate investment any property in the funds, any fully paid-up shares in a joint-stock company, and any shares in an industrial or provident society, all of which banks, companies, or societies are under strict Parliamentary obligations, it leaves her no power to continue to her own benefit after marriage any shares in any private business or firm, joint ownership of lands, buildings, or ships, or any other trade enterprise not specially enregistered under Parliamentary enactment.

The Act also enables her to retain to her separate use any property belonging to her before marriage which her husband shall by writing under his hand have agreed with her shall belong to her after marriage as her separate property, and further empowers her to maintain in her own name an action for the recovery of any such investments, earnings, or property, but it does not give her the power to make any contract, nor is any contract which a married woman may make binding upon her in law, so that her employers have no remedy against her for breach of contract.

The Committee submit that the present state of the law, so unjust and degrading to married women, and in so many ways confused and inconsistent, can only be remedied by some simple and direct measure which will secure to a woman the same rights with regard to her own property as are secured by law to a man with regard to his own property.

They would remind their friends that the Act of 1870, though a very defective and inconsistent measure, and differing widely from the Bill which they had endeavoured to promote, did yet confer an immense boon on the married women of the working classes, by recognising their right to their own earnings. They would further point to the fact that as a direct consequence of the passing of that Act, a measure effecting an amelioration of the law as to the property of married women, was passed by the Legislature of Victoria (Australia) in December, 1870, a similar measure by the Legislature of Ontario in March, 1872, and that still more recently a like amendment of the law has been accepted by the Swedish Legislature. It is probable that any successful vindication before our own Legislature of the claims of married women to justice, will speedily be followed by a recognition of these claims elsewhere, and that those who work for this reform here are helping to secure it throughout the world.

The Committee earnestly urge their friends everywhere to assist them at once:

(1) By collecting signatures to Petitions in support of these two Bills.

(2) By inducing Local Newspapers to discuss the question, and by contributing letters and papers for this purpose.

(3) By bringing the question under the notice of their Parliamentary Representatives, by writing letters, or forming deputations to ask their support, and, if they should prove favourably disposed, by questioning them on the subject when they meet their constituents.

(4) By reporting to the Executive Committee cases of hardship, caused by the existing law, which have come under their personal observation.

(5) By contributing to the funds of the Committee.

With two Bills to carry through Parliament, the Committee feel that they have much arduous work before them, work that only the active co-operation of all who sympathise with their efforts can enable them successfully to achieve.

All persons willing to help are requested to communicate at once with the Secretary, E. C. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY, Congleton, from whom petition forms (written and printed), leaflets, and other papers may be obtained.

Cheques and Post-Office Orders should be made payable to URSULA M. BRIGHT, Alderley Edge, Cheshire.

November, 1877.