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WEDGWOOD, J.
BOURKE, J. W.
CLARK, Mrs W. S.
N. S. W. S. (IRELAND)
WEBSTER, A.
C. C. N. S. W. S.
BLACKBURN, H.
BLACKBURN, H.

The political claims of women.
The emancipation of women.
Speech of Mrs William S. Clark at Clifton, 9.3.76.
Parliamentary franchise for women ratepayers.
Annual report... July 1st, 1878.
Some of the facts on the WS question.
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- A Historically Christian View of Women's Franchise. By Helen C. Gerard 1880
- Miss Leslie Craigen on Women Suffrage London 1880
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- Electoral Reform By William Count London 1880
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THE 39
POLITICAL CLAIMS
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BY
JULIA WEDGWOOD.

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THE
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BY JULIA WEDGWOOD.

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

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

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

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

that at Bath, which is the high water-mark of female ascendancy, they would vote in the proportion of one to three (1 woman to 3.8 men); while at Walsall, the opposite end of the scale, the proportion would be one woman to twenty-two men. Thirteen per cent. is said to be the probable increase on the whole. Even if we suppose this addition to add to the electorate a compact homogeneous body, its influence need not surely alarm the most timid. We cannot concede that this would be true; women are not of one mind any more than men are; but, even supposing it true, it would not be dangerous.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The tone of opposition to our demand has sensibly changed during the nine years that have elapsed since it found its first spokesman in John Mill. The quotations made above are mainly taken from the earlier debates in Parliament, and those very words would not now, perhaps, be used in argument against our claim. But, though we mark this change with satisfaction, it is as true of the last debates as of the first, that in order to have made them relevant the question before the House ought to have been, not should a certain class be enfranchised,¹ but should it exist. Almost everything true that has been said on the side we oppose is an argument not against women having votes, but against women having to earn their bread. Sir Henry James, for instance, dwelt emphatically on the physical weakness of women. He quoted Shakespeare's tamed shrew, in the speech where she rebukes one who by many will be thought to hold a more rational theory of a wife's duty, with the query—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE
EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN.

AN ESSAY,

READ AT THE CORK LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY, IN
THE SESSION 1870-71.

BY
JOHN WALTER BOURKE.

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1871.

"If any of you have not duly attended to the signs of the times, be assured that the great question now rising on the horizon of politics in all Christendom, is the political and social elevation of Woman. The movement, in different phases, agitates despotic Russia and Republican America."

F. W. NEWMAN.

"If the young generation are to be an improvement on their fathers, if sin is to have less dominion and religion more power, if vice is to be abolished and virtue to be honoured, it is to Woman we must look for such a generation."

EARL RUSSELL.

"But the Emancipation, and due ascendancy of Woman, are not a mere fact; they are the emphatic assertions of a principle, and that principle is the dethronement of the law of force, and the enthronement of other and higher laws in its place."

W. E. GLADSTONE (Prime Minister).

A WORD OF PREFACE.

THE Essay now published was read at the Cork Literary and Scientific Society in the past winter, and a debate which followed lasted four nights.

The deep interest which the subject possessed, and not any art of mine in the treatment, caused the extended discussion.

It is now become a national question, on which definite opinion must be formed, and I am told that my crude attempt at exposition may encourage controversy, and possibly promote instruction, in a wider field.

Perhaps it is well that everything new should, *primâ facie*, be considered wrong. Most certainly, this question experiences the proverbial obstruction.

Nevertheless, with reason at its side, and calm and earnest advocates and exponents, in and out of Parliament, it must progress.

Parliamentary suffrage for women will probably be granted next session. Logically, there is no reply to the demand—the franchise having been already conceded in Municipal and Poor Law Elections.

This further concession will authenticate the verdict of society, and materially help to enlist the intellect and energies of women, as our fellow-workers in the common toil of life, and common service of humanity, wherever, and in whatever they may be usefully and honourably employed.

B.

CORK, 31st July, 1871.

A

THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN.

AN impending change is manifest, in the present social and political position of Women.

It is foreshadowed by the remarkable deviations from the old system, which have already occurred, and assumed in the ample discussion and close analytical examination, which the subject has of late years received, from the most thoughtful and philosophic minds in the United States, in France, in Germany, and in these countries.

A question startling in its novelty, and met by the widest diversity of opinion, is suitably submitted to the consideration of our Society, for the help in its solution, which may be afforded by discussion.

Its promoters, in advocating the new and important social and political arrangements involved, have only one end in view; its opponents, in resisting innovation, are influenced by the same motive. It is one desire in each case from different points of view—to serve, or preserve the interests of the human family.

Time and immemorial usage, it is said, sanction the present system and forbid experiment.

On the other hand, those with whose views I sympathise, and who are in favour of the new distribution of work in the business of life, and of a more equally diffused participation, for both sexes, in social and political rights and privileges, are sanguine of success, because of the irrefutable morality of the principles they put forward, and the large and clear accession of strength to society—of strength for its work, and of help for its wants—to be derived from their adoption.

They are not discouraged by society—almost everywhere, with more or less modification, having for ages accepted the present arrangements.

They think prescriptive right, may be in this instance, as it has often been before, prescriptive wrong.

In illustration, they allude to slavery accepted as an institution, consonant with human and divine law, by the most civilised communities in the world—approved of by Aristotle in the Pagan times, by the Jewish Laws of the old dispensation—impliedly sanctioned by Saint Paul, in the text “Wives obey your husbands—Slaves obey your masters”—to the

enormity of which, the mind was only awakened after several centuries of Christianity; and then, I need not say, how slow the conviction came, how incredulous to the last even disinterested and enlightened men were—how these countries, in which we live, maintained the belief, and acted on it up to a few years ago—and Russia still later; and how in the United States, the latest and I believe in many respects, the most advanced exemplar and exponent of civilization, the terrible solution came, after an appeal to civil war, almost unparalleled in history; and if force had not been measured by right, slavery may have been now, and for years to come, an accepted principle in America.

I do not, for an instant, mean to assimilate the two things.

I instance slavery to show how long the delusion, as to its iniquity, continued—how persistent was the blindness, how obstinate the prejudice, how inveterate the strength of habit and custom, which to the vast majority becomes conviction, and even to exceptional insight and cultivation, is often a barrier to truth.

Feeling is stronger than reason, and makes us think, that the thing which we would wish to be—is the thing which ought to be.

Nay more, the love of delusion becomes stronger from the very strength of argument against it, and loyalty of feeling, clings more pertinaciously to error, the clearer, its weakness has been shewn.

I have repeatedly met Americans, men and women of cultivated intellect and excellent hearts, unconvinced by the war, who would prove, on abstract principles and by its practical results in their country, that slavery was good, and ought to have lasted.

In dealing with this question, the contemplation of war is very remote indeed. But in the war of reason in which its faith will be fought, and its virtue tested, the fortresses of prejudice—the strong places of usage and custom must be stormed, and the resistance will be greater, the pertinacity more difficult to overcome, than in any similar struggle.

I have said so much to try and divest your minds of foregone conclusions, and of influences which should not exist.

I have now to approach the direct consideration of the subject, and the first question which arises, as it occurs to me, is this—

Is there anything in natural law, which suggests that equality should not exist between the sexes, or that ascendancy on one side, and acceptance of subordination on the other, is the right and just condition

of society? I would answer by another question, —availing of the national privilege.

If we were to reconstitute society, by our present ideas of civilization, and the principles they assert, should it not be on a basis of perfect equality?

Revelation does not seem to support any other view. “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him—male and female created he them.” Man meaning one and both, male and female.

The ascendancy of the male and the subjection of the female, is not indicated here.

But it will be said, that the present state of things must be viewed, as the verdict of society, as it originally arranged the relations of the parties, and that we should regard them as decided by the common law, which should still exist, if no unanswerable reason be given, as the lawyers would say, for special legislation.

Retrospective enquiry may therefore be desired to see, if the present system is supported by any such judgment founded on reasoning, from which there is no appeal.

Study and examination will fail to discover, that the present condition of society can be traced to anything, but the law of force and submission, or that

there is any superiority, except physically, in either party to the contract.

Not that I admit there has been any test to prove even this, or that if there had been, it would in any way justify the present relations.

But though I regard the test as fallacious, and as incapable of being advanced in support of the system, I am not prepared to say, that the result would have been infallible.

Individually—beyond all doubt I know women of such herculean proportions, that I would be sorry to see some of my male friends submitted to the trial; what they used call in the Middle Ages, “the wager of battle.” Collectively, we are to presume that the issue would not be doubtful.

Physical force and its mandates have, up to this, governed so much in the world, it must I fear be regarded as accounting for the present relation of the sexes, in society and government. Mr. Mill says :—

“People are not aware how entirely in former
“ages the law of superior strength was the rule of
“life ; how publicly and openly it was avowed, I do
“not say cynically or shamelessly—for these words
“imply a feeling that there was something in it to be

“ashamed of, and no such notion could find a place
“in the faculties of any person in those ages, except
“a philosopher or a saint. History gives a cruel
“experience of human nature in showing how
“exactly the regard due to the life, possessions and
“entire earthly happiness of any class of persons
“was measured by what they had the power of en-
“forcing.”

And as other systems have so long existed, resting on that principle only, and which are now utterly rejected, I see no reason why this also should not yield to the clearer view of right, and clearer perception of the advantages to be derived from its rejection.

It will, of course, be said by its defenders, that as there was no trace of original resistance, a system founded on use and obvious aptitude, by past societies, is sanctified by acquiescence and tradition, and should not be disturbed.

But in reply to this, is it not clear that the capacity of women for employment in the positions, and for fulfilment of the duties now exclusively absorbed by men, has never been tested to the full—or any extent ?

From the earliest period, as it appears to me, the progress and development of civilization, has been

asserted through the action and influence of men, and women have been put aside as out of the race, and collectively assumed unworthy of competition.

Unless natural incapability is established, prescription cannot be referred to.

Take any savage tribe in the present day, and look at the condition of women in it. It is a condition of absolute degradation and slavery. Woman is only regarded as a household animal.

Contrast the savage woman, and what she is, with the position which woman occupies in civilized society.

A different principle has clearly been accepted.

I therefore deny that intellectually the use of women, as agents of good or evil to society, has been tested to its full and possible extent; and we have to consider the other view, which must be relied on, that it was not intended, they should equally contribute to the mechanical, scientific, or intellectual work, or to the government of society, and that the use which has been chosen for them is more conducive to their happiness, and more suitable to their nature and capabilities.

That is to say, that it is right and ordained, and best for society that in the plan of the universe, we should ignore, unless to a limited and harmless extent, the

intellectual faculties of women, and that it is better for them and the interests of the human species generally, that they should be reserved for, and permitted to enjoy the happiness to be derived from the senses and affections only, as their natural destiny and as the role in life, assigned them by Providence.

It is a serious matter so to interpret the designs of Providence.

I regard the argument, as not only vulgar, but blasphemous, and undeserving of any rational consideration.

It appears to me more in harmony with those designs to say, that the mind was given to women, as to men, amongst other uses, to control and regulate the senses—but with no limit prescribed to its expansion and development—on the other hand, with a sacred trust attached to its employment, as a weapon of security and happiness, or if misused, of mischief and destruction—even more so to them, than to men, on whom physical power and the service and protection it confers, was more liberally bestowed.

In dealing with the early constitution of society, it is absurd to talk of these metaphysical refinements. Power regulated conditions according to the simple dictates of convenience—wants were fewer—require-

ments less, and the distribution of the relations, in which each sex should stand to the other, accepted without resistance, because there could be none—perhaps it was not thought of—succeeding generations accepted the arrangements made, until the inconvenience or injustice could no longer be tolerated and modifications gradually ensued.

It is not astonishing, that a position of servitude and subserviency, undergoing relaxation every day was accepted by women, when we recollect that originally the vast majority of *males*, were slaves.

The system of males holding males in servitude was gradually relaxed, and reluctantly abolished. As to females, the system continued in civilized societies, with more or less modification, and, as I have said, in savage races to this day, females are still actual slaves.

As society advanced, institutions originally founded on might, became sustained by assumed principle, and so continued until reason had disposed of sophistry. Aristotle put forth the principle in defence of slavery, that there were free natures and slave natures—fallacy from such a source shielded wrong, and the delusion continued for centuries.

Delusion is never in want of argument. Up to a late period absolute monarchy was Divine right.

The other day the king of Prussia said he had his crown from God, and, I have no doubt, believed it. and he was not contradicted.

Habit makes dominion appear natural, and the expression of complaint, or assertion of equality incredible and monstrous. "Oliver Twist" electrified "Bumble" by asking for more porridge.

That there has been no organized assertion of equality, until so late in the world's history, by women is quite intelligible. Their position in relation to man necessitated submission, and evils of greater magnitude had first to be broken down. Acquiescence cannot any longer be relied on to sanction the maintenance of the present system, and the whole modern tendency of society, is in favour of enquiry and concession, if wrong exists, or improvement be demanded.

A difference in the career and position of Women has been already conceded, and this practically, for the present, disposes of the argument grounded on the inferiority of their intellect and character, which I think it, just yet, unnecessary to discuss further.

Dealing with it, for the present, on abstract grounds, I may refer to another plea put forward as a reason for not granting equality, that it would be mischievous to them in their domestic relations, and that it

was therefore denied them by society, which on strict principles of morality (rather incomprehensible to me I must confess) demanded the sacrifice of their liberty, on this pretence.

I do not mean to dispute the peculiar duties which nature has assigned to them, but I deny that such duties are inconsistent with their perfect freedom and equality, in choosing the position and share in the world's work best suited to their tastes and capabilities, and necessary for their protection, and which, if they are willing to undertake, it is a mere assumption of dictation on our part to deny them.

If individual restrictions, on the complete enjoyment of civil and political liberty, exist, the reasons ought to be patent and obvious, and easily assigned; but you perceive the difficulty in dealing with this subject is, that you have not to meet arguments put forward, which prove that the system is right, but you have to assume, nay, almost to invent and combat every fanciful theory, which may or could have been set up as a pretext for its existence, in order to show that it cannot be defended.

I will now leave abstract principles, and speculative reasoning, and will try to deal practically with the subject.

Looking at our political, civil, social and indus-

trial life, I will discuss the denial of equality to women, and the disabilities under which they labour, in their relations with the state and society, under three heads.

1. *Marriage.*
2. *The right to earn.*
3. *Civil and Political Privileges.*

First: As to Marriage. I would approach this part of the subject, I confess, with diffidence, if I had to treat it in a general sense.

Fortunately, I only want to convince you how it may be made more attractive—that is to say, by removing injustice and deprecating partiality, I would restore harmony, and disabuse the institution of the injury done, in defiance of the original design of Providence, which makes equality and uncontrolled consent, the essence of the contract—and of course viewing its unimpaired continuance, as the best safeguard, for the happiness and security of the human family.

Society sanctions—the law makes binding—and religion sanctifies between man and woman a contract enduring for life—and indissoluble except by the misconduct of either party—and how are the civil and legal rights of the parties affected by the transaction?

Her rights are all forfeited by the wife, and conferred on the husband. The civil and legal subordination of the woman before marriage becomes absolute annihilation, when she enters into that happy state.

Some modification has been made by a Statute passed last year, to which I shall afterwards advert, but until this tardy and half-hearted attempt was made, the wife in these countries as regards the State and its laws (except she breaks them) has been an absolute cypher. There is a pleasant little fiction of the law, that if she transgress its mandates, she is under her husband's control, and she escapes. This looks tenderness, but it is in reality contempt, and how far the principle is true, as to the husband's influence over the wife, I dare not say, nor shall I quote Lady Macbeth.

It is clear, from this state of things, that the original condition of women was one of complete bondage.

Restrictions on the woman are gradually giving way before the action of reason—I must say founded to a great extent, on the selfish consideration that man suffers by them; and that being the case, the awakened perception of justice becomes clamorous.

Every argument advanced in support of the modified system, conferring only some shadow of right, would sustain absolute slavery.

Now, how does the woman tangibly feel the law's influence after marriage? She absolutely loses all property and estate; it becomes her husband's. She may have been possessed of great wealth, of large manufactures, or of extensive estates in land, and may have always used the one or the other well and justly. All goes to the husband, unless provision be made by law beforehand in her favour; even then she is, individually, ignored. One or more trustees may get something for her. Her sole protection is, that it must pass through her hands; but then the husband may take it, without being exposed to be called on for restitution, or is sure to get it from her, because of the helpless position of the woman in other respects, and the want of independence sanctioned, nay, ordained by society, and from which, by submission, she purchases some relief.

She can give nothing to, she can do nothing for her children. If the father die she cannot be their guardian, unless he by his will so directs. In his lifetime, no matter what his character, his example, his disposition, his habits, if he does not break the law, she

cannot protect or provide for her own children. In return for the surrender of all her rights, there is no obligation on him, except to support and clothe her. She cannot leave him without being subject to an order to come back. He may leave her ; and she, by an expensive process—to many a denial of remedy—may apply for alimony or sustentation ; he has all the money—she none. As the law stood, he may leave her and come back in twenty years, and claim all her earnings, and seize and spend them.

Now that is modified by the recent Act. Earnings acquired by her independent trade, or by literary, artistic, or scientific skill, are hers, and the late condition of the law is, in several other respects but quite insufficiently, relaxed.

The general principle, as to injustice in the legal effect of Marriage for the woman, is proved by the partial concession made.

On all ordinary principles of partnership it was and is an absolute outrage.

Of course, the nature of good men resists the temptation offered to do gross wrong, but the predominance given by the State, develops itself in bad men, into tyranny, excesses, and injustice, which can be indulged and practised with impunity,

and very often cause misery to the woman. Of this there are, every day, too many illustrations.

The negation of the woman's work, and the refusal to acknowledge and protect it, does great mischief, not only to the parents and family, but to Society itself.

Submission and acceptance of a position, involving no participation in the active and responsible duties of life, outside personal duties, misdirects and wastes energy, and the craving for employment will find another channel. The wife is a spectator of the world's drama, in which she is told she cannot, or is not destined, to play a part, and as Mr. Mill says,

“She is taught that she has no business with things out of that sphere, and accordingly she seldom has any honest and conscientious opinion on them, and therefore hardly ever meddles with them for any legitimate purpose, but generally for an interested one. She neither knows or cares which is the right side in politics, but she knows what will bring in money, or invitations, give her husband a title, her son a place, or her daughter a good marriage.”

Do not imagine that I apply this language generally.

There are women, and I believe the majority in the better classes, with higher aims, and who exercise nobler influences—whose ambition soars beyond the mistaken regulation of Society, and, in revenge for its shortcomings, contributes to its happiness and sound progress.

I believe that in married life, the law which gives irresponsible power to the man—because, I suppose, in that happy state alone he is infallible—is practically superseded, and men and women adapt themselves to their special capacities, and move, in their separate orbits, as order prescribes.

It is very fortunate, and, of course, I am ready to acknowledge, that this permitted system of inequality and injustice does not prevent the existence, almost universally, of the strongest feelings of attachment, between the contracting parties, but this does not touch the implied inferiority, in their respective relations.

I hope I have said enough, on that branch of the system, to awaken your perception to abuses, and perhaps to enlist your sympathy for enquiry, and it may be for reform.

Again as a collateral consequence, or result, look at the effect of the system on corrupt natures, and

those rare exceptions, to our lofty-minded humanity to whom I allude.

There are men who marry for money, and who at the same time follow their instinct, and obey the social ordinance, that their use in society is to spend a woman's wealth, which marriage transfers to them.

Have we not heard, at all events, in novels, of those fragile, tender creatures, of the other sex, whose hot-house culture and transient bloom cannot be exposed to the inclemency of the world's seasons, brought up with the idea, that they are to be passive agents in life, without the luxury of volition, who accept a purchaser's terms that they may be rescued from casualty—and why? because we deny them the right to earn, or the dignity and honor of independence.

I have now to advocate for women their claims to employment, and the right to exercise their faculties, and earn an independence in the several avocations and callings, mechanical, industrial, and professional, now absorbed by men.

It may be shortly said, that the employment now permitted them is only where it is convenient to man, and conducive to his ease and comfort, without at all interfering with his interest, or special

privileges. The former state of things naturally resulted from the condition of woman, in the early stages of society, and being so absurd and unnatural, it is gradually giving way before the demands of reason and the every day exigencies of life.

The doctrine of woman's unfitness for work requiring intellect and industry, is not only materially and morally of incalculable loss and mischief, but to my perception and from my experience, absolutely destitute of basis in fact.

I firmly believe, that for two-thirds of the work now exclusively done by men, and requiring brain study and assiduity, unbroken pursuit and concentrated attention, women are as well fitted, that is, if they be prepared with the full assent and encouragement of society, by the training, education, trial, and probation necessary.

I do not care to canvass, of course, only to condemn the present condition of women, as to the employment of their time, the training they receive, the tastes they cultivate, and the limited and imperfect employment of the faculties vouchsafed to the great majority of them, according to accepted usage or fashion which, with a sort of Chinese conformity, they all follow. It will be said their present condition is suited to their

destiny, and society proscribes any rebel from its authority.

Nor need I advert to the argument which is set up, and which is almost unworthy of notice, as to the well-to-do portion of the sex, that women would grow hard and coarse and lose their attraction for men, by doing the work of life like men—reasoning false in theory, and false in fact, which should never be listened to. It is idleness which repels and corrupts, and work which refines.

The implied inferiority, on whatever ground it is based, on the one side, and the acceptance of the charge on the other, which has so long paralysed the mind and energies of women, is the ground taken for their exclusion.

From the time when Moliere, in his "*Femmes Savantes*," misguided the mind of France, and pandered to the vulgar prejudice of his day, to our own era and its shallower sneer, the same unjust, dishonouring cause has been at work.

A man is said to be a benefactor to his species, who makes a blade of grass grow where it never grew before. Is mind and intelligence given to women to lie fallow and useless, or in truth, was it meant that wealth, nutriment, and blessing for the human race,

may spring from this soil as well as from any other? I deny the theory—I repudiate the morality—that productiveness, reclamation, or cultivation to the highest point, is forbidden or inexpedient in this field, as if it were less of God's domain than any other.

To be practical, let us look about and see for what work and employment in life, are the head and heart of women less suitable than man's, if custom did not blind us? I except of course occasions where physical strength is wanted to cope with the powers of nature, the inventions of science, or to master our brute propensities, in war, or for any of those other recreations, in which the male sex asserts its superiority.

In all the mechanical arts, requiring craft of touch and gift of taste,—they are equal if not superior to men—in the wide diversity of manufactures in which they are now so extensively employed as operatives, why may they not be principals? The marvellous success in trade obtained by individual women shews that they may be more extensively engaged in it with success for themselves, and advantage to society.

Few of us have failed to observe the obvious suitability of women, in preference to men, for very many of the subordinate trade occupations.

Why should it be incongruous that women should

possess the power to sway Senates—to master Science and apply it—to expound law—to assert legal right as ably and subtly as many of them do “Women's Rights?” Why should women—obliged to resort to the law for redress, or if made subject to the law, whether seeking its remedy or incurring its punishment, be denied the more congenial advice and advocacy of women as, Counsel—their sympathy as Jurors—their better knowledge of one another as Judges—or if you go further, their superior influence for reclamation?

It is unnecessary to ask, now why they may not practice Medicine or Surgery. Marvellous ability has lately asserted that privilege for the sex, and I may parenthetically observe, that the strange monopoly of men as midwives, has received a partial defeat. And then as regards trade and other employments? Why may not women be shoe and bootmakers, watchmakers, jewellers, cabinet-makers? I have seen amateur work by ladies in this line, which was admirable. Why may they not set type as printers? make paper? be house-painters and paper stainers? Why, in the public service, may they not be employed in the Post Office—the Excise—the Customs, and as clerks in every department—wherever their com-

petency, asserted on fair competition, shall entitle them to work and employment.

Dr. Elizabeth Garrett took first place, from 300 men students, and the immense voting for her, on the Medical and School Boards proved she was the fittest instrument, for the work.

Again, Miss Peachy in a class of 236, got third place as a chemist.

If this lady join a chemist in wedlock, will he banish her from the laboratory?

No,—but by the operation of our just laws they cannot work a joint trade, from which she, though perhaps making most, would derive any personal profit.

It would be hard to follow,—in all its wide ramifications—the influence of the present suppression and restriction which, in principle false and immoral in practice, produces more than commensurate evils.

Realize to your minds the revolution in married life which may be wrought, if the weight of the accepted duty, as to providing for and directing the destinies of female children, be taken from parents, and if girls now brought up to idleness be converted into workers and made self-supporting.*

* It is very gratifying to see, by the Report of the "Women's College" in London, issued in June of this year, that 85 students had matriculated.

In India, as a rather violent remedy or mitigation of marriage evils, they, I believe still to some extent, murder their female children.

Think of the incentive to family union and family happiness. Want of provision for daughters, is now the greatest enemy, and their responsibility, the greatest barrier to the experiment of marriage after—if the wife knew how to earn, and the daughters were brought up workers and self-supporting as mechanics, or in trade, or otherwise, as the sons are. In tending to the removal, of the tremendous responsibility from fathers, it will serve their position in society, and enhance their usefulness in the State.

A true remedy for the complaints as to marriage being avoided by men, would be the employment of women.

Now as to the influence of work, of brain and hand, on women themselves, what I may call the sentimental view of the question, that is to say, on young females likely to marry, or, having married, to be mothers—How vast and important the interests of those women, who unfortunately for themselves, are not included under either category, I shall have occasion by-and-by to notice.

The objection as to work and cultivation by women,

and the theories put forward in this respect, are founded, on the assumed antagonism of the head and heart before adverted to.

Of course I recognise with profound respect, the divine laws as to maternity and its duties, and assign to these duties the first place in the consideration of women.

It will not detract from the mother's love for her child, that perhaps for that child's benefit, morally and physically, she should employ the intellect God gave her. As far as my observation goes the more clearly the head sees, the more deeply the heart feels, that is, if it be a good heart—I cannot well argue the alternative.

I see no advantage to the child, in the mother being idle and ignorant. On the contrary, for greatness or goodness, children generally follow the mother's example, and this widens the responsibility, as to the qualifications for aspiring to the title.

The mother is not always, necessarily, a model for her sex.

It is of that class that Monseigneur Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, speaks in his spirited and brilliant defence of "Studious Women." He says, "The very worst scourge is the frivolous, fickle, effeminate, idle,

ignorant, pleasure-loving woman, devoted to dissipation and amusement."

This is an extract from a book, exhorting ladies of the richer classes, in France, to more useful employment of their time. He says further on, "Human nature requires to be instructed, enlarged, enlightened, and elevated in all its powers, and I must say, for my own part, that I never found anything more dangerous than repressed capabilities, unsatisfied desires and a thirst unquenched."

I agree unqualifiedly in this statement—That large employer, who has always a supply of bad work on hand, is quite equal to the lively demand of the idle, time-killing ladies.

When there is no outlet for the active faculties, they are sure to go wrong—the waters which, if well directed, may fertilize—let loose, only destroy.

Powerful admonition follows from this great man, by which I hope the ladies of France, have been benefited, to shew, that to a great extent, the blame is on society itself, for having so long tolerated the present system.

The very argument advanced by men, that women's frivolity unsuits them, for social, civil, or political privileges recoils on the accusers. What is the main

cause of the frivolity? It is the old story; you abuse the thing you wrong.

I leave this part of the subject—so far as relates to the classes referred to—denying the incompatibility of the duties of the heart and intellect, and maintaining that it is the destruction of true harmony, to ignore the one or the other.

But there are other classes, on whose behalf I must urge this argument in very different terms, and on whom the exclusion of women from work and employment for which they may become as well fitted as men, falls with terrible force. This exclusion visits with a frightful and well-merited penalty society itself.

I mean, those women not likely to marry, or who having married have become widows—who are “unprovided for,” and therefore helpless—because the knowledge of what their faculties can do is denied them—daughters left without parents—again, daughters to whom one parent has at all events been unknown. These, left to struggle with poverty and temptation, enforced idleness and enforced incapacity to work, rebel against their destiny—shake off responsibility—and disastrous results follow, from which society deservedly suffers.

By the census in England in 1861 there were nearly six millions and a half of women, in that

country over 21 years of age; and of those, less than two millions were self or partly self-supporting; the rest were dependent on men, and it was stated a short time ago in the *Times* that the female population in England and Wales is, on an average, one million in excess of males, and that it is estimated one million of the average female population, die widows or unmarried, and, of course, it is my view that, for a large proportion of those, not provided for, employment ought to be equally available as for men.

Monsieur de Tocqueville, in estimating the influences at work which makes him prophecy a great future for the United States, lays stress on the superiority manifested by the women there, and the impulse which their employment, to an extent altogether unknown in Europe, will give to the success and prosperity of the country.

Indeed, you may measure in countries the standard of civilisation, by the position assigned to women.

I have now to consider the least defensible wrong to which women are subject—the denial to them, by the State or Government, of civil or political rights or privileges of any kind.

It is hard to discuss principles, when none can really be put forward to sanction this grievance.

Society may do, and does wrong. It does not pretend to have laws for its conduct.

Without law, the State is usurpation.

One must be elementary, to see how groundless this position is. Woman is put wholly and absolutely, so far as her volition goes, outside the law. What is law?

Law is three-fold—the law of nature, prescribing certain duties of act and avoidance; Divine law, which reveals from inspired authority the course of man's action; and, lastly, State or Government law, which, by common consent, we establish for our common good and safety.

As to the first, it cannot be said that women, in their first essential duty, as mothers, do not conform to it.

As to the second law, women are equally blameless.

Humanity goes beyond first principles. Society is formed, and government established and laws made. It cannot be said that woman forfeited her rights by any non-performance of duties to society, which tradition has brought us down.

Knowledge comes—civilization advances—and lays down rigid artificial rules and principles to preserve freedom and secure safety by combination.

Again, woman does not fail in her contribution to the common stock of work and duties.

By conduct and obedience, by intellectual, moral, and material support of the State and society, she constitutes her just claims to a share in making the law, which, without her consent or voice—so far as it may prevail—is not law; to a share in administering and executing the law; and to the enjoyment of every right and privilege of the State or Government to which she has given, or is assumed to have given, power over her person, her property, and her life.

That is the pleasant fiction. Now, what is the fact? Men adopt towards women that principle of public rule, propounded and acted on, by the first Napoleon, and as we have seen, by the Third, which has produced such substantial advantages to France—everything for the people—nothing by them. For the people, read women, with this slight modification. Most assuredly, and inexorably nothing by women—but everything for them—that is to say, after men, with that self-abnegation which characterises their relations, have made a careful selection for themselves. Now, practically, what does this mean? She is to obey, or to suffer by the law, good or bad, just or unjust, right or wrong; she is to pay anything asked from her, to maintain the State, however carried on; she is to

flatter herself that she is forming one of a family, living together by choice and consent, in which community of interest, and community of action, is the bond of common safety—and her position is to be that of utter extinction—no right to do anything—to sanction anything—to object to anything—to enjoy anything—and yet she is to suffer every penalty, to which a system, framed perhaps against her will, or in utter defiance of her just rights, may prescribe.

Let us practically illustrate this. A lady is left with great wealth and immense possessions ; she indirectly supports for the State thousands of its subjects, who may contribute largely to every branch of what we call Government—the army, the church, the law, and every other institution—she pays the heaviest taxes ; every resource of the National Exchequer receives subsidies from her, and yet the State, in return, does not even acknowledge her existence ; she represents as much property, as in many small boroughs returning a member to Parliament ; she pays, or there is paid through her property, as much in rates as by all the electors put together ; and yet she has no public recognition in the State, of which she is practically a pillar ; or, in the society to which, not improbably, she may be a boundless benefactor.

There is, of course, nothing for her but enforced acquiescence, enforced submission, to the mandates of an advanced civilization.

When anything is attempted in defence of this part of the system, which has even the colour of justification, the strings are pulled, and that favourite on the woman's-wrongs stage—the injured matron—appears with the baby, on her arms, and appropriate scenery of the pantry, the nursery, and the kitchen, and papa's arm-chair at dinner-time, and you are asked—is it to that woman overburdened with the care and anxieties of life, you would give political franchises, you would trouble with opinions on the law, or that you would employ for its exercise or administration, &c., &c.

This is a very convenient way of disposing of the argument, and is, of course, an utter fallacy.

In the first place, the objection can only apply, to this comparatively short period, in a woman's existence.

What becomes of the rest of her life, before marriage and after. Is she not then to be a free agent, and actor and recipient in the work, and of the benefits of the State.

At most, this would be a partial or periodical ground of exemption, from public duties, but never a ground of total and absolute exclusion from rights.

The divine ordinance, which has assigned duties to women, is not to be lightly used as a pretext for injustice.

In truth, preaching and homilies on household management, and family training and superintendence, are beside the question.

By good women the message of nature will never be forgotten. It will be to them superior to all State or social dictation. The exercise, use and cultivation of their intellect, their proper share in the high and responsible duties of life otherwise, are not on that account to be forbidden, nor is the sacrifice required.

Depend on it, in the happy state, things will find their level. Who can tell how much the wife influences man in his public duties?

On the other hand, many men have a taste and aptitude for housewifery, are fitter to rock the cradle than steer the ship. Women must sometimes have such companions; and if they have or if they have husbands of another type, events will follow and shape themselves to requirements—public and private. How many statesmen, how many great writers have attributed to their wives half the benefit and blessing, they may have conferred on society.

The marriage plea failing, we have again to encounter the charge of the natural unfitness and un-

suitableness of women for any public or political privileges, or for participation in public life at all.

Yet how often have women been in public life the benefactors of men, and of the world?

Rejected by the rules, discouraged by the spirit of society, their competition with man, and their superiority to man has been forced into action, by consciousness of power, and strength of human sympathy and common need, against common danger.

It is only stating the exact historical truth, to affirm, that the sway of women, as Rulers, at periods when the character and work of the ruler meant government, has been wise, vigorous, beneficent, and just, and has produced blessing and peace while it lasted, in civilized and savage life.

In India it is illustrated by Hindoo rule, most remarkably when women were sovereigns.

It is said, according to Mr. J. S. Mill, that this means, when queens reign men govern, and that when kings reign women govern. It is a sharp epigram, but plain untruth. The advisers and trusted guides of their brothers and sons—king's sisters and king's mothers—have been practically the best governors France ever had; and somehow or other, women have been sovereigns at the proudest moments of England's destiny, and the highest of its happiness.

If women have excelled, as I have said, it was when chance or force of genius called them forth.

By analogy, the success of a few, in spite of obstacles, proves the rule of general fitness and equality with men.

I believe this necessity for disproving, the vaunted moral and intellectual superiority of man, utterly illogical, unjust and delusive.

I have now disposed of the three divisions of the subject, by which I hoped to make tangible and clear the disabilities and disadvantages which women labour under in the State and society, as at present constituted.

I am no visionary, and therefore do not believe that a great social revolution will be at once accomplished, but I do believe that a wrong system, although coeval with the very origin of society, unjust and injurious to all concerned, will gradually and insensibly dissolve before the influence of reason, which has steadily and decisively determined on its overthrow.

Once the vital principle is established, of the entire equality of men and women in all their relations, with the State and society, the rest will follow.

The movement will be slower from want of impulse than from resistance.

There appears to be a Nemesis sometimes in things

human. The wrong consummated by force, ultimately recoils, on the perpetrator.

Men must see, must be awakened to the folly, to the tangible loss and sacrifice of power brought on the world, by the renunciation of the use, of the moral intellectual and physical energies of women, in the toil and work of life, and in the public service.

If the argument is good, if we refuse community of right, should we live together and carry on the hypocrisy of being bound by the same rules and laws.

We ought to allow them separate laws, and a separate government, separate Parliament, separate houses of worship and institutions of every kind; Universities, with those officers, cynically called

“ Prudes for proctors, dowagers for deans,

This is the badinage of poets, and beside the very worldly, very prosy, and very common-place question of right or wrong to be dealt with. Nay more, (and I am not to be taken as speaking slightingly of Tennyson's noble poem, from which I have quoted), the poet here betrays the secret of man's false view of women, in idealising them as an ornament of existence, or exclusively as a beautiful complement of the superior beings, and the master spirits of the universe, and investing them with a delicacy, refinement, and

structure inconsistent with the hardship and rough work of life, in which, in my opinion, it is their destiny to share, and with which, it is their obvious duty, just as much as ours, to grapple.

If, when society was founded, false conditions were imposed and accepted, the appeal from men for justice and from women for change, cannot now be withstood.

In sight of the complainings, the trials, the privations, the misery, the struggles, the discontent of some—and the ignorance, recklessness, and despair of other classes, in modern society, a new Evangel must be preached!

Who can estimate the value of the wealth wasted,—the power unused—the dormant faculties to be aroused—the active faculties to be directed—and employed—in doubling or dividing the work, now done by men, which may partly be done by women—the original work—the insight and help in the progress of civilisation, which a mass of untried and different intellect may produce—the genius without scope—the creative power which may be awakened to lessen the pressure, and keep pace with the increasing wants of civilisation.

Clear analysis and masterly exposition and reasoning have been at work to elucidate this subject; notably, the foremost thinker and most philosophical

mind in those countries, from whose book have given extracts, and to whose illustration of the subject I am so much indebted—Mr. J. S. Mill—has taken it up.

He is, of course, called a fanatic, an enthusiast—at best, a clever man propounding impracticable theories. This is the usual penalty for endeavouring to benefit mankind.

But he and others have devoted themselves to the advocacy of the subject in too great a spirit of antagonism. On the other hand, he has been answered in too flippant a tone. One Edinburgh reviewer says that Mr. Mill wants to make woman, the lesser man.

He does not! This is one of the stock arguments—that it is degrading, that it is unwomanly for women to do some thing that has been hitherto done by men. What does this mean? Surely there is nothing in the nature of the thing done which prescribes whose hand is to do it. Men assumed the right to do everything, and it is coarse and indelicate of woman to employ herself at something or other which suits her: there is not much self-flattery by man in this, and less compliment to the woman than is supposed; in truth, it is only still indulging the privilege to patronise, to prescribe, to limit, or

define woman's work, her exercise of taste, her employment of her energy or her intellect, as she desires, which does not of right belong to us at all. I hope that you will agree with me that the fittest hand to do anything in this world is the hand that does it best, and that exclusion or restraint is immoral and unjustifiable. It is for that only Mr. Mill contends.

He wants to restore woman to a state of perfect freedom and equality.

He insists upon it as a right—but the predominance given in originally settling society, is not a matter of accusation against the present generation, and recrimination only weakens the appeal for removal and remedy.

I cannot see why man should resist the claim.

I believe the advantage will be all on his side; objections by women, or at least a portion of them, are far more intelligible—that is to say, from those of the well-to-do classes who have already become, or whose education has taught them, and whose nature harmonises, with the teaching, to become the pets and favourites, in what is to them, a very pleasant life of luxury or energy, directed only with a uniformly selfish purpose in view—they will very naturally decry and resent the movement.

Alluding to that class, a writer says:—

“No matter with what wealth she may be surrounded, with what dainties she may be fed, with what splendour of trappings adorned, with what voluptuousness, her corporeal, mental, or moral sweets may be gathered, that high prerogative of human nature—the faculty of self-government, the basis of intellectual development, without which no moral conduct can exist—is to her wanting.”

I am afraid she will ignore the ignominy, enjoy the sweets of bondage, and ridicule the cry for change.

The two-fold effect of discussion will be this.

Man is not generally aware of the groundlessness of the predominance he exercises; nor is woman of the dishonour and impropriety—I will not say degradation—of her submission.

The sense of injustice once awakened, felt, and asserted, no course will be open but to satisfy it.

Recently, in our own time, it was those who might have continued the masters who demanded freedom for slaves and freedom to themselves, from the responsibility of injustice, and who made war to assert the one and the other.

The discussion of the age, must arouse the sympathy even of uncomplaining women, and weaken the resistance of that portion of men, who will not be convinced.

I prefer no indictment against society in the past, on whose traditions we have acted. If error incontestably existed; if we see it now, and that the insight means accession to our own power and happiness, while appealing to our sense of honour and duty, we are worse than fools if we do not act upon it. Mr. Mill says—

“We have had the morality of submission and the morality of chivalry and generosity; the time is now come for the morality of justice.”

As you have observed, I regard principle and utility, in this case, as perfectly identical, and that, according to the new philosophy, the one inevitably leads to the other.

If I protest against the present isolation of the sexes, in the social, industrial, intellectual and political work of life, it is because I think occupation should be open to all alike, and that no line is drawn by any principle, human or divine.

If I demand perfect freedom and equality for women, it is no doubt as a measure of justice to them, but most assuredly one of wisdom for ourselves—A concession of sentiment by men, a contribution of energy, power and usefulness by women, far beyond its price.

Freedom for their nature, with as full and un-

limited expansion—freedom for their intellect, with as wide and uncircumscribed field, as men possess for its employment—freedom for them, to avail of, and exercise, partially it must be at first, and gradually to the full extent, the rights and privileges and duties of the State, now exclusively conceded, to the other sex. These changes demanded for them, in the name of justice are demanded for humanity in the name of common sense.

I see no injury, no danger, to arise from their complete emancipation—on the other hand I see palpable loss, mischief, and want of mutual protection in the separation and classification of the sexes, in doing the world's work and helping its progress.

I see many occasions, in which the presence and communion of women, with men, in the active pursuits of life, in the competition and conflict of the will and intellect—would rouse self-respect and check the tendency to self-abasement in men, would infuse seriousness and recall from levity—if so inclined—the minds tastes and sympathies of women, and stimulate them to higher aims, and nobler aspirations.

If I advocate the perfect reconciliation of the sexes, in doing the world's work and dividing its duties, I do not wish by depriving the one or the other of its

right, or assigned position, to weaken the present construction of society. I want to strengthen its foundations, to promote its symmetry. The change may be slow—it must be gradual—it may be combated, or it may be encouraged—but I am satisfied, that a more just and harmonious arrangement will ultimately produce the most beneficial results.

A distinguished writer has said, “Are two notes of the same musical chord unequal, or of different natures? Man and woman are the two notes, without which the human chord is impossible.”

I ask you, is it not well that we should strive to end the dissonance, and make the concord perfect?

S P E E C H

OF

Mrs. WILLIAM S. CLARK*

(Daughter of the Right Hon. JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.)

Mrs. W. S. CLARK seconded a resolution in support of the Bill. She said, “the Bill to enfranchise women householders introduced by Mr. Forsyth, is a very simple and moderate measure, so moderate, indeed, that some people who don’t understand it wonder why it should call forth any enthusiasm; and it is not only a moderate Bill, it is an honest Bill, it means exactly what it says and no more. But when we urge this simplicity and modesty of our aim, we are sometimes met by the statement that we are trying to get something further. Well, in one sense we are. We are not seeking the franchise for women merely that they may have the amusement of handing in a ballot paper once in three or four years; we are seeking it for precisely the same reasons that working men and middle-class men desired and sought it, and with, I venture to think, as much reason. Some of us were not unmoved spectators of the last great struggle for Parliamentary Reform. We saw there the whole force of powerful sections of the community opposed for years to the enfranchisement of the working-class; we saw the advocates of Reform denounced as mischievous agitators, and subjected to every kind of misrepresentation and abuse, but we did not see those men give up the

* Delivered at a Meeting, held in support of the Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women, at the Victoria Rooms, Clifton, Bristol, March 9, 1876.

work to which they had put their hands. They were confident of the justice of their cause and they persevered. Some of them were men who were not themselves excluded, to whom fortune had not been hard; but they had a great sympathy with their less fortunate fellow-countrymen, and they were ready to give years to the cause of their enfranchisement. Well, that cause is gained so far as the boroughs go, and what is the position of working men now? Do we not see a vastly increased attention to the needs and the feelings and the opinions of working men? Was not almost the first result of that measure a bill for the general education of their children, and does not every borough election show that even the very men who year after year opposed their admission to the franchise with all the influence they possessed, are now most eager to exhibit themselves, if possible, in the guise of true friends of the working class? Well, such lessons are not lost on us. The arguments that were convincing ten years ago are not less so now, and as for the various hobgoblins that are trotted out to frighten timid people, they are not new to us: most of them are very much the same as made their appearance during the last Reform agitation, and forty or fifty years ago, when the middle classes of this country were striving for something like fair representation, they played a still more conspicuous part. If you will look back to the speeches and debates of that day, you will find that the first Reform Bill, which I suppose most people now look upon as almost the foundation of our present electoral system, that that measure was regarded with the utmost alarm by the upper classes of this country. They predicted that it would produce the most disastrous consequences. It was to destroy the throne, the church, the constitution, and liberty itself, altogether. Well, we know that these things did not happen, and that, on the contrary, that measure brought peace and prosperity to this country. There are some people who are always afraid. I don't suppose that any measure of conspicuous justice was ever passed without frightening somebody. I remember

reading in that charming and instructive book, *The Life of Sir Samuel Romilly*, that when he was endeavouring to remove from our statute book some of those barbarous laws which disgraced it fifty or sixty years ago, particularly when he had charge of the Bill to repeal the law that condemned to death anyone who stole from a shop to the value of five shillings, he met with the determined opposition of the Cabinet of that day, and of the bench of bishops. They said it was a daring innovation, and that innovations in our criminal law were to be deprecated! and Lord Ellenborough, who was considered a great authority, said he should like to know what would happen next? Well we all know that a good deal had to happen next, and surely the name of Romilly is beloved and revered—it should be especially so in this city of Bristol—when the names of those cruel bishops and Cabinet Ministers are almost forgotten. Now, our cause is in some respects even stronger than that of the working men, for though they were no doubt as a body excluded from representation, yet there were exceptions, and there was always the chance that a working man, by thrift or good fortune, or both might attain to a position of greater affluence, and thus secure a vote. But it is not so with women. The line is fixed and they are absolutely excluded, and no wealth or special interest, or knowledge of politics, can avail to put any woman on a footing of equality in this matter with the meanest male elector, and observe that this exclusion tells more forcibly now than it used to do. It is natural that women should begin to resent their exclusion more now that almost every other great class is enfranchised than they did when it was the exception to vote, and when exclusion was therefore much less marked. Women are often told that they are already sufficiently represented by their male relations. I can only say that that is not an arrangement that would be considered satisfactory by men amongst themselves, and I know no reason why it should be more so for women; and certainly, men who, while desiring and valuing the

franchise for themselves, can yet see no reason why women should desire it, are clearly unfit and unable to represent us in this way, since it is evident that they apply a totally different set of rules to themselves and to us. During the last Reform agitation we heard a good deal of the educating effect of the franchise. It was admitted that a good many working men neither knew nor cared much about politics; but it was said that the best way to increase their self-respect and thoughtfulness was to give them a sense of responsibility, and to admit them to some share in the representation. Now I want to know why women are to be deprived of this great educational influence? If you teach girls and boys grammar and arithmetic, you teach them out of the same books and by the same methods. I never heard that there was one way for girls and another for boys if the end to be attained was the same, and why don't you teach them to be public-spirited in the same way? Is it not because some of you don't desire that women should be educated at all in this direction? But I ask, is it fair, is it just, that your wishes and your prejudices should be the measure of other people's rights? Some of you I dare say are liberal enough to allow art, and literature, and even science to women—but is it not “Thus far shalt thou go and no farther.” Now I think this policy of exclusion with regard to women is a narrow and selfish one, for delightful and valuable as art and literature and science are in education, is there not something that comes even before these? We know that these things may thrive for a time at least under a corrupt government, but public virtue, an enlightened public opinion, these are the surest and indeed the only safeguards of good government. And I ask you now, even supposing you do not care that your daughters should receive this sort of training, how can you expect your sons to grow up high-minded and self-sacrificing in public matters, if you allow those who have so often the greatest influence in forming their early principles to be shut out from all sense of duty and responsibility in political matters? And now I

should like to say a few words to those women—I dare say there are some here to-night, who have what may be called in this matter unbelieving husbands. Don't try to drive them; but try by all means to persuade them, only let it be by the most reasonable and judicious persuasion. Sometimes in a family even silence may be persuasive. I can quite sympathise with a man who is always under the apprehension that whatever subject is started, conversation will always come round in the end to women's suffrage. It does not appear so interesting and important to him as it does to you and me; and you must bear this in mind. I am sure that women need to use great tact and patience in this matter, and that for want of this tact and this consideration harm has sometimes been done to our cause. Now you know that one great fear that men have in connection with our movement is, lest an interest in politics and the admission of women householders to express that interest through their votes should draw women away from their domestic duties. It is a curious fear. They seem to forget that men have also domestic duties, and that amongst them is the grave and often very arduous one of providing for their families, and that the conscientious performance of these duties does not prevent a man from being an intelligent citizen and giving an intelligent vote—that is, if he has any intelligence in him to begin with. However, since this fear does undoubtedly beset many people's minds, let me urge on women to be especially careful that their lives should give no sort of colour to this idea. Do you try to make your homes more attractive, not less so because you have begun to think in a somewhat wider circle. And don't let the men with whom you are connected have any reason to think that politics will make women hard. Rather let them see, if possible, that your gentle sympathies, if, as I hope, you have these gentler sympathies they sometimes speak of, may tend to soften politics, and may perhaps do something to make a contest one of principles rather than personalities. If you take an interest in and study

those subjects in which your fathers and brothers happen to be specially interested, depend upon it they will find it agreeable, and they will perhaps end in finding that your subjects are interesting to them. But we have not, and we do not wish to have, only a special class of interests. Wherever we look, whether in the country districts, we see the agricultural labourer living on very small wages—as much as one-sixth or one-seventh of those meagre wages too often paid him in cider; his children almost uneducated, himself landless, and sometimes almost homeless, in a country of wealthy men and large landed estates, and where the laws favour that accumulation of land; or whether we live among the crowded population of towns, with their many temptations, and their besetting sin of drunkenness; or whether we look to our enormous and still increasing military expenditure, with all its train of demoralisation and vice, and I am but just touching on two or three of the great dangers that threaten us, surely, wherever we turn our eyes, we cannot fail to see that the fields are white unto harvest, and that the labourers are too few. And it seems to me, if I may venture to say so, that the Lord of the harvest is in these days speaking in the ears of women and demanding from them a wider sympathy and a more earnest life. That they should no longer be content to shut themselves within narrow walls, but that they should venture to look forth on the evils that surround them, and ask themselves the causes of those evils, and whether it is not possible by joint effort to do something towards their removal. And do not give heed to those who would tell you that these dark blots on our civilisation are necessary evils—and do not be led away by the notion, which some may be ready to present to your mind, that your personal purity may be dimmed, or your real influence lessened, because in the strength of your increased love for your fellow creatures you venture to look deeper than you have hitherto done into the causes of human suffering. There are many kind and tender hearts among women, I know, that are pained by the suffering they see. They have long

recognised it to be their duty to help and comfort the sufferer, but they have, perhaps, not been accustomed to look to human laws for some, I don't, of course, say all, of the causes of crime and poverty. We are sometimes told that we cannot make people sober and moral by Act of Parliament, and in a sense this is true. But it is not difficult to degrade and demoralize by law. It is easy to give the sanction of law to what could never have that of justice, and if people do what is in accordance with the spirit of the law they are generally satisfied. They are apt to make the law their standard of action, and hence it is of the greatest importance that the law should set forth a just and true standard. So long, for instance, as the law of England says that, when a man dies without a will, his landed property shall all go to the eldest son, even if it leaves the other children almost penniless, so long will average Englishmen think themselves justified in such an unnatural distribution; and so long as the law of divorce is unequal between men and women, will the sanction of the law be given to the idea that there is one standard of morality for men and another for women. Now, if the importance of laws is at all understood, I cannot see how anyone can suppose women to be less affected by them than men. As a matter of fact, they are more deeply concerned since they are subject not only to the laws made for people in general, but also to a number of special laws, made for them alone, made by men alone, and a good many of which it is obvious could never have been passed, if women had had any share in the representation. I think that, on the whole, we have had a great deal of kind help and fair dealing from men in this suffrage work. The various committees are deeply indebted to the thorough-hearted help they have received from the gentlemen belonging to them. I know it is specially the case on this committee, and I believe it to be so elsewhere. We are not afraid of those timid members of the House of Commons who have banded themselves together to defend nature, and

revelation, and the British constitution, against the women householders of this country. We mean to go straight on, and if some who have borne the burden and heat of many an earlier conflict are now resting from their labours, if some of them do not see their way to join us, well we must not expect too much. It is not, perhaps, given to any one to see all truth. We may each see a portion of the truth, and at any rate we may each, in our humble way, strive to extend those principles of justice which have had in the past, and I trust will ever continue to have, pure-minded and unflinching advocates."—*Reprinted from the Women's Suffrage Journal.*

M'Corquodale & Co., Printers, Cardington Street, London, N.W.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN IRELAND.

THIRTY-NINE Irish Members of the present House of Commons have voted in support of the Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women. This Bill, when it becomes law, will give a vote in the election of Members of Parliament to women who possess the same qualifications as men, viz. :

In Counties—To all women who are occupiers of land, or of houses and land, rated at the clear yearly value of £12 ;

In Towns—To all women who are householders rated above £4 ; or lodgers in separate apartments, at a rental of £10, unfurnished.

There are 4,127 women landowners (of one acre and upwards) in Ireland, or one to every seven men landowners.

It is calculated that the women to be enfranchised by this Bill would be in the proportion of one to seven of the existing electorate throughout the country.

In 1877, 268,428 persons signed Petitions to the House of Commons in favour of the Bill, of whom 3,741 were Irish.

LET ALL PERSONS WHO APPROVE ITS PRINCIPLE DO THE SAME IN 1878.

Forms of Petition and all information can be obtained from the Hon. Secretaries of the Irish branches of the National Society for Women's Suffrage :—

MRS. HASLAM, 91, Rathmines Road, Dublin,	} Hon. Secs. to Dublin Committee.
MISS M'DOWELL, 45, Mespil Road, Dublin,	
MISS TOD, 39, Rugby Road, Belfast,	Hon. Sec. North of Ireland Committee,
MRS. ADDEY, 69, Patrick Street, Cork,	Hon. Sec. South of Ireland Committee.

THE following Irish Ladies and Gentlemen have, amongst others, given their adhesion to the principle of the Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women :—

Richard Allen, Esq.
W. H. Archdale, M.P.
Mir Aulad Ali, T.C.D.
Sir Thomas Bateson, M.P.
J. G. Biggar, M.P.
R. P. Blennerhassett, M.P.
Mrs. Blennerhassett
Rev. F. Briscoe, Kilmessan
Maurice Brooks, M.P.
Mrs. Brooks
George E. Browne, M.P.
P. Callan, M.P.
Hon. E. R. Canning
Rev. W. G. Carroll, M.A.
Charles Cobbe, Esq., D.L.
Miss F. P. Cobbe
Eugene Collins, M.P.
Lord F. Conyngham, M.P.
Miss Corlett
Sir D. Corrigan, Bart.
M. R. Dalway, M.P.
Captain Dawson Damer, M.P.
James Delahunty, M.P.
T. A. Dickson, M.P.
Kenelm Digby, M.P.
M'Carthy Downing, M.P.
Charles Eason, Esq.
Nicholas Ennis, M.P.
Charles J. Fay, M.P.
Lord Garvagh
Mrs. Gradwell, Drogheda
A. P. Graves, Esq.
S. M. Greer, Esq., Recorder of Derry
Mrs. Hamilton, Killileagh
Rev. S. Haughton, M.D., F.R.S.
Rev. L. Hope, C.C., Co. Meath
Mrs. Johnson, Warrenstown
W. Johnston, M.P.
Sir Robert Kane
Lady Kane
Rev. W. B. Kirkpatrick, D.D.
The Knight of Kerry

Rev. Eugene Lynch, P.P., Co. Meath
Sir Thomas M'Clure, Bart.
Rev. T. A. M'Kee
Sir J. N. McKenna, M.P.
Lord Talbot de Malahide
Rev. C. L. Morell, Dungannon
Lady Murray
Major Nolan, M.P.
W. R. O'Byrne, M.P.
Keyes O'Clery, M.P.
Richard O'Shaughnessy, M.P.
W. H. O'Sullivan, M.P.
C. J. Parnell, M.P.
Richard Power, M.P.
W. A. Redmond, M.P.
J. G. Richardson, Bessbrook
Rev. Dr. Scott, Meth. College, Belfast
Abraham Shackleton, Esq.
J. Sharman Crawford, M.P.
Miss Sharman Crawford
William Shaw, M.P.
Sergeant Sherlock, M.P.
Edward Shiel, M.P.
Rev. Dr. Smyth, M.P.
P. J. Smyth, M.P.
Captain Stacpoole, M.P.
Rev. W. Fleming Stevenson
Rev. James Stevenson
A. M. Sullivan, M.P.
J. H. Swanton, Esq., J.P.
Ernest G. Swifte, Esq.
Right Hon. Col. Taylor, M.P.
Mrs. Taylor
Lady Emmeline Tennant
J. F. Waller, Esq., LL.D.
Dr. M. F. Ward, M.P.
Alfred Webb, Esq.
Benjamin Whitworth, M.P.
W. Whitworth, M.P.
Henry Wigham, Esq.
John R. Wigham, Esq.
Lady Wilde

2

PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISE
FOR
WOMEN RATEPAYERS.

By AUGUSTA WEBSTER.

(Reprinted from the "Examiner" of June 1, 1878.)

THE National Women's Suffrage Society, by announcing the subject of its public meeting at St. George's Hall, under, not the familiar heading of Women's Suffrage, but the restrictive and more explanatory title of "Parliamentary Franchise for Women Ratepayers," has made so judicious an attempt at forestalling criticism by definition that it is a pity it will be quite thrown away. The Society's object manifestly is to place in unmistakable prominence the exact claim they are making for their clients, and to restrain their opponents from confuting their arguments for it by replies against claims which they are not making. But it is not the way of opponents in any matter to allow the other side to limit attack to where it can most easily be met. Taken by itself, on its own merits, a measure which would do no more than allow certain women whom circumstances have placed in a position of independent responsibility to have the vote by right of their possessing the same legal qualifications as their male neighbours, involves no particular principle but that of common-place justice. If there is disturbance of the relation of the sexes, of the Paradaical, or Miltonic, subordination of women, it is in allowing them to hold independent positions at all. The whole mischief is done when once a woman is permitted to take control over herself, to manage her own affairs, to be mistress of a house without a master, to pay rates and taxes with her own money in her own name. The State, and society, have accepted her, Eve without an Adam to obey, as an authorised being, and made a citizen of her; the giving or withholding a vote in the election of a Member of Parliament for her borough can scarcely affect the relation of the sexes after that, though it may very much affect the worth of her citizenship to her and its use to her country.

And in a country where, with not men enough to marry all the women and polygamy still forbidden, the women who are spinsters and widows cannot fairly be condemned for their solitary state, and where living is too expensive for men to take the cost of their female collateral relatives upon them and leave no woman unprovided with a man's house to live in under a man's guardianship, the majority of men would feel, if the case were allowed to go to them fairly, that the class of women whom Mr. Courtney's bill would enfranchise are reasonably entitled to the help towards self-protection of the electoral vote. But the Society which exists for the purpose of getting this bill passed, charm it never so wisely with judicious headings to its cards and posters, will still find the deaf adders argue on their own themes. In a little while one member of Parliament will, in opposition to the bill, defend marriage, another the Bible, another the right of Man to have his dinner cooked by Woman; one will shudder over the feuds the bill's fatal gift would raise between man and wife, another be merry over the influx of lady-bishops to come of it.

It must always be well in taking any step to see what is the next step to which it naturally leads, and what again the next. But this form of wisdom may be pushed too far. Unless the subsequent steps are inevitable if the first be taken, we need not refuse to move at all because we do not want to go further than a certain point, or because, from where we stand, it is not possible to see round the corner, and we might not like the road beyond it. In our own small daily affairs we should never get any good done if we never dared make a useful change lest some other change we think not useful should afterwards seem to somebody its logical, though by no means its compulsory or necessary, sequence. We make the change so far as it is to our purpose, and we stop short of the point where we think it would begin to work amiss. English liberties, as we all know, have been established and legislated for in the same piecemeal but practical fashion, and there seems no earthly reason why the question of extending the franchise to a special class of women whom our laws and customs recognise as qualified citizens in all other respects should be treated as if the desire for it could pledge its supporters, or why its success could pledge the country, to even the smallest advance beyond it in the same direction—let alone to a seven-leagued-boot rush towards putting the men and the women in each others' places and governing England by the laws of the Amazons.

The women for whom enfranchisement is being asked have a definite and, all fair reasoners will admit, reasonable claim. It

is a generally admitted principle that taxation and representation should go together, that those who put the money in the national purse should all alike have so much share in controlling the spending of it as comes of a voice in choosing the national representatives in Parliament. But these many women—about a seventh of the number of the present male voters, it is calculated—are, as householders and ratepayers, sharing their full burden of taxation with the male voters, and are politically helpless. Their case is manifestly a strong one. They have a right, and the country has a right, to require that it shall have due consideration. It is only proper that all objections there may genuinely seem to be against granting them the political privilege of their responsibilities should be brought forward and fully urged, and that, if on careful examination it should seem that this act of impartiality to them could be injurious to the commonwealth, it should continue to be withheld. But it is not fair to drown discussion of their claim in denunciations of revolutions in the airy future with which it has nothing to do; in arguments founded on the duty of the wife's submission to the husband—the women in question being husbandless; in combating a principle of the parity of the sexes in all points which the bill not only does not seek to establish, but which it does not even insinuate. Nor is it fulfilling the duty of honest discussion to meet such a claim by assertions of the superiority of married women over single and of the reasons for believing that the wife's mental fitness to vote would be no less, or would be greater, than that of the spinster and the widow. Married women might, or might not, make better voters than the others, but this is not a question of a fancy franchise to be created on competitive examination principles, but of a claim to the existing franchise in virtue of the possession of the qualifications now established by law. It is no just answer to say "You are women under your own control, recognised by the law as in the position of men, and you are householders and ratepayers and so have men's qualifications for the vote; but your betters, being wives, are not in this position and have not these qualifications: therefore you ought not to have the vote."

It is quite true that the granting the women in question the vote, and so removing from them all legal stamp of inferiority on the ground of sex, must have effects reaching further than to themselves individually only, and no discussion on the subject would be complete which ignored this fact. We should not find so many married women prominent as workers in the Women's Suffrage Society if it were not generally felt among them that to remove the stamp of inferiority from the women on

whom it is inflicted on the ground of sex alone, is to remove it from all women, and that the result must be favourable to the general position of women altogether. The disqualification of only married women would be of course felt in its true light, that is as one not of sex but circumstances only—no worse a stigma than is put upon a son living in his father's house on his father's income—and it would bring with it none of that sense of humiliation with which so many women now look upon the position given to women in a nation in which every man and no woman (Queens excepted, but then they are rare) is held to be capable of feeling an interest in the commonwealth. The disqualification of sex alone which presses on independent women is unquestionably a marked disparagement of womanhood, and it is not unnatural to suppose that its removal would gradually and indirectly have its effect on the general conception of the moral and mental position of women, and therefore on the position itself. If evil consequences can be apprehended from such a result, our legislators and those who seek to influence them ought to look into that part of the matter narrowly. No objection based on any result genuinely deducible from the proposed measure can be irrelevant or unfair. But to discuss, apropos of a Bill for not withholding votes from husbandless females who have achieved the masculine distinction of paying rates and taxes, the theory of marriage, Adam and Eve, ministering angels, Tennyson's Princess, physiology, psychology, and things in general, is—may be honest.

Clever Alice went down to Hans in the beer cellar, and, while the beer ran, noticed a hatchet in what seemed to her a threatening place. Clever Alice at once perceived that, when she was married to Hans and had had a son and the son was grown up and just going to be married, the son might go into the cellar to draw beer for his betrothed, and the hatchet would tumble down on him and chop off his head. Clever Alice explained the danger, Hans listened and lamented, and the beer ran away unnoticed and left the barrel empty. Clever Alice was honest.

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ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

OF THE

National Society for Women's Suffrage.

Presented to the General Meeting, July 1st, 1878.

—•••—

YOUR Committee, in submitting to you the Report of the work done during the past session, desire to express their regret that, owing to ill-health and consequent absence from England, Mr. Jacob Bright felt it necessary to resign the conduct of the Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women. During the winter, therefore, negotiations were opened with Mr. Leonard Courtney, M.P., and in November last delegates from the various Women Suffrage Societies waited on him for the purpose of inviting him to take charge of the Bill, and your Committee have pleasure in informing you that he was good enough to accede to their request. Previously, however, your Committee had ascertained, by means of a private conference held at the Westminster Palace Hotel, at which Mr. Hibbert, M.P. presided, the opinion of the most influential supporters of the movement in Parliament as to the advisability of bringing the measure before the House of Commons this session. As the majority of those present were in favour of the re-introduc-

tion of the Bill, your Committee felt no hesitation in requesting Mr. Courtney to take the necessary steps to secure an early day for the second reading.

It is with a feeling of great satisfaction that your Committee record the amalgamation of the two Societies for Women's Suffrage previously organized in London—an amalgamation which they regard as a means of strengthening and advancing the cause which they have so much at heart.

Your Committee have to record with the most profound regret the deaths of Mr. Sharman Crawford, M.P., Sir Francis Goldsmid, M.P., and Mr. Russell Gurney, M.P. These three gentlemen have been for many years warm supporters of all questions that have affected the condition or interests of women, and to each may be given the title, which, it is said, Mr. Russell Gurney was proud to bear, "the Friend of Women." Your Committee have also to deplore the loss of Mr. Edward Spender, on whose sympathy and ready assistance they could always rely, and whose good work for the cause of women is too well known to require recapitulation here.

The work organized by your Committee during the past session is as follows:—Public Meetings both in London and the provinces; Lectures delivered by members of this Society, and other ladies and gentlemen; Drawing-room meetings; and *At Homes* held in the office for the purpose of discussing, with those interested, the best means of forwarding the movement.

The Public Meetings held in London have been at the Camberwell Hall, Mr. William Rabbits (chairman); Belmont Hall, Clapham, Mr. W. Martin Smith (chairman); Shoreditch Town Hall, Sir Charles Reed, of the London School Board (chairman); and at St. George's Hall, Mr. Hibbert, M.P. (chairman). The country Meetings were held at Oxford, Prof. Thorold Rogers (chairman); Leicester, Mr. Fred. Mott (chairman); High Wycombe, Mr. John Wyeth (chairman); and Reading, Mr. Silver, Mayor (chairman).

The Lectures were delivered at the Collier Memorial School, Peckham; the Tower Hamlets Conservative Club; the Westminster Democratic Club; the Progressive Club, Notting Hill; at the rooms of the Women's Provident League; the Lecture Hall, Borough Road; the South London Secular Club; at the Clayton Memorial School, and at the College for Working Men and Women.

Your Committee wish to take this opportunity of thanking Miss Blackburn, Mrs. T. de la Cour Carroll, and Mrs. Glover; Mrs. Harrison, Mrs. Macdonell, and Mrs. Imray of Beckenham; Mrs. Hale of Eton College, the Misses Davenport Hill, Mrs. Newton of Lee, and Mrs. Thomas Taylor, who have kindly held meetings in their drawing-rooms for the purpose of discussing the question of Women's Suffrage. Your Committee earnestly hope that in the ensuing session further meetings of this kind may be organized, as they consider them the most valuable means of educating public opinion on the subject.

The Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women was ordered to be read a first time on the 18th January, and the second reading was fixed for Wednesday, June 19th. Notice of opposition was again this year, as in 1877, given by Mr. Hanbury, now M.P. for North Staffordshire. On the day appointed, Mr. Courtney, in a very able speech, moved the second reading of the Bill, to which Mr. Hanbury moved as an amendment that it be read that day three months. Mr. George Palmer, the new Liberal M.P. for Reading, in his maiden speech, seconded Mr. Courtney's motion, and was followed on the same side by Mr. Serjeant Sherlock, Mr. Blennerhassett, Mr. Gorst, Mr. Hibbert, and Sir Henry Jackson. The opponents were Mr. Smollett, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Beresford-Hope, Mr. Greene, Mr. Assheton, and Mr. Newdegate. The debate was conducted in a more courteous manner this year than last, and was one of the most earnest discussions which has yet taken place in support of the measure. At 5.30 a division was taken, and the following result was announced:

For the Bill	140
Against	219
	<hr/>
Majority	79

But this result has been since officially corrected, and it appears that 220 voted against the Bill, thus making the adverse majority 80.

The last division taken was after the debate of 1876, when the votes were 152 for and 239 against. The following table shows the comparative numbers:

1876.

FOR THE BILL.				AGAINST THE BILL.			
	Lib.	Con.	Total.		Lib.	Con.	Total.
Votes ...	90	62	152	Votes ...	86	153	239
Tellers ...	1	1	2	Tellers ...	1	1	2
Pairs ...	3	4	7	Pairs ...	1	6	7
Totals	94	67	161	Totals	88	160	248

1878.

Votes ...	103	37	140	Votes ...	73	147	220
Tellers ...	1	1	2	Tellers ...	1	1	2
Pairs ...	5	8	13	Pairs ...	2	11	13
Totals	109	46	155	Totals	76	159	235

Of the 155 members who thus recorded their support of the Bill this year, 23 were Scotch, 26 Irish, and 106 English and Welsh. Of those opposed to it, 19 were from Scotland, 29 from Ireland, and 187 from England and Wales.

The number of Petitions presented in favour of the Bill this session has been 710, containing 172,711 signatures. Of these 223, with 76,681 signatures, have been obtained through the efforts of your Committee,* who desire to point out the important character of some of these Petitions. Those namely, from the Town Councils and Corporations of Aberdeen, Crewe, Dewsbury, Dumfries, Edinburgh, Falmouth, Forfar, Kendal, Kidderminster, Kirkcaldy, Leeds, Middlesboro', Neath, Northampton, Paisley, Peebles, Scarborough, Stockton - on - Tees, Stromness, Sunderland, and Walsall; twenty-seven separate Petitions from Women Householdors from various parts of the Kingdom, most of which were numerously signed, and among which may be noticed the names of Mrs. Grote, Miss Florence Nightingale, Miss Helen Taylor, Miss Buss, Mrs. William Grey, the Countess of Buchan, and the Hon. Mrs. Liddell; a Petition from Clergymen of the Church of England, and another signed by 64 Masters, Professors, Fellows and Tutors of Cambridge. Among

* A larger number of signatures were sent in, but have not been reported in the Parliamentary papers; and the Committee desire to call the attention of their friends to the new Parliamentary rule which came into force in the middle of the session, and which renders invalid every signature that is unaccompanied by the full address of the petitioner.

the Edinburgh Petitions were the following:—From Ministers of various Denominations; from 216 heads of Banking and Mercantile Firms; from 43 Physicians, Surgeons and Medical Practitioners; from 105 Members of the Faculty of Advocates and Writers to the Signet; and from 185 Rectors, Headmasters, Schoolmasters, and Teachers.

The Declaration from Women Householdors which was inaugurated last year by your Committee, and which is intended to form a record of a permanent kind of the demand of women to exercise the parliamentary franchise, has since received many valuable signatures of women, whose names are well known in the world of art, science, and literature.

It is with satisfaction that your Committee report that many interesting and important contributions have been made to the library during the past year; and that the object for which it was established, viz., to serve for reference to members of the Society, has been attained. Your Committee gladly avail themselves of this opportunity to thank those friends who have kindly assisted them in carrying out this project by presentations of books and pamphlets.

In closing their Report your Committee desire to express their satisfaction with the progress which the enfranchisement of women is now making in every class of society. Although the division list on the Second Reading of the Bill was on neither side so large as in previous years, yet there is reason to believe that the measure has not lost ground in the House of Commons, while there is ample evidence to show that the measure has gained considerably in the country. There never was a time when signatures to Petitions were more easily obtained, or when the workers of the Society met with so cordial a reception from the public. In order that this satisfactory progress may be continued your Committee earnestly appeal to all who are interested in the object of this Society to assist to the best of their power in carrying on the work. They have already set forth the various means which they have adopted for advancing the movement, and they would welcome suggestions of new methods and increased co-operation in the labours of the next year.

8. The above Rules shall not be altered except at a General Meeting, after fourteen days' notice of the proposed alteration, given to the Executive Committee.

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SOME OF THE FACTS

OF THE

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE QUESTION.

BY

HELEN BLACKBURN.

“Doth the desire for freedom rivet bonds
Here, where thy boast is freedom?” . . .

THE HON. MRS. OCTAVIUS KNOX.

Published by the
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64, BERNERS STREET, LONDON. W.

1878.

TO
THE ELECTORS OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND,

With whom it rests to return a House of Commons
in harmony with the needs of the time.

LONDON:
WOMEN'S PRINTING SOCIETY, LIMITED, 21b, GREAT COLLEGE STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.

SOME OF THE FACTS
OF THE
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE QUESTION.

As the constitutional law of Great Britain formerly stood women were not incapacitated, by reason of sex, from voting in Parliamentary elections. As that law now stands women are rendered incapable of exercising the franchise, and strange to tell, their exclusion from this most important right and duty of citizenship is due to this present century. Restriction of political liberty is the last result which might have been anticipated from an English Reform Bill, especially in a century when constitutional principles of Government are extending with unprecedented rapidity. Yet the great Reform Bill of 1832 deliberately and for the first time in our history, excluded women from the general extension of political rights by using the term "Male Persons" in all the new franchises created by that Act instead of people. The term "people" was, however, still retained in such of the old franchises as were untouched by the new legislation and women were not deliberately excluded from these older franchises until the decision of the Court of Common Pleas in 1868. Up to that time they might hope to break through the long growth of custom which hindered their exercise of the right and to record their votes quietly in company with all other duly qualified persons. Since that date this has become impossible without an enabling statute such as the Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women,

In earlier and ruder ages when arms occupied the most prominent part of a man's existence, the exercise of electoral rights would seem to have been treated as a comparatively domestic concern, one which could be attended to by the non-combatant portions of adult society as well as by the combatant. But times have greatly changed since the days when our forefathers admitted ladies of rank and abbesses to an equal place in their Witangemotes and on this point the change has been against, and not in accordance with the progressive growth of liberal institutions.

When Henry III. and Edward I. summoned abbesses to appear in Parliament and Edward III. commanded peeresses to appear by proxy the idea of disqualification by reason of sex cannot have entered the Common law of the land. No words occur in the early statutes regulating the elections of Knights to Parliament which can be construed as excluding women. The Knights of all counties (Henry VI. x. c. II.) are to be chosen by the *people** dwelling in the same, who have freeholds to the value of 40s. a year. "There are extant," says Mr. Chisholm Anstey,† "many Parliamentary returns for counties and boroughs from the earliest times which were made by female electors and yet were received. Some of these are enumerated in Prynne's collection of Parliamentary writs, some of later date are mentioned in the Commons Journals themselves, others are to be found in the repositories of the learned or the curious."

Although women cannot be shewn to have been placed under any legal incapacity they fell under an incapacity almost as decided in its effects—that of custom. When home politics acquired a more absorbing interest these became more jealously guarded by men and although the right to vote remained unaffected, the inconsistency of allowing the civil law to treat women as subordinated to men while constitutional law left them equally independent acted insensibly on ordinary

* "Gentz demeurant et reseantz en icelles, dont chescun ait frank tenement" etc. etc.

† Notes on the Representation of the People's Act by Thos. Chisholm Anstey. The portions of this work which relate to the franchise for women may be found re-published in the "Women's Suffrage Journal," September, 1877.

practice and told detrimentally on the general conception of their status. Persons treated by the policy of the law in the private relations of life as perpetual minors could not be consistently regarded as fit to share any exercise of sovereign power; thus that which was "contrary to the policy of the law" easily came to be esteemed as also "contrary to decency." The exercise of the franchise by women became so rare as to pass at last out of the current of ordinary ideas and Lord Coke's hasty inclusion of all women amongst non-electors was quietly acquiesced in though, as has been shewn by Mr. Chisholm Anstey in a passage given below, the facts of his own time refuted the assertion.*

* "He (Lord Coke), quotes no record. He contradicts without comment records of the highest authority. But this is what he does say: "And in many cases multitudes are bound by Acts of Parliament which are not parties to the elections of knights, citizens, and burgesses; as all they that have no freehold, or have freehold in ancient demesne, and all women having freehold or no freehold, and men within the age of one-and-twenty years, etc." The "etc." is Lord Coke's. He then returns to the question of the clergy and their proctors, and makes no further reference to those Parliamentary franchises. This is, however, the whole and sole authority, on which those who receive the enumerated disqualifications always rely when they are put to show the law and practice of English elections from the reign of Henry III. to that of Lord Coke's Sovereign Lady Elizabeth.

3. Now first, as to the alleged disability of sex, according to the law and practice of Coke's own time. In the reign of that very queen (and it is impossible to conceive the great Parliament man to have been ignorant of the fact, although it suited his purpose to pass it by), there had happened several elections to Parliament for a borough (the more than once famous borough of Aylesbury), where the franchise was then claimed and exercised by a simple family of "inhabitants," and long continued to be so claimed and exercised. Now at one of those elections, the "sole elector being a minor," his mother, *jure representationis*, had actually voted in his stead—elected the two burgesses—signed their indenture—and as returning officer made the following return, which was upheld as good:—

"To all Christian people to whom this present writing shall come, I, Dame Dorothy Packington, widow, late wife of Sir John Packington, knight, lord, and owner of the town of Aylesbury, sendeth greeting: know ye *me*, the said Dame Dorothy Packington, to have *chosen, named, and appointed* my trusty and well-beloved Thomas Lichfield and John Burden, Esquires, to be *my burgesses*, of *my said town of Aylesbury*. And whatsoever the said Thomas and George, burgesses, shall do in the service of the queen's highness in that present Parliament, to be holden at Westminster, the 8th day of May next ensuing the date hereof, I, the same Dame Dorothy Packington, do ratify and approve to be my own act, *as fully and wholly as if I were or might be present there*. In witness," etc.—On some supposed Constitutional Restraints upon the Parliamentary Franchise, by Mr. Chisholm Anstey. *For passages relating to the Franchise for Women, see "Women's Suffrage Journal" for August, 1877.*

Quoting Lord Coke, Mr. Serjeant Heywood writes in 1790, "and so the law is *understood* to be at the present day," while Mr. Hallam remarks, "women have generally been supposed capable of no political right but that of reigning." Nevertheless this supposed incapacity rested, not on legislative enactment, but on custom, the first exclusion by statute law dating, as has been already said, from the Reform Bill of 1832.

The force of custom might encourage constitutional law to tarnish its own principles and approximate its practice to the policy of subordination which had been inherited as regards civil matters from an earlier stage of civilization, but custom however old and time-honoured, cannot withstand the tendency which draws political and social interests into closer relations. How was it possible that an agitation like that preceding the Reform Bill should sweep over the country and impart none of the excitement of the time to mothers, sisters and daughters, especially when the cry for reform was swelled by the cry for bread? It was the Corn Law of 1815 that first stirred Englishwomen into political combination, that made the women of the manufacturing centres form "sister associations" to co-operate with the men. Reform came, heedless enough of them and of their part in the excitement; but the Corn Law still remained, bread was still kept back from their children's mouths, work from their looms, by that Parliament-made scarcity. Did men struggling for the Anti-Corn Law League tell women politics were not for them?—nay rather, they called on them to aid. "This is emphatically a mother's question, it is a mother's duty to take it up" writes the Anti-Corn Law Circular and again and again refers to the help women gave. Then women learned to petition, a practice which hitherto had been generally confined to men, then women learned to attend public meetings, to watch closely the proceedings of debates and of elections. When the Corn Law was abolished the country returned to its usual quiet but the lesson learned could never be forgotten, politics had touched the inmost recesses of home, politics therefore had touched the women in the home and they knew now that the interests within and

the interests without were closely interwoven together as they had never known it before. They had learned something of the power for good of combined effort and association. These were lessons which once learned both by women as regarded themselves, and by men as regarded women could not be forgotten but taught many to see that the time was fast approaching when, instead of discouraging the electoral rights of women, it was becoming socially imperative to encourage them. That apart from the injustice of creating an artificial distinction between persons equally fulfilling the test which should qualify for electoral power, such a distinction was discordant both with the much-prized principle that taxation should be accompanied by representation and with the tendency of modern times. That it was injuring society to teach women to cultivate an apathetic attitude of mind towards public affairs when so many interests of vital importance to every hearth were subjects of public policy. The course of women's education was extending beyond the narrow range within which a non-manufacturing, non-locomotive manner of life had held it for the majority of middle-class women, but instead of deepening that course was becoming dissipated on superficialities until it was worthless. The solid industrial occupations of a self-contained household of a generation or two ago which had become absorbed by large manufactories, instead of being replaced by solid intellectual occupations, were giving way to a pursuit of accomplishments which scarcely merited even so respectable a description as a dilettante pursuit, so unsystematic was the curriculum of a girl's education, bearing the same relation to true education that a patchwork of chance fragments does to a co-ordinated design. For was not the merest outer garnish good enough for those whom human law—at any rate—pronounced not good enough to be treated as helps meet (intellectually) for men? "The constitution of States and Society, forms of Government, state of ancient nations, sources of wealth, many natural phenomena, the whole range of mathematical truths are generally presumed beyond her ken"—writes one of her Majesty's Commissioners for the Inspection of Schools in 1868. "In a boy's school these points, whether

taught or not, are treated as worth knowing, with a girl" continues the Commissioner, "their importance is not even recognised, and the influence of school upon her mind is as far as it goes to discourage her from attempting to understand them:" and again, "if the reproach be just that women do not reason accurately and their knowledge even when they possess it, is deficient in organic unity and coherence and in depth, there is no need to look for any recondite explanation of the fact. The state of the schools in which they are educated sufficiently explains it." Well, might Mr. John Stuart Mill say, in his speech in the House of Commons on May 12th, 1867, "The time is now come when unless women are raised to the level of men, men will be pulled down to theirs. The women of a man's family are either a stimulus and a support to his highest aspirations, or a drag upon them. You may keep them ignorant of politics, but you cannot prevent them concerning themselves with the least respectable part of politics—its personalities: if they do not understand and cannot enter into the man's feelings of public duty, they do care about his personal interests, and that is the scale into which their weight will certainly be thrown."

Convictions like these work silently for a while, appearing in scattered pages of the press or the literature of the day, in occasional lectures and conversations, and then take shape at last in some enduring form. So it was with the Women's Suffrage question, which took coherent, organised shape with the approach of the Reform Bill of 1867. A preliminary Committee was formed in London in 1866 and that year the first petition with the signatures of 1500 women was presented by Mr. John Stuart Mill. The Manchester Committee was formed in January 1867, followed by the Edinburgh Committee later in the same year.

The Representation of the People's Bill introduced before the House of Commons that year, gave the required opportunity of bringing the subject prominently before the attention of the country. Instead of the phrase "Male Persons," this Reform Bill of 1867 used the term *man* throughout all its provisions. By Lord

Romilly's Interpretation Act passed in 1850 it had been enacted that in all future statutes words importing the masculine gender should include females unless the contrary were provided. The contrary was not provided in the Bill brought forward, it became a matter of some uncertainty whether this new Act was or was not framed with the intention of including women in its operations, and on the 25th March Mr. Denman raised the question in the House, whether it was intended by the use of the word *man* to come within the operation of Lord Romilly's Act and include women. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his reply that he believed the contrary had been provided in this case. This however was an error, the contrary was not provided and to place the question beyond all doubt, Mr. Mill, on the 12th May, moved his amendment which was supported by a petition signed by 13,000 persons "to leave out the word man and insert person." That amendment was rejected by 196 votes against 73. The Committees for women's suffrage in London, Manchester and Edinburgh were re-organized on a permanent basis. And thus was started an agitation which has continued to increase steadily from that time—an agitation about which Mr. Mill said, when writing to a lady eminent in philanthropy who expressed some doubts to him whether the time had come for agitating—"there are several reasons which concur to make me think it has. In the first place, to agitate for a change in the law is not to obtain it, and therefore even if any of us think that women are not yet prepared to exercise the suffrage, that will still not be a reason against agitating for it, because much smaller changes than this can never be obtained until after the agitation for them has lasted some time, and the agitation itself will be the most effectual means of preparing people for the change whenever it comes. The great change now taking place in the right of voting among men is, however, the main reason for bringing forward this question at this particular time. The subject of the right of voting is under discussion, and people's minds are comparatively open to receiving new ideas on the subject. If it is true that women ought to vote, it is wrong to lose the present opportunity of spreading this truth as far and wide as possible. By doing so, we

are only sowing seed, to bear fruit in due time if it is good seed suited to the soil and climate." In another part of the same letter Mr. Mill wrote, "the right of voting is in my opinion not only a power to be coveted (although it is a legitimate power which may be honestly coveted by an honourable ambition) but it is still more essentially an obligation to be dutifully fulfilled. You will see from this that I cannot agree in the wish you express that the right should rather be *given* to woman by those who deprive her of it, than from her own demand. Because even if any sentiment of generosity should make one feel that it is a more beautiful thing to receive a legitimate power unasked than asked, there can be no generosity and nothing noble or beautiful in waiting to have a duty thrust upon one, instead of asking to be allowed to take it upon oneself for the good of everybody concerned." These words written in Dec. 1867, just eleven years ago—express the feelings which animated the leaders in this movement; the Committees in London, Manchester and Edinburgh, formed themselves into one National Society, while each maintaining a separate organization; others followed quickly in Bristol and Birmingham and their first efforts were directed to finding whether it might not be even then possible for women to vote, since the Representation of the People's Act of 1867 had been passed without any change in its phraseology.

That same autumn, a lady—Miss Lily Maxwell—recorded her vote in favour of Mr. Jacob Bright's election for Manchester, it is stated in the First Report of the Manchester Society for women's suffrage that "the circumstance of this vote having been recorded, excited a great amount of public attention not only all over the kingdom but on the Continent of Europe and in America. It removed women's suffrage from the region of theoretical possibilities to that of actual occurrences, and therefore gave a powerful impetus to the movement." The *Times* (Nov. 29th, 1867) in a leading article on the circumstance, went so far as to say that women constitute in every sense more than half the British nation, "nevertheless in violation of every principle of numerical and logical proportion they have no votes in the election of the national representation," but concluded, "we are

afraid a legal scrutiny would deprive the sex of this momentary triumph and prove that we have been very absurd in writing a serious article on the subject." Possibly, if a legal scrutiny had been ordered, the vote would not have been allowed, for the qualification under which Miss Lily Maxwell voted was one constituted by the Act of 1832. But so far as the fear of absurdity was concerned it doubtless had short duration, for during the weeks preceding the general election of December 1868, the *Times* records day after day, how women in large numbers and in many places entered their names on the electoral register, until on Nov. 3rd, commenting on the Second Annual Report of the Manchester Society, it wrote "The present condition of the woman suffrage question is decidedly an odd one. It is not often that the glorious uncertainty of the law is so strikingly illustrated as it has been by the decisions of the revising barristers, as to whether a woman under certain assumed conditions may or may not vote for a Member of Parliament According to one view, the view of the majority, she may vote if her name is on the electoral register and is not objected to, the revising barrister himself remaining neutral; according to another, the barrister ought himself, if necessary, to start the objection; according to a third, the view taken in four Courts, her name ought to remain on the electoral roll even although objected to. However this glorious uncertainty is soon to cease." Pending the time when the question should come before the Court of Common Pleas and guided by the decision of the South West Lancashire Revision Court, which had held the women's votes as good, the liberal candidate for Chester issued his electoral address to the women as well as to the men inhabiting the constituency. On the 6th November, the Court of Common Pleas heard the various cases for appeal, taking first an appeal from Manchester where 5,750 women had placed their names on the register. This case *Charlton v. Ling* would govern all other cases before the Court which related to women's claims.

Mr. (now Lord) Coleridge, Q.C., argued on behalf of the appellants; that in former times in all cases where men were

entitled to vote, women were also; that women had, in point of fact exercised that right and no modern legislation had taken it away, although there might be cogent evidence to shew that the general understanding had been that no such right existed. Judgment was given on the 9th, when it was maintained by Lord Justice Bovill that the instances named had comparatively little weight as opposed to the usage of several centuries, and what had commonly been assented to as the law raised a strong presumption of what the law was. Mr. Justice Willes concurred, and trusted that the unanimous decision of the judges in Scotland, as well as in England "would for ever lay the ghost of a doubt which ought never to have been raised." But as the *Times* remarked, "there was not much of the spirit of prophecy in this prediction."

The quarter to which prophecy should look was more safely indicated by the result of the Bill introduced by Mr. Hibbert in 1869 to assimilate the Municipal and Parliamentary franchise: amendments extending the provisions of the Bill to women were proposed by Mr. Jacob Bright and Sir Charles Dilke. Mr. Hibbert readily consented to admit the amendments and they became law without opposition. This proved a great encouragement to the promoters of the Women's Suffrage movement and Mr. Mill not having regained his seat, Mr. Jacob Bright in 1870 introduced the Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women, supported by Sir Charles Dilke and Mr. Eastwick. That Bill passed a second reading on May 4th, by 124 votes to 91, but in Committee the opponents of the measure, who had not troubled themselves to attend the second reading, rallied in great force and the Bill was thrown out by a large majority. However that same session of 1870 conceded another great step in women's political rights through the Elementary Education Act, framed with the express intention of admitting them to vote in elections for the Board and to sit themselves as members. Hence with some disappointment this session brought also a great encouragement. The Bill was re-introduced at each succeeding session by Mr. Jacob Bright, supported by Mr. Russell Gurney, Mr. Stansfeld and

Sir Robert Anstruther, and during the interval when Mr. Jacob Bright was not sitting in the House, by Mr. Forsyth, Conservative member for Marylebone. In the session of the present year, (1878) Mr. Jacob Bright desiring to withdraw from the main burden of the conflict, the Bill was accepted, at the unanimous desire of all concerned, by the Liberal member for Liskeard, Mr. Leonard Courtney, under whose leadership it passed through a division calculated to encourage its supporters, for it shewed that though death has lately thinned their ranks of many of their staunchest friends, new friends have not failed to replace them, in more than equal number. Subjoined are the words of the Bill, * which will have the effect of extending the system of interpretation provided by Lord Romilly's Act, to all Acts, relating to the Parliamentary franchise, to which, justly or unjustly, the decision of the Court of Common Pleas has ruled that interpretation shall not apply.

* TEXT OF THE WOMEN'S DISABILITIES REMOVAL BILL.

"1. That in all Acts relating to the qualification and registration of voters or persons entitled or claiming to be registered and to vote in the Election of Members of Parliament, wherever words occur which import the masculine gender, the same shall be held to include females, for all purposes connected with and having reference to the right to be registered as voters, and to vote in such election, any law or usage to the contrary notwithstanding."

COMMENTS ON THE OPPOSITION

TO

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

BY

HELEN BLACKBURN.

Published by the
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COMMENTS ON THE OPPOSITION TO WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

The inconsistency between the two theories which have co-existed in our jurisprudence, the Common Law treating women as without independent will, while Constitutional Law left them until 1832 (*de jure*) capable of the sovereign power of voting, has complicated the question of the admission of women to the suffrage, in itself a purely constitutional claim, with numberless points relating to domestic legislation and laws affecting special classes of persons, as in the various relations of wife, mother and independent earner, and this to such an extent that we frequently hear it said that if the laws which press heavily on women were repealed the claim to the suffrage would have no justification. But this is to regard the subject from a side-issue. The real question lies much deeper. For women as for men "Freedom is a noble thing," and though noble lives may be led without, the standard of a nation's life must be higher where freedom is within reach of all. Those who are excluded from the share in sovereign power which the right to the franchise bestows are amongst the governed but not amongst the governing and no one can deny that for any considerable number of the governed to find themselves absolutely excluded from all chance and possibility of becoming one of the governing, is utterly inconsistent with all theories of political liberty. "It was the theory and it had been the practice in all times to adapt the representation to the state of the country" said Mr. Pitt in his speech on Reform in 1785. "Now and in all future time to adapt the representation to the state of the country, was the idea of reform which he entertained."

The supporters of the Bill to remove the Electoral disabilities of women believe that the time has come when this reform is adapted to the state of the country and will increase that conformity of sentiment between the representatives and the nation at large which the same great statesman calls "the essence of a proper representative assembly."

Even the most determined opponents of women's suffrage will probably allow that women form part of the nation at large. It is for them to show what there is in the state of the country inconsistent with a reform which will embrace a considerable

fraction of law-abiding persons already acknowledged as citizens in respect to the duties they owe to local governments and state revenues, but not acknowledged as citizens in respect to the vital point of imperial representation. Or, what comes to the same thing; it is for our opponents to show what there is in the pursuits of women which unfits them for a duty laid theoretically on all except such as are "in so mean a situation that they are esteemed to have no will of their own."* The argument that elections are too tumultuous has been nullified since the ballot has made it easier to vote at an election than to attend her Majesty's drawing room, as school board elections have practically proved. The plea of intellectual inferiority has been abandoned, if not from a belief in absolute intellectual equality, at any rate from comparison of the average standard and the indignity of preferring to respectable women such drunken and illiterate voters as are at present occasionally channels of sovereign power. Again the mere superficial ridicule which buzzes about all new ideas, has almost subsided when eleven years of constant endeavour have worn off the novelty of the claim. Its opponents are at least conscious that they are called on to face the question on deep and serious grounds.

Here are numerous persons claiming an important national privilege with cogent arguments of logic, justice, expediency. Those who oppose the claim are bound to shew that it is illogical, unjust or inexpedient. The merely logical aspect of the question is little regarded by adverse thinkers, as one determined opponent, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, said so long ago as 1874, "the argument that the power of voting ought to go with a certain amount of purely mental cultivation or with a certain amount of contribution to the public revenue, covers the case of women, *unless it be properly guarded.*" Conscious that they have not themselves unjust intentions towards women many men fail to conceive injustice that may nevertheless result from their legislative action, and the sense of injustice which many women feel strongly, is to them incomprehensible, consequently the opposition mainly guards itself

* Blackstone's Commentaries I. p. 172, 15th edition.

on the presumption of inexpediency. Thus the contest is concentrated on the four points with which the question of expediency is alternately met, and which constitute 1st, an assertion; 2nd, a prophecy; 3rd, a sentiment; 4th, a suspicion.

First then, we are met by the *assertion* that law is based on physical force and therefore political power must rest with those who have physical power. Legislation must be masculine, lest at any time women should outvote men and an insurrection ensue when physical force would inevitably decide the conflict. This is the most serious difficulty that has been urged because it touches on the most fundamental point in legislation, the power of sanction. If the political equality of women means the weakening of order, women will be the last to desire it, they would rather continue to deserve the epithet bestowed by our Saxon forefathers of "Peaceweavers," than earn that of weavers of Chaos. But what ground has ever been shewn for the belief that days of law and order are less amenable to the force of peaceful influences than days of wars and turbulence?

Brute force is undoubtedly the substratum of society, for if we analyse civilization we come in the ultimate residuum to pure physical force. Strip off one by one the motives and the restraints with which civilization has surrounded human life and you find yourself at last reduced to the will of the strongest. In the absence of law the fist rules, but as law increases in power, that is to say as law creates additional motives to orderly self-controlled action on the part of men, the rule of the fist loses its force and each new principle of law is another layer intervening between us and the rude stage of no-law.

It is easy to peel the rind off so lowly organized a growth as a mushroom, but try to strip the layers of bark off one so highly developed as a wide-branching oak tree and leave its woody fibres bared everywhere to the action of the elements, and it is a hard task. Similarly, every new motive, every new interest enveloping our complex civilization adds an additional hindrance in the way of returning to the ultimate

residuum. It may well be true that the admission of women to political power is inconsistent with a society which depends on brute force for its maintenance, for such a society will simply fail to maintain itself at all, the societies which have maintained themselves are those which have travelled away from dependence on brute force. In the rudest forms of social life the will of the strong man dominates, overawes the mass into a chaotic sort of obedience, rough and uncouth in its forms and customs, step by step experience develops laws which tone down these customs and custom first, then law, interposes an ever broadening barrier between the brute force in the community and the motives impelling action. Civilization develops gradually accumulating interests, religion impresses nobler motives, and these the legislator inweaves into the daily national existence until they become a concrete part of it, sending the appeal to brute force further and further into the back-ground. Those who believe that this process has been at work for ages must believe that it is still at work and that when men say the appeal to brute force makes it unreasonable to give women political powers, they have given the strongest possible motive in favour of giving them a share of such power, for by so doing they will be adding another influence to be overcome before the ultimate residuum, can be reached, another element to be disintegrated before we get ourselves resolved back to anarchy. We can say nothing against the possibility of such a dissolution, the history of the earth shews times of retrogression as well as of progression, but those times of retrogression come when respect for law is relaxed and faith in brute force encouraged.

There was a time, as geologists teach us, when England was a mass of ice and glacier, and there may again come a time when ice fields will cover our land again, but meantime we sow and reap and build and weave confidently above the ice-worn rocks. Let us make our laws no less confidently, for if we know that it is possible for men to fall back to the lower type, we know also that it is in their hands to advance to the higher ideal and bring about a time when

it shall as little enter into the heart of the civilized man to return to the rule of the strongest fist, as to return to the habits of the brute tearing and rending its prey.

To say that those who never fight (until their homes are attacked, their country perishing, and times of crises sink all ordinary duties in the one supreme duty of defence of the hearth) must have no share in legislation is to confess that legislation is a failure and its laws too weak to inspire the reverence which is stronger than arms—and such a confession would contradict all history and all civilization. If law did not obtain superior reverence armies themselves would be impossible, the cohesive discipline of an army is of comparatively early growth in the progress from the state of no-law which is so often misnamed the law of force, yet that discipline is as truly the result of law, as that product of a complex condition of society, the organization of our electoral system.

The *prophecy* which forms our second point of difficulty, though unverified by experience, tells with the force of fact on many minds, declaring that women will practically nullify all their independence of will by delivering themselves over to the guidance of the clergy, so that a woman's vote will mean so much additional power given to the Church. No prophecy can stand the test of verification which is based on a solitary set of facts, and does not consider other modifying facts at work and in this instance, only one side of the case has been regarded. We must not only remember that for ages the Church has been the one organization which has provided women with systematic instruction beyond school days and with systematic work outside their own doors, reaping its reward in corresponding influence over women—but we must also remember that to extend political rights to women is symbolical of wider ranges of study, synonymous with more extended ranges of interests than the Church has ever provided. Hitherto sacerdotalism has flourished most where political liberty has been repressed. Hitherto political liberty has cultivated independent action and encouraged independent thought—and the common humanity of men and women is too deep-seated for any reasonable expectation

that this order of things will be changed. We would beg those who are inclined to put faith in the prophecy of an increased clerical influence, to consider carefully whether they are not helping the evil they fear, by standing in the way of political liberty for women. We would remind them that it is one of the best attributes of human nature to give its chief reverence to those who have been the leaders of our intellectual lives. If statesmen, ignoring intellect in women, have left them to the guidance of the clergy until that guidance has assumed the narrowing tendency inseparable from limited horizons, then the more statesmanlike course would be to offer guidance to new horizons. A restricted mental horizon must promote an unintelligent conservatism: if priests promote such conservatism it is for politicians to counteract the evil and for these prophets of ill to watch, lest they stand in their own light.

The third difficulty which we have to meet is perhaps the most troublesome, because the least solid and tangible, point of attack. *Sentiment* is a shifting sand, and we are never sure where we have it. Sometimes it sternly confines women to their nurseries and store-rooms, ordering them to abandon all the solid studies which would enable them to connect the duties of these departments with the general facts of life. Sometimes it admits that it is right and good that women should earn money for their subsistence—when misfortune has depressed them—but is wroth if they begin, before misfortune comes, to follow the independent modes of life which ensue on power of self-support, nay which are essential to that power and for lack of which efforts begun too late fall inefficient. Our sentimental opponents will often grant that women should have the responsibility of property, while they steadily decry the correlative privilege. Occasionally they will advise women to study the newspaper, but with the warning not to take any deep interest in the politics they find there. Finally, sentiment will frequently take pains to encourage culture up to a certain point—the point which just falls short of making practical use of culture: rarely opposes the attentive and laborious study of the latest fashion books or even attendance at race-

courses and hunting-fields, but ever and always reprehends such study as might help intelligent discrimination on the questions brought forward at an election: and should they desire to approach the polling-booth, sets up a lamentation over the grace which is departing and the sweetness which shall fill our homes no more.

We admit that women who value their dignity as citizens will be as little satisfied to be described as "things of music and flowers" as Englishmen would be to hear themselves described as things of horses and dogs. They hold such descriptions to be as adequate as if one were to describe a book by its binding or a picture by its frame, and if the type of young gentlemen who think "women are meant to look pretty and be amused" (*a bona fide* speech, oh incredulous reader) find themselves uncomfortably compelled to form another estimate of women after their aunts or sisters or mothers possess the franchise, we shall not deem it an evil to be deplored. We shall moreover esteem it to be a useful collateral advantage if the fact that his wife might have been the possessor of a vote before he married her, and may become so again should he die first, so operates as to modify the sentiments of people of the type of the gentleman who preferred that his wife should coax and wheedle him out of what she wanted, than that she should obtain it by a reasonable, sensible wish (and here again, oh reader we speak from actual fact.) That the franchise will not be exercised by her while he lives, since the law has privileged him with the administration of the family possessions, is a matter of mere detail in presence of the paramount fact that the womanhood he professes chivalrously to honour shall no longer be pressed down among the non-governing governed and graciously permitted to have exemption from electoral duties along with minors and idiots, convicts and others, the most miserable of her Majesty's subjects. And let no man urge that this is an unfair application of a merely accidental coincidence. We are willing to acquit the law of having classified women, by malice aforethought, with these unpleasant congeners, but the coincidence remains and while you, gentlemen, ply us with your sentimental objections

to including us in the electoral body, we feel at liberty to indulge also in our sentimental objections to the exclusion, and now turn to the *suspicion*, which is the last point of defence.

Many persons who profess themselves not averse to our claim for the franchise, and who readily admit that they see "no harm" in women voting if they like, hold back nevertheless because they suspect ulterior ends and are haunted with the fear that to qualify women to elect is to qualify them also for election and straightway they will rush from the poll to the hustings, enter St. Stephen's and accomplish mighty revolutions! That women have ulterior ends is perfectly true. The vote is valuable, not for what it is, but for what it brings—that sense of citizenship, that consciousness of progress which accompany political emancipation; the means of more direct influence and increased power of usefulness which a recognized political position gives and which without the franchise is unattainable. These are ulterior ends which will work gradually ripening changes. We would remind the uneasy friends who suspect an imminent rush to Parliament, that to be an elector is not one of the qualifications essential for election—but let them be consoled, before any woman can enter Parliament, some one at least, must have been found ready to stand, friends must be ready to uphold her, and a constituency willing to elect her. As these conditions have not yet ripened into existence, it will be some time before all the three can meet in the necessary combination, and meantime, however essential that statesmen pay due regard to the ulterior consequences of legislation, suspicions like these do not prove that this may not be one of the points where a plain present justice calls more imperiously than far-off possibilities.

In justice to these cautious and doubtful friends, it is right to admit that their suspicion is not altogether unworthy of respectful treatment, for however unscientific in its operation it arises from a laudable motive, the fear that in some way or other the division of labour will become confounded, and the proper organization of duties obscured. Nature has from the most primæval days pointed out certain duties for the two

co-ordinate sides of humanity, but civilization has gradually developed interests, sympathies, duties, where men and women meet as on common territory: the margin of that territory extends as culture extends: the man may still retain the general function of loaf-winner, the woman that of "loaf distributor" and yet they may, without confounding their functions, find mutual consultation useful on the methods and organizations of their separate duties. The question to-day is whether the exercise of the electoral franchise is or is not one of those duties which culture has slowly brought to the shore of the common territory; we believe it is, and mere suspicion will not disturb that belief.

To those men and women who, while respecting the law as the expression of the national standard of conduct nevertheless believe that standard capable of frequent advance, the passing of the Bill to remove the electoral disabilities of the latter will bring no change of feeling, save the gladness that law is now on the side of the equality they prize for themselves.

To those who regard the law as the all-sufficient standard pointing out the whole duty of man, this Bill must add a new thought: but will make no change in the current of their lives; they will go on as before, following the lead of law and will quietly acquire the new idea that women are citizens in the full sense of the word and that therefore it is a duty for them also to give some thought to the service of the State.

To those who are below the law, by whom law is regarded as an enemy to be evaded and obeyed only from compulsion, this Bill will bring a new, unwelcome, but salutary command of respect for those whom now law marks as inferiors.

In days of old, the young man was invested with the sword as a sign of his manly activity and the young woman wore her keys as the sign of her household duties, but those keys should no more lock the thoughts of women within their cupboard doors, then the sword should cut off the men from domestic affections. Surely Home and Country are for all, and all for Home and Country.

1878

SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN HOUSEHOLDERS.

AGAIN, last session, the House of Commons has discussed the question of Woman's Suffrage, and again, as was expected by all who know how great is the strength of prejudice and Conservatism, it was rejected. It is only by very slow degrees that opinion in Parliament responds to the growth of public opinion; and on a question which does not immediately affect the interests of any class already possessing that great lever of movement, the vote, we may expect the response to be doubly slow in coming. The Women's Suffrage Societies have to act with small command of funds, and with workers who, like the Romans against Pyrrhus, can only learn how to win through repeated defeats.

The Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women, which was brought forward by Mr. Leonard Courtney, M.P. for Liskeard, was rejected on June 19th by 220 votes against 140. At the last division, that of 1876, 239 voted against the Bill and 152 for it; therefore, the number of those who voted this year was smaller on each side, the opponents of the measure losing nineteen votes, and the friends twelve. Since the commencement of the movement, eleven years ago, the support given to it by members of Parliament has been very remarkable, 396 having voted in favour of the Bill, some of them seven or eight times. It was asserted with premature triumph by Mr. Hanbury, who opposed the Bill, that many former supporters were prepared to follow his example in deserting the cause; but on examination of the division list, this assertion has not been borne out, the Bill having received some new adherents, and the conversions having been the other way. The balance of support for the Bill lies, as might be naturally conjectured on a question of rational reform, on the Liberal side of the House. Of the 142 who, including tellers, voted for the Bill, 88 were Liberals, 16 Home Rulers, and 38 Conservatives. Of the 220 who opposed it, 67 were Liberals, 7 Home Rulers, and 146 Conservatives.

The debate followed much the same course as in preceding years, with this difference, that the new speakers were mostly on the side of the Bill, and the opposition was entrusted chiefly to veteran antagonists. Their arguments were not remarkable for novelty. One member thought that to give votes to women was making votes too cheap, and that if Parliament could retrace its steps in the matter of the School Board and municipal franchises, long ago conceded to them, it would do well. By other M.P.'s it was characterised as an "arrant sham," "a mere phantasm to create a vexatious state of agitation," "a piece of socialistic democracy," and a measure which should be "opposed to the Day of Judgment." Nevertheless, there was a marked improvement in the tone of the debate, and instead of the derisive howls and hootings with which the discussion was overpowered in 1877, every speaker was listened to with punctilious courtesy.

The method of attack reminds us now and then forcibly of the quarrel which Æsop's wolf picks with the lamb, accusing him of having muddied the brook at which he drinks. The lamb humbly represents that he is drinking lower down, so he reviles him for having once used bad language of him, to which the lamb says he had not been born then. Then, said the wolf, it was thy father who did so. Some of the gentlemen in the House of Commons lament that all women would vote as a logical consequence of the Bill, and hence heartburnings in families, and fierce domestic discord, the wife voting one way and the husband another. But, say its supporters quickly, this Bill

made, and is making, that it was not won last year, and will probably not be won even in the next Parliament. There are some people who believe it is making no progress because year after year the House of Commons throws it out with but slightly altered majorities, and they quote, with approval, the women's higher education, and their entrance into the medical profession, as questions which "get on." It is often with political questions, as with the dawn of a tropical morning, that full daylight breaks in upon the darkness without long gradations of brightness. It is frequently not till a reform is actually made law that the world perceives that opinion, for a long course of years, was slowly ripening in its favour. Even the opponents of Women's Suffrage admit its justice, while doubting its expediency; we believe in its expediency likewise: in the effect which it will slowly, but surely, have of removing the influences of prejudice and injustice, and doubling the effective forces of the world by the participation of women in its higher interests. Of one thing we may be sure, that the struggle which those ladies who are the principal exponents of the movement are conducting, is among those which, "though baffled oft, are ever won." They are not impatient—they do not look for victory either next year, or the year after; but as each session passes, they chronicle their slowly accumulating gains, and, while steadily keeping in front the standard of complete educational, electoral, professional, and legal equality of men and women, they despise no improvement in the condition of women, no fresh sphere of activity, no new concession of justice; but look on each step as leading to the more perfect end. It is this steadiness of purpose and continuity of effort which Englishwomen, like Englishmen, inherit as a national characteristic, that is the surest harbinger of success.

LATEST INTELLIGENCE

FROM

THE PLANET VENUS.

REPRINTED, BY PERMISSION, FROM FRASER'S MAGAZINE.

MANCHESTER:

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LATEST INTELLIGENCE FROM THE PLANET
VENUS.

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It may be reckoned among those things not generally known that within a short time direct telescopic communication, by means of signals, has been established between the earth and the planet Venus, and that at certain stations regular interchange of intelligence is now carried on. The results have hitherto been kept secret, partly, it is said, owing to the disappointment of the astronomers at finding in the new country but a mirror of our own, with an hereditary constitutional monarchy, two Houses, a civilisation in about the same stage of advancement as ours, and political and social institutions generally similar. The single remarkable difference presented to their notice is one they are loth to reveal, for fear, we believe, of the family discords it might possibly excite at home, and we are the first to acquaint our readers with the curious fact that in the planet Venus, though the present sovereign happens to be a king, all political business, electoral and parliamentary, is allotted to the women. Women only have the right to vote or to sit in the House of Commons, and the Upper House is formed of the eldest daughters of deceased Peers. Politics, therefore, are included among the usual branches of ladies' education, but except in this respect their social condition presents no unusual features.

This monopoly by women of political power is as old as their system of government, and until a few years ago no one dreamt

of complaining or of questioning of its wisdom. But a pamphlet advocating the enfranchisement of males has lately been published by a clever female agitator, and caused a considerable stir. It is not pretended that a majority of the sex ask or even desire the privilege. The plea put forward is abstract justice backed by possible expediency, and, the cry once sounded, arguments are not wanting, petitions flow in, idle men have taken the matter up and find supporters among the younger women, and last night a member of the Government redeemed the pledge made to her constituents last election, to bring forward a bill for removing the electoral disabilities of men. She has no lack of supporters, some sincere, some interested. Her greatest difficulty was in persuading the House to treat the measure seriously. The notion of admitting young cornets, cricketers, and fops of the Dundreary pattern to a share in the legislation, the prospect of Parliamentary benches recruited from the racecourse, the hunting-field, and the billiard-room, was a picture that proved too much for the gravity of the Commons. A division, however, was insisted upon by the original proposer. At this juncture the leader of the Opposition, a lady as distinguished by her personal attractions as by her intelligence, moderation, common sense, and experience, arose, and made the following forcible speech, which we transcribe for the benefit of all such as it may, directly or indirectly, concern :

“Madam,—Before proceeding to state my opinions on this question, or my reasons for holding them, I wish to impress on you a sense of the importance of the measure just brought forward, that it may at least obtain from you the attention it deserves. I must urge you not to allow party or personal motives to blind you to its nature and bearings. The supporters of Male Suffrage are seeking not only to introduce a

startling innovation into a system of government that has hitherto worked remarkably well, but in so doing they would tamper with the foundations of society, and in a blind cry for equality and suppositious justice ignore the most elementary laws of nature. The question is not a political, it is a scientific and physiological one. About the equality of the sexes we may go on disputing for ever, but with regard to their identity there can be no manner of doubt. No one has ever ventured to assert it. Each sex has its special sphere—mission—call it what you will, originally assigned to it by nature, appropriated by custom. What now are the special and distinguishing natural characteristics of the male sex? Assuredly muscular strength and development. With less quickness of instinct, flexibility and patience than women, men are decidedly our superiors in physical power. Look at individuals, men of all classes—mark their capability for, nay their enjoyment of, exertion and exposure. If these do not naturally fall to their lot they find artificial employment for their faculties in violent games and athletic exercises; some indeed go as far as to seek it in the distant hunting grounds and prairies of uncivilised continents. This quality of theirs has its proper outlet in the active professions. To man, therefore, war and navigation, engineering and commerce, agriculture and trade, their perils and toils, their laurels and gains; to man, in short, all those callings in which his peculiar endowment of greater physical force and endurance of physical hardships is a main and necessary element. Those with superior mental gifts will turn to such scientific pursuits as specially demand courage, exposure, and rough labour. It is most essential that their energies should not be diverted from these channels. We should then have bad soldiers, bad ships, bad machines, bad artisans. Government, on the other hand, is no game to be played at by

force of the community being male, an opportunity would be afforded for an amount of intimidation it would shock us now even to contemplate. Right has ever been might in our land. Shall we reverse our motto? Shall we, who have ever taken pride in the fact that our counsels are swayed by reason and judgment alone—a fact from which men have benefited at least as much as women—invite the fatal indefensible element of force to enter in and meddle with our elections, and let the hustings become the scene of such struggles and riots as in certain countries where, by a singular distortion of judgment, the management of political affairs is thrust entirely on the men? Supposing that the suffrage were irrespective of sex, and supposing it to happen that the men in a wrong cause were arrayed against and outvoted by the women in a right, would they not, as they could, use force to compel the women to submit? And here we are threatened with a relapse into barbarism from which the present constitution of our State affords so admirable a guarantee. And that something of the sort would ensue I have little doubt. Probably the next step would be to oust women altogether from the legislature—the standard of female education would then decline, and woman would sink lower and lower both in fact and in the estimation of men. Being physically weak, she must always, among the rough and uneducated classes, be especially exposed to ill-treatment. Of this in our country, I am happy to say, there are but rare instances, nevertheless. But there are lands where men monopolise the suffrage, and where a state of things exists among the lower classes—let us hope the upper and civilised orders do not realise it, for their apathy would otherwise be monstrous—which if widely and thoroughly known would be recognised as the darkest page of modern history, something to which a parallel must be sought

in the worst days of legalised slavery. Penal laws have utterly failed as a remedy, and it is obvious that they must always do so. What has been our guard against this particular evil? Is it not that point in our social system which raises woman's position, both actually and in the eyes of the men of her class, by entrusting to her functions of general importance, which she is at least as well qualified by nature to fill as man, and which we take care that her education shall fit her for, as a man's, necessarily unequal, semi-professional, and engrossing, can never do? Thus men have an irksome, thankless, exacting, life-long labour taken off their hands, which are left free to work out their fame and fortune; educated women their faculties turned to the best account; while among the lower orders, the artificial superiority conferred on the female sex by its privilege of the suffrage, raising the woman's status in fact and in the eyes of her husband, acts as an effectual check on domestic tyranny of the worst sort, and the nation has the advantage of being governed by that section of the community whose organisation, habits, and condition best enable them to study political science.

“That any wrong is done to men by the existing arrangement, I entirely deny. Most of them are married, and it is so seldom that a wife's political opinions differ materially from her husband's, that the vote of the former may fairly be said to represent both. The effect on the sex itself would be most undesirable. It is a fatal mistake to try to turn men into women, to shut them up indoors, and set them to study blue-books and reports in their intervals of business, to enforce on them an amount of thought, seclusion, and inaction, so manifestly uncongenial to their physical constitution, which points so plainly to the field, the deck, the workshop, as the proper theatre for their activity. The best men are those who are most earnest and laborious in their professions, and do not

trouble themselves with politics. Already they have sufficient subjects to study—special studies imperatively necessary for their respective occupations. Do not let us put another weight on the shoulders of those who, from the cradle to the grave, have so much less leisure than ourselves for reflection and acquiring political knowledge, or else, let us look no more for calm and judicious elections, but to see candidates supported from the lowest motives, and members returned by a majority of intimidation, bribery, private interest, or at best by chance, all through the ill-advised enfranchisement of an enormous body of muscular indeed, but necessarily prejudiced, ignorant, and preoccupied members of society.”

The honourable member here resumed her seat amid loud cheers. On a division being taken, the motion was rejected by an overwhelming majority, and the question of Male Suffrage may be considered shelved for the present in the planet Venus.

B. T.



Speech of Mrs Helen Bright Clark at a
Women's Suffrage Congress held in
Bristol, 23d January 1879.

IN moving the first resolution, Mrs Clark said:—Some people, I daresay, will be ready to think that this is an unfortunate time for holding a Women's Suffrage meeting. During the past two or three years, questions of useful home legislation have been almost entirely at a standstill. Measures that have been longer before the public than our Bill, and have excited a more widely-spread if not a deeper interest, have made little or no onward progress. Almost all efforts for the good of the people, whether by way of reform or of economy or of education, have been baffled or overpowered by the opposition, or the apathy they have encountered; and the minds of the people have been diverted from the consideration of the pressing needs of this great population, in order that they might, shall I say, attack shadows and chimeras many thousands of miles distant from our shores.

Under these circumstances, it is perhaps not unnatural that we should be asked, Is it worth while to press the consideration of grievances which many people even yet look on as chiefly of a sentimental character? And so far as the question of peace or war is to the front, we must all admit that *that* overrides every other, for it carries the fate of every other question with it; and any government, or any party, that will keep the question of peace or war perpetually unsettled, will succeed in stifling discussion and checking progress to a very considerable extent. But I think that the suggestion, and the recapitulation of the burdens of men and women in this country, always affords one of the strongest arguments for those who are striving to maintain peace; and therefore that the holding of such meetings as these can never be out of place, even in the troubled times through which we have been passing, although they may perhaps

or in women either. Some people have very little faith in anything that is good. It is a curious thing that, while the great Conservative reaction which took place at the last general election was a result, so far as votes went, exclusively of men's votes, the municipal and School Board elections, in which women take part freely, have shown no such general tendency, though they have been to a large extent political contests. I am willing to admit cheerfully that, for the election of the present majority of the House of Commons, and for its subsequent course, there is not one woman in the country who is directly or indirectly, through her vote, responsible. All the glory of that belongs to men, undoubtedly. All the peace, so long as it lasted—and all the honour, such as it was, and the garters and the ribbons—belonged to men. But you women *are* responsible for the influence you used, and for the influence you did not use, because you were too selfish or too idle to inform yourselves sufficiently to have any influence. And I maintain that, when you see a course pursued which you think hurtful to the true interests and the honour of the country, you are guilty if you do not use all honourable means to secure for yourselves that share of the representation which is the surest and most direct means of opposing that which you believe to be wrong.

I heard this afternoon of a well-known gentleman who said he could not be with us, because there were so many other more important things to be looked after. That may be a man's point of view, but it is hardly a woman's. That gentleman has a vote. I have no doubt he has two or three votes; and he can use them and the influence they give him to further those objects which he thinks so important. But the very point of the matter is, that women have no votes; and it is largely because we feel so keenly the importance of the questions before the country that we resent their exclusion from the representation of the people. For myself, I can truly say that it is from no capricious love of change, or from any desire for what may appear to some fantastic or new, but from an ardent love of liberty and of all that seems to me noble and Christian in the life of the nation, that I am here to-night to protest humbly, but with all my heart, against that unjust exclusion which denies to my sex the rights, and I may say also the sacred duties, of free citizenship.



THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF WOMEN

IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

A PAPER BY MISS BECKER,

Read at the Conference on behalf of extending the Parliamentary Franchise to Women, held in the Victoria Rooms, Clifton, Bristol, on January 24th, 1879.

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THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF WOMEN
IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Representative government is the fundamental principle which regulates the conduct of public affairs in this country. The principle had its origin in local government. The application of this principle in the supreme government of the country appears to be of comparatively recent origin. Before the reign of Egbert consolidated the Saxon kingdoms into a nation, all government might be said to be local government. During the reign of the Saxon kings, the representative assemblies had a real share in the government. Women took part in these assemblies. Gurdon, in his antiquities of Parliament, says the ladies of birth and quality sat in council with the Saxon Witas. The Abbess Wilde, says Bede, presided in an Ecclesiastical Synod.

The Norman conquest introduced the feudal system of government, in which the kings were little more than military chiefs. The various struggles for the crown from the death of Henry I. to the accession of Henry VII. were determined by military successes, and not in any sense by the choice of the people. A few hundred knights and men-at-arms, fighting hand to hand, gave the crown first to one prince, then to another, the people as a party standing aloof from a struggle which, in truth, concerned them very little. But local or

municipal government was not dead. It survived in the government of parishes, cities, and counties, and it formed the basis of the more general representative government which first took definite form under the guidance of Simon de Montfort, the man who caused to be summoned the first House of Commons.

Women were not left out of consideration in the earlier forms of parliamentary government. We learn from Gurdon that in the times of Henry III. and Edward VI., four abbesses were summoned to Parliament, namely of Shaftesbury, Berking, St. Mary of Winchester, and of Wilton. In the 35th of Edward III. were summoned to Parliament, to appear by their proxies, Mary, Countess of Norfolk; Alienor, Countess of Ormond; Anne Despenser Philippa, Countess of March; Johanna Fitzwater Augusta, Countess of Pembroke; Mary de St. Paul, Mary de Roos, Matilda, Countess of Oxford; Catherine, Countess of Athol.

This indication of a sketch of the rise of parliamentary government, and of the connection between this and the earlier form of local government, is intended to prove that the annual local franchise, instead of being a secondary and subordinate vote of little or no importance politically, is in truth the foundation on which the whole of our system of government is built. Women have, and always have had, coeval rights with men in regard to local franchise; they have a share in the foundation, and they have a right to a corresponding share in the superstructure that has been reared upon it.

For an illustration of the proposition that local self-government, by means of representative assemblies, is antecedent to national self-government, we may turn to the condition of the village communities in Russia. Here representative government in imperial affairs is non-existent. The Czar is abso-

lute autocrat. But local affairs are regulated by village communities named "Mir;" these are described by Mr. Mackenzie Wallace as "a good specimen of constitutional government of the extreme democratic type." The constitutional members are the "Heads of Households." The "Mir" apportioned the land of the community, regulates agricultural operations, and exercises authority over the taxes, and also over the movements of the villagers. Women are represented in these gatherings. Mr. Wallace says:—

"In the crowd may generally be seen, especially in the northern provinces, where a considerable portion of the male population is always absent from the village, a certain number of female peasants. These are women who, on account of the absence or death of their husbands, happen to be for the moment Heads of Households. As such they are entitled to be present, and their right to take part in the deliberations is never called in question."

Should parliamentary government come to be established in Russia, these village communities will in all probability form the basis of the electoral districts, and we may see representative government in imperial affairs accorded concurrently to women and men.

Men in this country obtained parliamentary representation in and through local government. They used the power they had, and they obtained more extended power. We urge women to follow their example—to take an interest in the local affairs in which they have a legal right to be represented, to make their votes felt as a power which must be recognised by all who would govern such affairs, and to be ready to fill personally such offices as they are liable to be nominated for, and to seek those positions to which they are eligible for election.

The parochial offices to which women may be nominated are

churchwarden, overseer, waywarden or surveyor of roads, guardian, parish clerk, and sexton. Women now occupy, or have very recently occupied, all these offices. Recently, a parliamentary petition was placed in my hand signed by a lady as churchwarden of a parish in Wales. There are many parishes now in England where women are overseers. There is a parish in Cheshire where there are but six or seven farmers eligible for the office of overseer. One of these is a lady, and she takes her turn with the rest. Moreover, while many of the men employ a deputy, she performs the work herself.

The office of overseer is a very responsible one. When the guardians or other lawfully-constituted authorities require money for the relief of the poor or for other purposes, they issue a "precept" to the overseers to furnish the required amount. The overseers are then personally liable for the sum. On the other hand, they are armed with stringent powers over the property of the ratepayers. They have to adjust the burden of the impost equitably among those who are to bear it, and they must collect the money from the people, either personally or by deputy. They have power to seize the goods of any person who does not pay the rate, and their own goods are liable to seizure if they do not collect the money from the parish. The office of overseer is unpaid, and the persons on whom the duties are imposed must discharge them under the penalty of a considerable fine. Women are not excused from these duties on account of their sex, and many women are now discharging these duties in various parts of the country.

A few years ago, Mrs. Gold, a widow lady of sixty years of age, was appointed overseer of her parish in Montgomeryshire. She objected to serve, and applied to the Court of Queen's Bench to release her from the obligation to do so. Her application was refused; she would therefore be compelled either to

fulfil an office entailing much trouble and no honour, or to pay a heavy fine.

A widow lady was recently appointed waywarden of a parish in Westmoreland. This lady had complained to the surveyor of the state of the roads, and at the next election he prevailed on the ratepayers to elect her to the office. Perhaps he imagined that she would decline to serve, and render herself liable to the penalty of twenty pounds for refusal. But the lady was equal to the occasion. She accepted the duties imposed upon her, and as she keeps a clerk and has ample means, she has no difficulty in obtaining a thorough supervision of the work. It is said that she has made some important discoveries as to the state of the accounts.

The conditions of local government vary greatly in different districts of England. They may be classified under three heads :—

1. Government of parishes by vestry meetings, in which every ratepayer had a right to vote, and which were convened for the imposition of rates and the election of parochial officers.
2. Government by vestries or other local commissioners under the provision of some local act applying only to the particular district therein specified. This is the condition of the metropolitan parishes outside the city of London, and of large districts in the country.
3. Government by local authorities elected under a general Act of Parliament specifically applied—a kind of permissive act, which may be extended on application by the ratepayers of any district in which it is not in force. Of this nature are the Public Health Act of 1848, the Municipal Corporations Act of

1833, with its amendments of 1869; and the Elementary Education Acts of 1870—1876.

In all of these provisions for local government, the rights of women are recognised.

I have before me, as I write, a copy of an Act passed in the year 1774, when George the Third was king, for the local government of the parish of Clerkenwell. It is a quaint document, printed in black letter. The preamble sets forth that whereas the poor of the said parish are very numerous, and the present workhouse is not large enough to contain them, and a considerable debt for their relief has been unavoidably contracted; and whereas the present method of raising and applying money for the relief of the poor is attended with many inconveniences, &c., &c., &c., the Act proceeds to set forth the names of a number of gentlemen to act together with the ministers, churchwardens, and overseers of the parish as guardians or governors of the poor for carrying the Act into execution. The Act further provides that in the event of a death, or removal, or refusal to act of any of the before-named persons, it shall be lawful for the inhabitants of the parish paying to the rates for the church and the poor to assemble and meet together in the vestry-room of the said parish, on Tuesday in Easter week every year, or within one month after, to elect one or more persons to be guardians.

It is further provided that the inhabitants as aforesaid are authorised and required to assemble on the Tuesday in Easter week, or within ten days after, to nominate a list of eight persons to be overseers, and the persons so nominated shall be bound to serve under a penalty of ten pounds. It is further enacted that the churchwardens, overseers, and inhabitants are authorised and required to assemble on Tuesday in Easter week,

or oftener, as occasion serves, to make a general equal pound rate or assessment for the relief of the poor, or for the other purposes of this Act.

The requirement to assemble in the vestry on the Tuesday in Easter week, for the election of overseers and the imposition of rates, is laid on all inhabitant ratepayers, without mention of sex. There is no doubt that women ratepayers are summoned equally with men, and that they may attend and vote.

In the clauses relating to the qualification of guardians masculine pronouns only are used; it is said no person shall be capable of acting as guardian unless *he* shall be assessed at the annual sum of twenty pounds, &c. Also, in the provision relating to the penalty for refusing to serve as overseers, the words "if *he* or they shall refuse," &c., are used. Notwithstanding this, it is probable that women might be guardians or overseers under this local Act, and it is certain that they may fill these offices in other districts.

But when it comes to the clauses providing for the payment of rates there is no possibility of mistake as to whether women are intended to be included. The pronouns *he*, *she*, or *they*, *his* or *her* house or houses, etc., occur. These feminine pronouns are not, however, introduced everywhere, and it would not be possible to construe the Act so as to exclude women in every case where masculine pronouns only are employed.

This old Act is the only one which I have had the opportunity of examining, but, as it is probably a type of many similar ones for other parishes, I have thought it worth while to describe its provisions.

I desire particularly to impress on women the fact that Tuesday in Easter week is the day for vestry meetings and parochial elections of churchwardens and other officials, that

women ratepayers have equal rights with men in such elections, and I would urge them to assert these rights by taking part in the elections whenever practicable. Thus Tuesday in Easter week would in parishes become what the first of November is in boroughs, a day when thousands of women in different parts of England may be seen taking part in public affairs, forming a demonstration of women electors, and giving a practical proof that women desire and care for the suffrage.

The Public Health Act of 1848 contains an interpretation clause in virtue of which, to use the clumsy and ungrammatical phraseology of our legislators, "words importing the masculine gender are deemed and taken to include females." There seems to be nothing to prevent women from becoming members of Local Boards of Health; and I cannot help thinking that some of the energy which is successful in keeping the insides of our houses clean and well ordered might be usefully extended to the care of the outside arrangements for the same end.

The Municipal Corporations Act was originally intended to apply to men only. When its operation was extended to women in 1869 the extension was specifically declared to be to the right of voting for councillors, auditors, and assessors. It seems therefore probable, though not absolutely certain—because the question has never been raised in such a form as to call for a legal decision—that women are not eligible for election to Town Councils.

The Elementary Education Act, on the other hand, was from the beginning intended by its framers to include women in all its provisions. Women have not only the right to vote, but to sit on School Boards, and to be elected to any official position in connection with the work for which men are eligible. A woman may be chairman, vice-chairman, or clerk of a School Board, and ladies actually fill such offices.

The principle on which this part of the Act was based is that, as half the children to be educated are girls, women have an equal right with men to regulate the conditions of the education. But if this is allowed in the case of education, its application cannot be logically arrested here. Half the people to be taxed are women, half the people to be governed are women, half of the people whose interests are affected by the national policy are women; women therefore have as much right to a share in regulating these matters as they have to a share in the regulation of education.

Political freedom begins for women as it began for men, with freedom in local government. It rests with women to pursue the advantage that has been won, and to advance from the position that has been conceded to them in local representation to that which is the goal of our efforts—the concession of the right to a share in the representation of our common country.



WOMAN

A Church View of the "Woman Question."

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You ask me to write to you on the subject of Woman's Rights, and I gladly do so, not because I have any new or original ideas to offer you, but because I agree with you in thinking that it is one of great interest in the present day, and one, therefore, on which you have a right to know my opinions.

In the first place, then, these two words "Woman's Rights," are to some like a red rag shaken at a bull, rousing in them indignation and scorn. "Woman's Rights," advocated by the screaming sisterhood. (Can't you recall to yourself, the tone, the look of contempt, the sneer, that is too often elicited by them). And yet, if women have no *rights*, then they can have no *wrongs*; and who is bold enough to assert this?

Well, but granted they have rights; what are they? This is the question that presents itself to those who are thinking, and thinking soberly and sadly on the subject. I can only give you some of

the crude workings of my own mind, some of the ways in which I try to answer the question to myself, so as to enable me to give my full sympathies to the cause, even though I may not admire the workers,—to approve of the end, though I may disapprove of the means.

Now, I go to the Bible, and where *men* learn the subjection of women, I would learn their emancipation. My own firm conviction is, that a woman is a man's *equal*, not his *inferior*. To Adam were brought, in succession, his *inferiors*, but there was not found a *help meet* for him. Clearly, then, a help meet for him was to be one equal to him, not one to whom he had to condescend. If you urge that Eve was formed from Adam, and, therefore, not his equal, Adam was formed from the dust of the ground; he was not, therefore, inferior to the dust.

Then came the Fall, and because of it are the daughters of Eve for ever to be held inferior? Does the account of the Fall warrant the belief that Eve was Adam's inferior,—weaker in will and intellect? Remember, it took Satan to deceive Eve. We are distinctly told "he beguiled her," but it was by the promise of an easy and pleasant way of becoming wise. Adam appears to have needed no greater temptation to disobey, than what his equal—or, as some would have it, inferior—offered. And what was the punishment? On both alike fell the sentence,—banishment from Eden, and *toil*. To Adam, toil of body in

subduing the earth; to Eve, toil of body in replenishing the earth. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children;" and I will not forget the end, "he shall rule over thee." A distinct punishment, surely, for her evil rule over her husband, "she gave to her husband and he did eat." But we Christian women should never look back sadly on our mother Eve and forget the second Eve; for if Eve was the means by which sin entered into the world, so Mary was the means by which the Saviour of our race came into this world. Think, then, of all the honour put on our sex,—not only did God take *human nature* upon Him, but He was born of a *woman*. It seems to me we are brought almost nearer to our Lord than men are because of this, while we share equally with them in all the gifts that flow from the Incarnation; yet, perhaps, in the fact that to *men* is reserved the work of the Priesthood, we may learn that each sex has its especial privilege, and neither is above the other.

You know, of course, the scriptural arguments against slavery, and how it is said that slave owners objected to slaves reading the Bible, because there they learnt that liberty was their right, that no one class should oppress another. No wrong ways of gaining liberty can really dishonour liberty itself. All this I would apply to women. I remember that where it is said, that "in Christ there is neither bond

nor free," it is also said, there is "neither male nor female." I firmly believe that before the Throne of God I, as a woman, shall be inferior to no man merely because he is a man. I find that I have equal rights in the Church on earth with men,—Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Christian Burial,—each is bestowed on me in exactly the same terms as on a man; and I can never forget that the most exalted of all the human race is a woman—Mary. I do not find that men consider themselves evading the punishment due to the sons of Adam if, for the toil of body consequent on the culture of the ground, they substitute any other toil. They don't think they fail to fulfil their destiny if they prefer literature to agriculture. Why, then, should not women have equal liberty to change the form of their toil, and labour with their minds also?

Forget the details, and grasp the main idea that underlies all the talk about women's rights, that women have as much right as men to *education*,—that is, to the fullest development, as far as practicable, of their body, mind, and spirit,—not one to the neglect of the others; and that, not that they may become fitting companions for men; not that they may fit themselves to adorn an earthly home, but that they may fulfil their Maker's will and fit themselves for their Heavenly home. Banish that false idea of "He for God; she for God in him." Woman does not need to go to God through any other mediator than *One*.

I believe women have a right to do any work for which they are physically fitted, and in which they can succeed, and they have a right to be educated so as to succeed. That men like any particular kind of work, and wish to diminish the number of workers in order to keep up the price of labour, does not justify them in such a monopoly. They must give, and have, better reasons than these.

And as to legislation. Do men never remember that women have an equal interest in all public matters? Take taxation alone. Who feels an increased income tax the most—the father, or husband, or brother who pays it? I think not. I think it is but seldom, if a question comes of restricting the household expenditure, that the pinching and economy comes from the man's side,—they pay what the woman saves; therefore, in this mere question about money, they have a right to be heard. And in war, who suffer most? In all social questions are not women equally concerned with men? Is there one single political question on which they have not a right to be heard as being personally interested in it? They may be unfit at the present to exercise their rights, but so are many men to whom the franchise is given. Surely there is something radically wrong in manhood suffrage.

I have not forgotten all the arguments that are often brought forward from S. Paul's Epistles on the duty of a wife's submission to her husband, and

which have been made use of as pretexts for the unjust power given by the State to husbands. It is an unjust power, for the State cannot enforce those qualities in the husband which alone can make obedience desirable. With respect to the right understanding of S. Paul's meaning upon this question, I cannot do better than quote the following from an able writer on the claims of our sex. "We shall be told, perhaps, that religion imposes the duty of obedience. The Church, it is very true, enjoins it in her formularies, but it would be difficult to derive any such injunction from Christianity. We are told that S. Paul said, 'Wives, obey your husbands,' but he also said, 'Slaves, obey your masters.' It was not S. Paul's business, nor was it consistent with his object,—the propagation of Christianity,—to incite any one to rebellion against existing laws. The apostle's acceptance of all social institutions as he found them is no more to be construed as a disapproval of attempts to improve them at the proper time, than his declaration, 'The powers that be are ordained of God,' gives his sanction to [military despotism, and to that alone, as the Christian form of political government, or commends passive obedience to it."

In conclusion, I wish I could convince you that it is possible to approve of women voters and yet to be a Christian, and to take up the woman question from a religious point of view, and think it over in a tolerant spirit; for if religious and Catholic women

stand entirely aloof from this important movement, the younger generation, who will have the higher education and rights now claimed for them, will be influenced by those who have fought the battle for them, and may, possibly, be lost to the Church altogether.

L. B.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

Eleventh Annual Meeting

OF THE

EDINBURGH NATIONAL SOCIETY

FOR

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,

HELD IN

THE BIBLE SOCIETY HOUSE,

ST ANDREW SQUARE, 5TH MARCH,

1879.

EDINBURGH

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1879.

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Miss E. KIRKLAND, 13 Raeburn Place, *Secretary.*

*This Society consists of all friendly to its object, and who
subscribe to its Funds.*



EDINBURGH NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

ANNUAL MEETING.

THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING of this SOCIETY was held on the 5th of March 1879, in the Bible Society's Rooms, 5 St Andrew Square. Mrs STEPHEN WELLSTOOD occupied the chair. Apologies had been received from Mrs Nichol, Miss Louisa Stevenson, Dr Jex-Blake, and others—also from Mrs Duncan M'Laren, the President of the Society.

Mrs WELLSTOOD said:—"The subject was growing in interest every year, and instead of the reasons urged for and against the movement becoming stale, they always found fresh points presenting themselves in one direction or another. In Parliament this session the subject was to be brought up in the shape of a resolution. She wished that they could hope for success; but if their claim was settled on grounds of justice, there would be no fear. The right to vote had been given to women in connection with the School Board and the Parochial Board, and in England even in the Municipal elections, and had been found to work admirably. Why it should not be extended she could not understand. Under the old system voting might be attended with trouble and annoyance, but these were obviated under the ballot. She was in Bristol when the last election took place there, and the proceedings were so quietly conducted that one would scarcely have supposed that an

election was in progress. They wanted no special privilege; they simply asked that their rights should be acknowledged, and that they should be allowed to exercise these rights. Some time ago the women of Wyoming were allowed the privilege of the franchise, and much wonder was expressed as to how it would work; and on this point testimony had been given by the Hon. N. L. Andrews, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Wyoming. His testimony is all the more valuable as coming from one who states 'that he came to the territory in 1871 with the strongest prejudice possible against women suffrage, and decidedly opposed to it in all its features, yet, willing to be fair and candid, he became a close observer of the practical results of this innovation on the rights of man. He is now able to say that the more he has seen of it, the less his objections have been realised, and the more it has commended itself to his judgment and good opinion. He frankly acknowledges that, under all his observations, it has worked well, and been productive of much good, and no evil that he could discern.' That, she thought, was a most satisfactory answer to many objections raised against women's suffrage, for it showed that where it has been tried it has worked with marked success. Scotch women were surely quite equal to the women of Wyoming, and able to use their rights with discretion. Indeed, they had already shown this in connection with the School Board elections. The friends of the movement in Edinburgh had been working for many years, and she often wondered to see how energetic they continued. They were also getting new adherents, and she was hopeful that the end of all their efforts shortly would be crowned with success." (Applause.)

Miss WIGHAM then read the ANNUAL REPORT:—

The operations of this Society have, during the past year, as in previous years, been of a twofold character—to seek, on the one hand, to educate popular opinion to the righteousness and expediency of giving the suffrage to women, and on the other to convey to the House of Commons the expression of that opinion. The work of petitioning embraces both of these objects, and accordingly the attentive efforts of the Committee were directed to preparing for Mr Leonard Courtney's Bill, which was brought before the House of Commons on the 19th of June 1878. If the signatures to these petitions were not so numerous last year as in former years, they were notwithstanding of great value. The canvassing for them has been conducted on a new and important principle. Hitherto the aim of the Edinburgh Committee, like that of all the others, had been to obtain simply as many signatures as possible—to send a larger number of signatures each year to the House of Commons; at the same time taking all

possible care to render these monster petitions accurate and trustworthy; indeed, much of the canvassing was done personally by members of the Society. But a new method has now been adopted. The Committee has not given its attention so much to canvassing for mass petitions. It has selected important classes among the inhabitants of the city, and country at large, and has canvassed those as thoroughly as it was possible for them to do. This was done not by personal application, but by letters written and addressed by a sub-committee, meeting week by week for this purpose. One advantage of this plan is, that it cannot be implied that undue pressure is brought to bear upon the person canvassed; on the contrary, in every case a person who signs a petition in this manner must be sufficiently warm-hearted in the cause, not only to append the name when asked, but to put that signature in a letter, and to address, stamp, and post it to the proper quarter. In this way some of the most influential classes in Edinburgh have been already more or less completely canvassed.

Among these class petitions was one signed by 105 advocates, writers to the signet, S.S.C.'s, solicitors, accountants, and actuaries; one was from 212 bankers, architects, civil engineers, merchants, and heads of mercantile firms; one from 51 ministers of various religious denominations; one from 43 medical practitioners, surgeons, physicians, &c.; one from rectors, head-masters, schoolmistresses, and teachers, signed by 183. Perhaps the most significant and important of these petitions were those from women householders and rate-payers. Ten of these were sent from Edinburgh signed by 1279 women householders, of whom 173 were ladies residing in the principal streets of the city, paying rates on rentals of from £30 to £200 per annum.

The work of the Committee was not confined to Edinburgh, for lady householders have been canvassed from other towns and country districts, among which may be mentioned Dunoon, Rothesay, Largs, Gourock, Aberdeen, Ayr, Ardrrossan, Stirling, Bridge of Allan, Crieff, Melrose, Kelso, Alloa, Perth, Dollar, Stromness, Dumfries, Portobello, St Andrews and other towns in Fife. Twenty country petitions of this class were last year sent to Parliament, bearing 1042 signatures. General country petitions were also sent with 6209 names. The total number of petitions was 96, bearing in all 10,897 signatures. In referring to the Edinburgh mode of canvassing, Professor Masson says, in a paper sent by him to the late congress at Bristol:—"The responses made in the signatures to petitions have been very satisfactory and instructive. They show that an unsuspected amount of opinion in favour of the admission of women to the electoral franchise

has been quietly forming itself among men of solid habits of thought and of recognised standing in the various chief businesses and professions, and this in consequence of mere private reflection, each for himself, on the simple plea of justice, that women householders and rate-payers ought not to be disqualified because of their sex. It is something to have brought out the fact that all the objections to women's suffrage, all factitious alarms on the subject, have vanished from the minds of so many persons whose opinion must have weighty effect on those around them. There have been striking instances, I may add, of a declaration of adhesion at last where there formerly had been doubt, indifference, and even strong opposition. I believe that the experience of the value and easy working of the vote of women householders in School Board elections has had much to do with this interesting result. There are two good effects of the collection of signatures from classes. In the first place, petitions sent up on this method, though inferior in point of numbers, are absolutely trustworthy, and are of far higher value in the House and out of it as expressions of opinion; in the second place, this is the only means by which a committee can hope to ascertain, with any accuracy, the state and growth of opinion within the range of its exertions.* Nine petitions were sent from town-councils, and seven from public and drawing-room meetings. Some of these meetings were of a highly influential character. We might be allowed particularly to mention that in Glasgow, held in the house of Professor Edward Caird, at the University, and under his presidency. It was attended and addressed by many gentlemen and ladies of talent and influence. The conclusion of the meeting was a hearty vote in favour of women's suffrage.

The Bill was introduced into Parliament under the leadership of Mr Leonard Courtney. His speech, in introducing it, was full of weighty argument. He pleaded the question in all its bearings with much dignity and earnestness; beginning on the ground on which our constitution is based—that taxation and representation must go together; claiming that the idea that a representative government was the best of all governments was shared by every member of the House, he insisted that it was of the utmost importance to have the government as widely and universally representative as possible; that all members of the community should be admitted to a share in the representation, against whom there could not be established personal

* In reference to the signing of petitions during last year, it may be well to mention that a new rule was unexpectedly brought in force, which cancelled all signatures which did not bear the *full* name and *address*; and as the latter was not easily given in country towns, some of the petitions were almost lost.

unfitness, or an assumption of political danger on account of their being included. He went on to show that neither of those reasons could apply to women, who could not be proved to be unfit to exercise the franchise, neither could danger accrue to the constitution from their doing so. He alluded to the experience we already had of the operation of women's suffrage, in the admission of women to vote in the municipalities of England, and in the School Board elections of England and Scotland, and to the results of these experiments having proved highly satisfactory. Women had shown great interest in these elections; they had taken part in them as readily as men, and had been very careful in the choice of persons to represent them; and the one thing they aimed to secure was the presence of a respectable and responsible person on the Board, which was to administer the affairs of the town, or of the school district. He then reviewed the arguments respecting the detriment possible to the character of women themselves by admission to the electoral responsibility, and proved that the expansion of ideas and thought which would follow would only be beneficial to themselves and to those with whom they were associated, and on whom they exercised so largely an educational influence. Mr Courtney touched on the benefits that would accrue to the *position* of women by their being a represented portion of the community, showing that the laws respecting women would be greatly improved in character, and that competitive industries would be opened to them on a juster footing.

“The political reasons,” he added, “for granting the prayer of the Bill appear to me to be undeniable; but I confess they are not the reasons why I most strongly support it. I believe it will develop a fuller, freer, and nobler character in women, by admitting women into the sphere of political thought and duty. Some may say, ‘But what is to be the end?’ I do not know that we are always bound to see the goal towards which we are moving. If we are moving on right principles, if we are actuated by a feeling of justice, if the hand that moves above us and leads us on, is a hand in which we can place implicit confidence,—then I say, trust to that light, follow the hand without fear of the future.”

Several of the other speakers in favour of the Bill brought forward substantial and conclusive facts and arguments. And we would here express our grateful sense of the services rendered to our cause by Mr Courtney, and all those noble members who spoke in his support, and to the 140 who voted for the Bill—among whom, as in past divisions, we are proud to include our own city members, and the others composing the 23 Scotch representatives who voted on this occasion. We can only hope they may be long permitted to

retain their seats, and that, before many sessions of Parliament have passed, they may be associated with a much *larger* and more *complete* representation of the constituencies in Scotland. We were glad to observe that, on the occasion of the election of Lord Colin Campbell for Argyllshire, the subject of Women's Suffrage was placed before him, and received his favourable consideration. At one meeting, Lord Colin Campbell remarked that he had been quite astonished to find what progress the question had made during the last few months in Argyllshire; and the truth of the remark was fully illustrated in the interesting and influential petitions which have been lately signed by lady ratepayers in various towns and districts of the constituency, many of which have been recently visited by our organising secretary. The return of Sir David Wedderburn for Haddington forms another and valuable accession to the number of our friends in the representation of Scotland. It is the wish of this Committee that, directly or through allied friends and local committees, the question of Women's Suffrage should be presented to all candidates for election in Scotland. The division on Mr Courtney's motion gave a considerable majority against it, and the Bill was once more lost. But an analysis of the list shows that it was rejected by a smaller majority than on the last division in 1876. The number of votes recorded was smaller; but the opponents of the measure lost twenty votes, and the friends but twelve. Two of the members who voted against the Bill in 1876, supported it this year, and not one who supported it in the last division voted against it this time—and this, notwithstanding the removal from the House of seventeen old and tried friends of the measure. The minority, including tellers, contained 92 English, 23 Scotch, and 27 Irish members. The majority was composed of 177 English, 17 Scotch, and 27 Irish members. We should wish to quote further statistics of this division, but sufficient are given to give us courage to persevere; and it is a satisfaction that the majority, viz. 28, of our Scotch members are in favour of Women's Suffrage.

This year we have not felt it a duty, as a Committee, to go largely into the petitioning work, reserving for another year more concentrated effort in this direction—when, perhaps, our national circumstances may be in a more prosperous condition, and the commercial weight overhanging our country may be removed; but we have not failed to use influence in other ways, seeking to urge on members the duty of being present when Mr Courtney's resolution comes before the House.

Very interesting and influential public meetings have been held throughout England and Ireland, in support of Women's Suffrage,

during the past year; and, on the 23d of January of this year, an important Congress was held at Bristol, to which we appointed as delegate, our Secretary, Miss E. Kirkland. The meetings were presided over respectively by Rev. J. Caldicott, D.D., Head-Master of the Grammar School, and Mr Killigrew Wait, M.P. for Gloucester. Speeches were delivered by Mr Courtney, Mrs Lillias Ashworth Hallet, Mrs Helen Bright Clark, Miss Becker, Miss Tod, Miss Sturge, Mr Allen Greenwell, Mrs Colman (sister of the late John Stuart Mill), and others. Papers were sent by several friends of the cause who could not be present. Among others, by Professor Masson, on recent work in Edinburgh, the substance of which we have embodied in our report. The speech of Mrs Bright Clark covers so much of the ground of our position that we have thought it well to print portions of it in pamphlet shape. It embodies her sentiment as well as that of all sincere adherents of the Women's Suffrage cause, "that it is from no capricious love of change, but from a sincere love of liberty and all that appears to be noble and Christian in the life of the nation, that we protest humbly, but with all the strength we have, against that exclusion which denies to our sex the rights and the sacred duties of citizenship."

A Report of this Association must properly give details of the direct work for which it has been organised; but we may perhaps be permitted to glance at many of the collateral tokens of progress to women in social and educational advantages. The London University has opened its doors for the education of women, and women already have largely availed themselves of the privileges thus afforded. During the past year several women have entered the ranks of the medical profession, with the degree of M.D. conferred by the Dublin College of Physicians, and many are conducting successful practice in various parts of the kingdom. Some ladies are studying for the bar even in this country; and in America the legal profession shows many eminent and successful practitioners. Working Women's Unions have been and are being formed throughout the country, with the view of becoming a protective and provident league in the interests of the industries and earnings of women.

We have to record, during the past year, the deaths of many good friends of our cause. Among others we may specially allude to those of Sir Francis Goldsmid, M.P., Mr M'Carthy Downing, M.P. for Cork, Dr R. Smith, of Londonderry, and the Right Hon. Russell Gurney. The latter was emphatically the friend of all measures to promote the education and elevation of women: as Mr Courtney remarked in his allusion to the loss sustained by his death—"In respect to all questions affecting the position and the rights of women,

he had that great attribute of a judge, to recognise their claims even before they were pressed on his attention by any importunity. The unjust judge of Scripture listened to the complaints of a woman only because he was wearied out by her pertinacity; the righteous judge is foremost to admit any proper claim, from whomsoever it may come, and Mr Russell Gurney surely fulfilled that duty."

Our interests in Parliament have also been deprived of another friend, by the withdrawal of the Hon. Mr Henley from his position there. "Mr Henley (again we quote Mr Courtney) thought for himself, and so thinking he had the courage of his convictions. He addressed himself to this question without prejudice, and without any apprehension beforehand as to the consequences of his own thought. He saw that the claims of women could not be denied, except upon grounds which would also compel the claims of men to be rejected."

The latest and most affecting loss to our cause is in the death of the Lady Anna Gore Langton, on the 3d February, at Langham House, Hanover Square. There was scarcely a section of the many movements in the interests of women in which she did not give her warm sympathy and help. The women of India, as well as those of this country, had occasion to reap the benefit of her help and experience, and her loss will be widely felt. She was one of the earliest members of the Women's Suffrage Society, and president for many years of the Bristol branch of the Society. She gave her help and influence to the cause, often presiding over meetings held in her own drawing-room, and on more public occasions. With a quotation from one of her speeches in March 1875, we may fittingly conclude this report:—"To have a share, however small, in the government of his country, is one of the noblest ambitions of man; it improves by elevating him; forces him to consider the welfare of others, and enlarges his intellect. And if men find themselves benefited and improved by having the franchise, would not women feel themselves benefited if they had the power of voting? . . . It will always be a principle that Christian women should be meek, modest, humble, and charitable; but it is a prejudice to suppose that giving them the franchise would make them less so. Intellect has been given them which enables them to form opinions—whether equal to men or not we need not consider. Such as it is, they are answerable for making the best use of it for themselves and others. I agree that women's duties begin at home—they begin there, but there they do not end. Wherever there is poverty or sorrow, need or suffering, there it is the duty of women to follow, and try to alleviate or remedy the evil." So may it be with those who seek political recognition—that their aims

in this cause may be ever directed to secure their object for the interests of women and of humanity. Remembering that for their influence, and the effort to extend that influence, they are responsible, as they are for the exercise of all the talents with which God has entrusted them.

We have gratefully to acknowledge the legacy of £100 from the Hon. Caroline Elizabeth Norton, left by her to her dear friend Miss Agnes M'Laren for the good cause of Women's Suffrage. We would express especial thanks to Miss M'Laren for thus kindly placing at our disposal this sum of money, and we shall endeavour faithfully to employ it in advancing the cause it is left to promote. The money, with interest from the date of gift, amounting to £114, 10s., is lodged on deposit-receipt in the Bank of Scotland, and will readily be available when occasion offers.*

Miss MAITLAND, Corstorphine, in moving the adoption of the report, and that it be printed and circulated, characterised it as a most interesting and encouraging one, and hoped its circulation would advance the interest in their cause still more than formerly. As that occasion was the first on which she had been present at any of these meetings, she thought she could not do better than explain how she had come to take an interest in the movement. She had for several years possessed that which gave her the right to vote if the privilege had been given in Scotland; however, she had been in the position that if it was given she might use it, but would make no effort to obtain it. But being invited to a drawing-room meeting

* Since the preparation of the above report, the "Resolution" of Mr Courtney has been brought before Parliament, and the division on it has taken place, when 217 voted against, and 103 voted for it. Notwithstanding this unfavourable result, however, many tokens of encouragement were afforded in the character of the debate, and other circumstances. The following Scotch members voted in favour of Women's Suffrage on the two divisions.

George Anderson, Glasgow.	Peter M'Lagan, Linlithgow.
Sir R. Anstruther, Fife.	Duncan M'Laren, Edinburgh.
James W. Barclay, Forfarshire.	John Maitland, Kirkcudbright.
Charles Cameron, Glasgow.	Alex. Matheson, Ross and Cromarty.
James Cowan, Edinburgh.	John Pender, Wick Boroughs.
Sir H. R. F. Davie, Haddington.	Right Hon. Lyon Playfair, Edinburgh and St Andrews Universities.
Archibald Orr Ewing, Dumbarton.	John Ramsay, Falkirk Boroughs.
J. F. Harrison, Kilmarnock Boroughs.	Mark J. Stewart, Wigtown Boroughs.
William Holms, Paisley.	G. O. Trevelyan, Hawick Boroughs.
Edward Jenkins, Dundee.	Sir David Wedderburn, Haddington Boroughs.
Samuel Laing, Orkney and Shetland.	James Yeaman, Dundee.
John Farley Leith, Aberdeen.	
C. F. Mackintosh, Inverness Boroughs.	

at Newington House, Mrs M'Laren's address there roused her to more consideration of the subject, as also to a feeling of responsibility in connection with it. There is a saying attributed to the Wesleyans, "Do all the good you can, as long as you can, and by every means you can." We have also a higher saying, as follows:—"To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." So she had come to think that woman's exercise of the franchise might be a means of our doing good in the world, and our not seeking after this means of usefulness might be wrong. In considering the matter still more deeply, she considered it had good foundation in Scripture, reason, and justice. In Old Testament times there were a Miriam and a Deborah taking a prominent part in the political actions of the people of Israel. In the New Testament we see that our blessed Lord made use of women to advance the interests of His kingdom; whilst the Apostle Paul mentions them as fellow-labourers in it. It may be thought that Pilate's wife took a bold step in endeavouring to sway the exercise of the Roman governor's authority when on the judgment seat; but well had it been for Pilate this day had he taken his wife's advice and had "nothing to do with that Just Man." She also believed that there is sound reason and common sense in women having some share in the choice of the legislators of the country, seeing such a large portion of the community for whom laws are to be made are women. Some members in the House of Commons had said long ago that if women had had something to do with the Legislature some of the laws obnoxious to women and the whole country would never have been passed, and that others would have been repealed sooner. Justice also commends the grant of the Suffrage to women, seeing that what they pay for should be granted to them as well as to men, and that in this matter there should be "no respect of persons." If, as some of our best men in Parliament have said, the interests of justice, religion, and morality would be advanced in our country through Women's Suffrage, then she felt that the sooner they obtained it and exercised it the better.

Mrs KIRK moved, "That it was inconsistent with the principles of representative government, and against the best interests of the country, that women who were entitled to vote in parochial and school board elections, and in municipal elections in England, though not in Scotland, when possessed of the statutory qualification, were disabled from voting in Parliamentary elections, though possessed of the necessary qualifications, and that it was expedient that the disability should be removed and repealed, and that a petition to this effect be sent to Parliament from the meeting." Mrs Kirk thought that, when they remembered the House of Commons

was elected to raise taxes—that was its chief purpose—and that it had complete control of all the money given or raised in this way from the people, they ought to see that every woman as well as man who sends money into that House, to be disposed of there according as members might vote, should have the right to look after that money, and see what was done with it. To get this done, the only way she could see was through the franchise. Then, as regarded the best interests of the country, she had to say that, if they took women and men equally just as they stood, taking one class of men and the same class of women, and put them side by side, they would see that the women were as well educated in their several classes as men were. Hence, it was for the best interests of the community that men and women should equally be entitled to the franchise in this country. Then, in regard to the justice of the question, suppose they took a man who had no property, properly speaking, but who paid the proper amount of rental, and a woman with very large means, very different in every respect from this man, still, simply because she was a woman, she was not permitted to use the franchise, while the man was preferred by the law as it at present stood. Was that justice? She considered that every one of them could easily see that this was simply injustice. Seeing women were allowed to vote at municipal elections in England, she trusted they would soon have the same privilege extended to them in Scotland. Miss Blyth and Miss Stevenson had been elected by them to the School Board, and in doing this they had done a good work. She trusted they might now have it in their power to do something with regard to councillors also. She thought women were more uncompromising than men. Very frequently they were more honest—not so easily swayed by trade and many other influences as many of the electors are. They even found instances of men who would give their vote to their employers, or to any one who would give a good return. But women saw better—more clearly. If they had not intellect in one way, they generally possessed it in respect of their clearness of penetration; and she was fully convinced that if women, with the knowledge they possessed, had electoral power, they would use it for the good of the country as well as for their own good. (Applause.)

Mrs DANIEL, in seconding the motion, remarked that the educational advantages for women were very inferior to those for men; and she hoped, when women were enfranchised, that these would be more equalised, and their educational interests more considered. (Applause.)

Mrs KIRK concurred with her seconder in thinking there was great room for more education.

TREASURER'S STATEMENT, for the Year Ending 28th February 1879.

INCOME.

Balance from last year	-	£161	10	2
Subscriptions and Donations	-	134	1	0
Interest	-	1	0	10

EXPENDITURE.

Printing	-	£18	3	0
Subscription to <i>Journal</i>	-	18	12	6
Publications for circulation	-	1	13	6
Canvassing and Travelling Expenses in connection with Country Petitions	-	19	10	9
Expenses of Sub-Committee in getting up Class Petitions, and Canvassing Women	-			
Householders in Edinburgh	-	29	14	3
Expenses of Secretary	-	67	0	0
Rent of Committee Room	-	2	7	6
Postages, Stationery, Carriage of Parcels, Advertising, &c.	-	19	16	0
Deputation to Bristol	-	10	0	0
Balance on hand	-	109	14	6
		<u>£296</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>0</u>

EDINBURGH, 5th March 1879.—I have examined the Books and Vouchers for the past year, and find them all correct, there being a Balance in the Bank of Scotland of £109, 11s. 6d., and in Treasurer's hands, 3s. ; in all, £109, 14s. 6d.

DUNCAN M'LAREN, JUN.

OPINIONS OF WOMEN ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.