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1898
Women's Suffrage Pamphlets
 Some Selected Facts
 from the Bishops of Southwell + Lady Laura Ridding,
 England + Wales. Areas of the Various Societies
 National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies London, 1897
 The Present Aspect of Women's Suffrage
 Considered. By Arabella Lane 1897.
 Women's Suffrage. Why should Women Demand
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 Women's Suffrage Associate Scheme.
 Women's Suffrage in the Light of the Second
 Reading of 1897.

WHY WOMEN WANT THE SUFFRAGE.

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WOMEN'S opinion is not at present represented in Parliament. Is this fair or right?

A woman may be a landed proprietor, but while every man on her estate has a voice in the government of the nation she has none. She may be a tenant farmer, but while each labourer on her farm has a vote she has none. She may be a lodging-house keeper, but while the lodger in her house has a vote she has none. All these women pay taxes and have to obey the laws, yet they have no voice in questions of taxation or in the making of the laws. They are in exactly the same position as men, they have exactly the same responsibilities as men, yet they are not allowed the same privileges as men. They may vote in the School Board Elections; in the Parish and District Council Elections; in the Town or County Council Elections, but they are shut out from the Parliamentary polling booth. Is this just or reasonable?

Again if "obedience to the law is a test of good citizenship," women are better citizens than men, for out of the number of men and women who are committed for trial for serious offences against the law the women are less than a fifth the number of the men; yet although thus proved to be better citizens, women are allowed no voice in the government of their country. A man may even have been in prison for breaking the laws, yet on his release he is permitted to vote, while a woman who has obeyed the laws all her life is not allowed a vote.

It is said: "If women householders and ratepayers are given the vote, married women who have property, or who are judicially separated from their husbands, or whose husbands are in an asylum, will also have a right to the vote; and if these married women have the vote, why should not all married women have it as joint occupiers of houses?" It is true. By their unpaid labour of keeping the homes of the working men, and by their bearing and rearing of children, the working man's wife is just as useful, just as necessary to the nation, as her husband, and she has therefore just as much right to a voice in its government and the making of its laws.

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HEAVY
It is, however, impossible to attain everything at once. Things grow gradually, and women will do well to remember how slow has been the extension of the suffrage among men, and so "take anything they can get and hope for more as time goes on."

Now the general idea amongst men is that women do not want the vote. Is this the case? If so, it can be only because women do not realise the power of the vote.

It is said also that women take no interest in politics. Is this true? If so, it is only because they do not realise what politics are and how they affect their everyday life. Let each woman consider this. For instance:—

Do you care about Temperance? At present you can only talk and wish for better laws; the vote would give you direct power to help in improving legislation on this subject.

Do you care about Religion? The question of the Dis-establishment of the Church has arisen in Wales and may spread to England and Scotland. You may wish to keep the Church established or wish for absolute equality amongst all Denominations, but without a vote you have no decisive power in the settlement of the question.

Do you work for your own living? If so, are you content that men should regulate women's work and wages, and pass laws affecting them without your having any voice in these matters?

Do you care about your children's Education? Do you think the law just by which they belong solely to their father? Do you think it right that the divorce laws should have, as they now have, one rule for men and another for women? You may think and say what you like about all these matters, but without the vote you have no power to alter them.

It rests in your own hands. If you care about these things and wish to have direct influence in settling them and other political matters, do all you can towards getting Women's Suffrage.

✓ M. TAYLOR

CHIPCHASE.

Copies of this leaflet may be had from the Secretary, Mrs. CHARLES BAXTER, National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, 39, Victoria Street, London, S.W., at 9d. per 100, post free.

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

✓ PROFESSOR F. D. MAURICE

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

BY withholding the Suffrage from Women, on the ground that they ought not to be politicians, we make them, it seems to me, politicians of the worst kind. We justify all feminine pleas for acting upon mere trust or fancy in the selection of a candidate; we encourage the abuses to which those pleas lead. On the other hand, if the Legislature frankly admits Women to the exercise of the Suffrage, it will, I believe, gradually raise the tone of the whole land, by raising the tone of those who, often to their injury, govern its governors. In any sphere wherein women feel their responsibility, they are, as a rule, far more conscientious than men. When in any sphere they are *less* conscientious and help to make men less conscientious, it is a reasonable conjecture that in this sphere something has taken from them the sense of responsibility. Mere legislation is not able to effect such a mischief as that, but legislation based upon a moral theory and working along with it, may do even greater mischief. * *

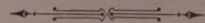
"So long as a majority of the male inhabitants of Great Britain were not reckoned in the constituency, it might have been a useless waste of time to recommend that women should be represented. When householders are admitted to the franchise, their exclusion must strike anyone as anomalous. I do not, however, ask for their admission as the removal of a constitutional anomaly, of which we tolerate so many, but as a positive strength to the moral life of England. The hints I have thrown out on this subject have been expanded with far more force in the writings wherein women have pleaded their own cause. But it may not be wholly useless for an outsider of the other sex to own how their arguments have impressed him, and to state on what grounds he considers that men of all parties and all professions may co-operate with them.—
Letter to "The Spectator".

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

HERBERT SPENCER

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.



THE extension of the law of equal freedom to both sexes will doubtless be objected to on the ground that the political privileges exercised by men must thereby be ceded to women also. Of course they must; and why not? . . . We are told, however, that "woman's mission" is a domestic, that her character and position do not admit of her taking part in the decision of public questions—that politics are beyond her sphere. But this raises the question, Who shall say what her sphere is? . . . As the usages of mankind vary so much, let us hear how it is to be shown that the sphere *we* assign her is the true one—that the limits *we* have set to female activity are just the proper limits. Let us hear why on this point of our social polity we are exactly right, whilst we are wrong on so many others. We must conclude that, being required by that first pre-requisite to greatest happiness, the law of equal freedom, such a concession is unquestionably right and good.

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

THE LORD
Chief Justice Coleridge

(THEN SIR JOHN COLERIDGE).

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

"I can scarcely believe that if the House of Commons was as much aware as every lawyer is aware of the state of the law of England as regards women, even still after the very recent humane improvements in it, it would hesitate to say it was more worthy of a barbarian than of a civilized state. If that be so, I do not think the wisdom of Parliament will be darkened, nor the justice of Parliament slackened, because those who appeal to that wisdom are entitled to be heard by reason of the possession of something like political power, when they ask for justice. I believe, fully, that after a certain number of years the law, which I regard in many respects as wholly indefensible, will be altered. As it is, I believe the sense of justice on the part of men, if they are once aroused to it and convinced of the injustice, will in time bring about the reform needed; but I believe this reform will not be brought about so fast as it would be if we put into the hands of those who suffer from this injustice some share of political power. Therefore, Sir, while I admit I do not question the justice of Parliament, or the right intentions of honourable members, I submit that the constitutional means of remedying injustice is by influencing members of Parliament in a constitutional way.—*Speech in the House of Commons on May 1st, 1872, during the Debate on the Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women.*

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

PROFESSOR LINDSAY, D.D.

(GLASGOW UNIVERSITY,)

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

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

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PROFESSOR LINDSAY, D.D.

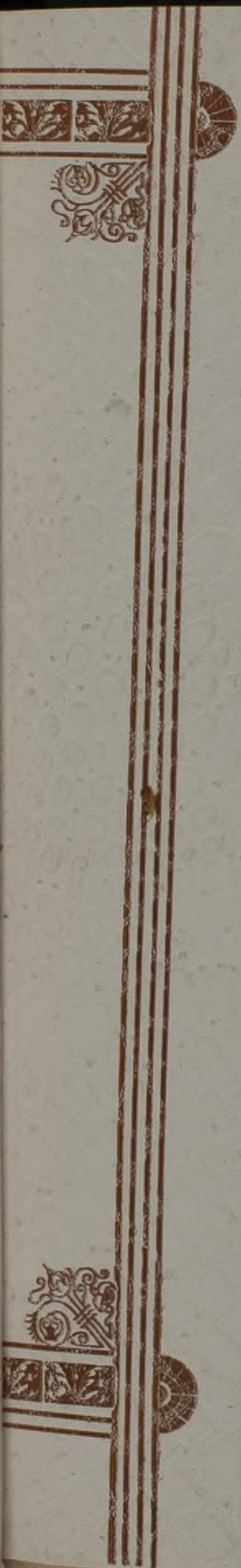
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The
Renaissance
of
Women.

Isabel Somerset.

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The North American Review.

THE RENAISSANCE OF WOMEN.

WHAT has changed woman's outlook so that she now desires that of which her grandmother did not dream? This is the question that is asked to-day from pulpit and platform, in magazine and newspaper, with fatiguing reiteration. Is the woman of our time less feminine in her instinct, less domestic in her tastes, or less devoted to the interests of her family? As well might we ask whether the man of our time is less courageous because he no longer buckles on a coat of mail to wage an endless war with his near neighbour; less honourable because he does not avenge insult in a duel; less devout because he no longer believes that by conquering a distant land and planting the cross instead of the crescent on the heights of Jerusalem he is doing God's work in the world. Times have changed, and with the years the standard of social custom changes also. Woman, like man, is adapting herself to her

environment. In ancient days her home was a great domestic manufactory of which she was the head. The flax was spun, the linen woven, by her deft fingers; the bread was baked in a glowing oven under her watchful care; and by her the perfume was distilled from summer flowers. She was the artist whose embroidery decked the cathedral and the palace; for home was not only the factory that supplied domestic wants, but the studio whence came the choicest objects of skill and beauty. But with the birth of applied science the marvellous inventions of man robbed her one by one of her employments. The steel fingers of machinery replaced her skilful and ingenious hand; the city bakeries provided food; the sweet perfumes of flowers were perfectly imitated in a thousand chemical laboratories, and tapestries and silks were woven to the tune of steam while the roomy old homesteads disappeared and rows of little houses took their place where operatives eked out a monotonous existence. The school with kindergarten attachment undertook to educate her children's powers; trained nurses watched over the pillows of the sick, and woman with folded hands looked out upon the world, her employment wellnigh gone. In view of such a situation, the reasoning mind must ask, Is not

woman to adjust herself to these far-reaching changes, even as man has suited himself to the new environment that steam, electricity, and the printing-press have brought to him? The arts and crafts that centred for centuries in the home have expanded until they have become the possession of the world, and man has taken them under his supervision. Why, then, should not woman keep her native place in the world's economy by the regulation of that wider home which has now spread outside the four walls of her own house, and which we call society and government, and take her place with man in framing laws that affect the well-being of those who formerly worked within her kingdom, but who now dwell outside, in that larger family circle that we call a nation?

The arguments used by those who oppose woman's entrance to public life are in these days usually based on the line that woman is too sacred, her influence too pure and precious, to be frittered away in the sordid quarrels and mean ambitions entailed by party politics; that her presence has ever been the magnet of the home; and that the nation will be wisest and best that preserves the sanctity of its womanhood and the influence of its mothers. It is precisely because I believe in the truth of this

argument that I maintain that to debar woman from any one single right, to exclude her from any prerogative, is to create for her not only a disability by reason of her sex, but to build up a barrier that must ever effectually hinder her widest influence. It is well to talk of the mother guiding the son in life, but from the hour that the boy understands that his mother's prerogatives end at the garden gate, that she has no voice whatever in the moulding of the nation's laws, that her precepts are good for the fireside but unavailing at the hearthstone of government, there insidiously creeps into the boy's thought a realisation of the fact that his mother is classified by the rulers of the land with the lunatic and the idiot; and I maintain that this discovery has done more than sons are themselves aware of to undermine the influence that is deemed so precious and yet which is sedulously preserved for "home consumption" only. Moreover, to deprive a government of the keen moral sense that is native to women as a class (though, to the great hindrance of humanity, they have too long admitted that their moral standard must necessarily be higher than that of man), is to rob the nation of a strong support by which it would undoubtedly benefit. Another argument that is brought forward to prove that woman does not

need to have a share in government is that her interests are ably represented by men. If this be so, women are the only class "ably represented" by those who have in many instances a wholly separate interest from theirs. The very fact that the question of the woman's vote has been so long treated as a subject fit only for stale and silly jokes, or to be put aside with pompous platitudes, is in itself sufficient proof that women's interests are not guarded with the same care as men's; and the code of laws that places property in the hands of the husband, gives him complete power over the children, and protects him in conjugal authority over his wife, proves the impracticability of securing justice to women as a class until they themselves have an equal voice with men in the making of the law.

We have been told that woman's true work comes to her in the gentler calls of a sorrowing world; that her leisure should be spent in assuaging misery and suffering, and in the exercise of that charity which man has not the time or inclination to dispense; but there is probably no surer symptom of the change that is coming over society at large with regard to the great social problems of the age than the view now taken of the best methods of dealing with poverty and crime. This change is the outcome of the slow, but

sure, sifting of social questions that is going on in the minds of all classes. Charity was considered to be a sort of moral patchwork ; it was excellent for the soul of the giver, and helped the recipient to exist under circumstances that would otherwise have been intolerable. But it was, and is still, unconsciously, too often a mere ethical anæsthetic. We have many of us in England passed through the phase of going from cottage to cottage in country districts or in those village towns which abound in our land, listening to the oft-repeated story,—“twelve shillings a week, ten children, afraid to complain—the farmer from whom the wretched pittance is earned would turn us out. There was scarlet fever (or typhoid) in the village last year, the inspector came and we may get the sewage altered. They say the water is bad.” We have looked out on the sunny pastures, standing at these cottage doors, and heard that the sick baby can get no milk ; it is all sold at the farms for butter. “My husband could do with a bit of land or keep a cow, but it is all let away in big holdings, and there isn’t a rood to be got.” And as we have put down the half-pound of tea or a few yards of flannel on the little table, the absolute conviction has come to our minds that such charity is but a palliative to our consciences, and we go away with the feeling that with the priest

and Levite we looked upon the sufferer, saw the real condition, and passed by on the other side. Tennyson sang long years ago :

Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
If time be heavy on your hands,
Are there no beggars at your gate
Nor any poor about your lands ?

The words were true, wherein they prescribed for the mental malady of Lady Clara, but let her not imagine that she is doing other than taking into the midst of her artificial surroundings a very little of that wholesome tonic which contact with the realities of life must bring. I do not underrate the self-denying efforts of any who give their lives to make the existences of those around them holier, purer, and more wholesome ; but I maintain that true philanthropy means the dealing with cause and not effect, searching out the root of evil and attacking it at all risks ; not pulling down the leaves from poisoned boughs in the leisure moments of a summer’s day.

I am well aware that Lady Bountiful is popular ; that it is her happy fortune to minister to the wishes of all. She presides at the sumptuous dinner party, and with her fair hands carries the crumbs to the “beggars at her gate.” But I know also that she will become unpopular when she dares to pass beyond the

circle of her guests 'into that wider world where she will seek to know, from those who solve such problems, the reasons that laid a fellow-man beggared at her door, and when although she succours him she determines so to work that none may take his place; and I maintain this is the only charity to which the thinking woman can turn her powers of mind and heart to-day.

The more we seek to unravel the tangled skein of reasons that are given to prove that woman must not face the great public questions of the time, or endeavour to enter "the maze of politics," the more clearly we understand that these many reasons resolve themselves into one, and that one is the disability of sex. It is not education that is wanting, because the higher education now places many women far above the level of the ordinary voter, some on an equality with any statesman, and the average woman on an absolute equality with the average man. Nor is it the question of property that can now bar woman's way to the polling booth. From the hour that the married woman's property was restored to her, she was at least allowed to become an individual. The grotesqueness of the old *régime* that prevailed only a short time ago in England, became so apparent when a certain poor man married a rich woman and made a will by which he kindly left

the woman her own property on the generous condition that she should not marry again, that as the sequel of public agitation men granted this measure of justice to women.

We are continually reminded that the whole basis of good government is founded on the fact that taxation and representation go together. It can therefore only be sex disability that deprives a woman of the power to vote when she is compelled to pay taxes. In this respect I do not find men anxious to represent women; in fact, I have never found a male citizen keenly desirous to represent my interests when the tax collector called. Again, woman is an individual and her individual right is fully conceded when she is to pay the penalty of any ill-doing or when she receives a death sentence from the the lips of a jury of men.

I presume that the argument that is supposed to be almost crushing as to the disability of woman to take her share in national politics is the fact that she does not fight; but I do not think woman does not fight because she is unable to do so. It may be true that the myths of the Amazons are lost in so hazy a past that we are not able distinctly to glean any definite facts as to their origin; but we are well aware that among savage tribes in our own time woman's strength

and woman's prowess are called into action, that kings' bodyguards have been formed of women, and that as far as physical strength goes, woman, at any rate in a savage state, is as capable of bearing hardship and fatigue as man. Any one who has seen the Indian squaw carrying the baggage of the family on her back while the man leisurely sits on his horse smoking his short pipe, cannot feel the slightest doubt as to woman's equality in physical strength; at any rate the Indian has realised it and made practical use of his knowledge.

This whole outcry of "one vote, one sword," is founded on a fallacy. It is true that the barbarous tribes who were wont to put their women in the van as fighters have all died out. To what is woman's exemption from military duties owing? To the desire of men to represent her on the battlefield? Not at all; it is owing to natural selection. The mothers who are the makers of men had to be guarded for the benefit of the tribe or the nation; otherwise that nation would suffer in its survival.

Women have a greater *role* than that of fighting; they are the fountain of the race, at which it recruits its losses, perpetuates its hopes, and conserves the results of victories already gained; and I maintain that if service to the nation is to count as a chief

article of faith for the voter, the service—aye, and the dangerous service—that woman renders every nation is far greater than the occasional facing of a Maxim gun or the remote contingency of a bursting shell. There is hardly a woman who is not called to come face to face with death; who does not go down into the great Gethsemane of suffering, and with the dew of eternity on her brow give to the world its sons and daughters. It is woman's fight for the race, the fight in which she too often gives her life. It is a greater service to bear soldiers than to bear arms.

I now revert to the fact that there is a severe loss to the nation in the disability of woman to vote, because it places her, in the estimation of the citizenship, on a lower level than men, and it leads to the degrading belief that man can afford to have a lower standard of morals than woman. It lends, also, to the demoralising idea that woman was created for man's pleasure, and from this concept is recruited that great army, sad and sorrowful, that has for long ages trodden the stony way of shame. There is no class of women who can ever be justly set aside to fulfil purposes of evil because it is necessary that men should sin; but it is from this immeasurable indignity that has sprung, undoubtedly, the idea that women are inferior to men, and, therefore, must be debarred the

rights of citizenship. If it be true that a certain class of women must ever be appointed to fulfil the duty that Lecky terms "the mission of the sad priestess of humanity," I believe that the middle ages took a far more logical view of this question than we do now, for then such women were recognised among the guilds that paraded the towns on hey-days and holidays, a class whose existence was a necessity, and who, therefore, carried on no dishonourable calling. We naturally shrink from such morality as that, but the existence of any class of women who are degraded by doing that which does not unfit man morally or socially for the duties of citizen and of a future husband honoured and beloved, is far more debasing in its effects upon the nation than the crude brutality of the mediæval times.

There is another argument that I believe to be, if possible, more fallacious than any yet examined, namely, that the right to assert her political individuality will cause the disruption of the home. The age is too far advanced for such arguments. Woman has discovered herself; she has realised that she possesses a soul with all that that word implies; a soul fraught with that mysterious loneliness which envelops every human being that looks up to the great beyond, not knowing whence it came nor whither it is going.

Shrouded in that inner recess which no man can touch, no human being approach, lies the consciousness that is always lonely save as it realises the presence of God. And unless the marriage tie respects this individuality, instead of being the dearest and the best bond that can brighten any human life, it will become the detestable chain from which woman will pray to be released. The only way in which the tie of home can ever be destroyed will be by endeavouring to chain the woman who has as much right to be free as the husband at her side.

I believe that woman should vote because she is a different being and always will have a different work to do in life from that of man. She has a divine task to accomplish. You entrust her with the most sacred duty on earth; you ask her first to give the nation her children; you ask her to nurture and care for them; you ask her to instil into their minds the holiest aspirations that are to be their guide in after life; you ask her, with all her experience and her judgment, to look upon the world with its many social evils that her mother's eyes are swift to see while yours are blinded, and then you ask her to believe that it is "justice" that her voice should be silent, her action powerless to guard the interests of her girls whom you declare that men, and men alone, must represent.

You ask her to sit through long weary nights rocking the cradle, but when the child grows up to manhood you say that she has no right to deal with those questions that make for the weal or woe of his future life. You do not deny that in many cases women maintain the home by their own labour, that by the "sweat of their brow do they eat bread," that the children owe their education, their clothing, the roof over their heads, to the work of their mothers' hands; you do not ask the men of the state to "represent" the women when they have no one to earn a living for the children who are deprived by death of a father or deserted by a worthless husband; but only when you come to the edge of the Rubicon, where toil is merged into privilege, and penalties pass over into power, do you say to the woman, "Stand back; thus far and no farther!"

"The broadest and most far-sighted intellect," Wendell Phillips has truly said, "is utterly unable to foresee the ultimate consequences of any great social change; but ask yourselves on all such occasions if there is no element of right or wrong in the question, no principle of clear, natural justice that turns the scale; and if so, as in the past so in the future, the men of this country will take their part with perfect and abstract right, and they will see the expediency of it hereafter."

It is possible that woman may not take the same view of imperial politics as has been taken in the past by man; but man's views are changing, and it may be that woman's influence on politics has had some effect in bringing about that change. Suffice it to say that should women take a different view it may not be that it is less wise, less just, less true, but rather in this dawning day when the nations are beginning to understand the brotherhood of the race, men may learn that real brotherhood can never exist so long as one-half of humanity is ignored in the councils of the world. For eternally it will be true that "man and woman, dwarfed or god-like, fall or rise together."

The world has seen the renaissance in art and literature; the renaissance in religion; it has watched the slow dawning of the renaissance of human brotherhood: are we not now entering the epoch of the renaissance of woman?

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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

amateurs. The least of its functions claims much honest thought and watchfulness. Either, then, the manly professions will suffer, or else—and this is the worst danger of the two—the suffrage will be carelessly exercised, and the mass of new voters, without leisure to think and judge for themselves, will be swayed by a few wire-pullers, unprincipled adventurers, who, seeking only to feather their own nests, will not hesitate to turn to account the ignorance and preoccupation of the electors.

“Now turn to the woman. Her organisation no less clearly defines her sphere. With finer natural perceptions than man, less ungovernable in her emotions, quicker and clearer in intellect, physically better fitted for sedentary life, more inclined to study and thought, everything seems to qualify her specially for legislation. For the judicious application of general rules to particular cases, peculiar delicacy of instinct is required, and in no capacity have any but women been known to approach the ideal of government—that perfect rule—all-efficient, yet unfelt.

“Take the family as a rough type of the nation. To whom, at home, is naturally allotted the government of young children? To the mother. To whom that of the domestic household? To the mistress. Widowers and bachelors are proverbially the slaves and victims of spoilt children and ill-trained servants. In all such home matters the husband defers to his wife, and would as soon expect to have to instruct her in them as she to teach him fortification, boxing, or mechanics. Little time or thought, indeed, has the professional man to spare for household superintendence; how much less for matters requiring such careful study as the government of a nation. The clergyman, wearied with his day’s visiting of the sick, teaching or preaching; the doctor after his rounds; the merchant or tradesman

overwhelmed with business; what they require when their daily toil is over is rest, relaxation, not to be set down to work out complex social and political problems, to study the arguments for and against the several measures to which members offer to pledge themselves, and to form a judgment on the merits of respective candidates. What time or opportunity have they for qualifying themselves to do so? But the wives of these men, on the other hand, have lives comparatively unoccupied, and of physical and intellectual leisure enough and to spare. Here, then, is a commodity; there a demand and a field for it, and this surplus, so to speak, of time, strength, and attention with us has been always applied to the science of government, nor do I see how a happier or more judicious arrangement could have been made.

“I will proceed now to enumerate a few of the dangers to which the enfranchisement of men would inevitably expose us. Male voters will view each political question in a narrow professional light, irrespective of its justice or general expediency. Large proprietors will stand up for the game laws, eldest sons for primogeniture. Publicans, brewers, and railway directors will exercise a baneful, blind, one-sided influence on our counsels. An impartial debate or decision will soon become a thing of the past, fairness sink into the shade, and a majority of direct pecuniary interest turn the scale in all cases.

“Again, the bulk of the national property being in the hands of the men, the openings and temptations to bribery would be enormously increased. Few women have the power, had they the will, to offer bribes sufficient to suborn a constituency, but when millionaires are admitted to the suffrage we may expect to see parliamentary elections bought and sold, and going, like other wares, to the highest bidder.

“But there is a more alarming danger still. The muscular

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.

THE
CITIZENSHIP OF WOMEN

SOCIALLY CONSIDERED

By LOUISA SHORE

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THE writer of the following essay is no more. She lived till the 24th of last May, twenty-one years after its first appearance, yet not long enough to witness the final success of the movement she so earnestly supported. It is true that that movement has been a cause of many of the reforms here advocated and that the condition of women is very different from what it was then. But the fact that some wrongs still remain, perhaps unconsciously, unredressed, and the importance of the general truths dwelt on in these pages will, it is hoped, render the reprint not mistimed even in these present more enlightened days.

A. S.

HILLSIDE, WIMBLEDON.
18th June, 1895.

THE CITIZENSHIP OF WOMEN SOCIALY CONSIDERED.

WHAT is the position of women in England at this day? It has, doubtless, risen with advancing civilisation at war with old traditions; it has been improved by very slowly improving education; it is ornamented and disguised by masculine compliments; and it is surrounded in drawing-rooms by chivalrous homage, meaning thereby politeness, as well as by an abundance of outward comfort and luxuries. Yet—legally, and therefore, more or less, socially—it is merely a modification of ancient barbarism, ordered on barbarian principles, mitigated in their working but still barbarian. The progress made in other directions, the changes other institutions have undergone, make this fact still more conspicuous, the position of women still more exceptional.

In the early ages of the human race advantage was taken of woman's physical weakness to make her literally a slave; she is now—in civilized nations, that is—merely in "subjection." In old times—and not such very old times either—she was reviled and despised for the defects fostered in her by slavery; she is now more gently branded by the law as an inferior, in company with "criminals, lunatics, and idiots;" and complacently told by men—seriously, with the most complimentary intentions it may be, and with full conviction—that this legal inferiority, this positive subjection, imply and result in a social superiority first formulated by "chivalry" (only women of the drawing-room class being recognised under this theory) and form the safeguard of that higher moral excellence she is credited with alongside of a lower mental capacity.

But this legal position of woman does, I think, tell on herself and on society in general, in quite a different way, while at the same time the unconscious, or half-conscious, efforts she has herself made hitherto, according to her more or less of education, to resist these evil influences, produce the strangest incongruities. It has fostered grievous private and individual wrongs; and, worse still, it helps yet, as the

principle on which it was founded has helped for ages, to lower the tone of that society it is supposed to benefit. Many thinking men and women, in continually increasing numbers, have begun to perceive this; and a good many others have been from time to time aware that there was something a little wrong in matters of detail—something here and there that might be amended. To these latter, and we believe to English legislators in general, it has always seemed easier to modify the evil workings of a vicious principle than to abolish it altogether. Such minds do not even seek to distinguish the authority of old-established prejudice from the sanction of nature and reason. It seems to them more natural to grant privileges than justice, indulgence than liberty. It has not occurred to them to ask themselves whether, after all, woman may not be allowed a voice, or at least the fraction of a voice, in the ordering of her own position in the world, of her own dearest interests and liberties.

It would be useless, most unjust, most unphilosophical, to bring a railing accusation against men on this account—especially unphilosophical because such, or such like, has been the course of action of all irresponsibly dominant classes since the world began, until the eyes of both ruler and ruled have been at last opened to a sense of its injustice. And further, it would be most ungrateful to those noble and generous minds amongst them whose hearty sympathy and active efforts to obtain justice for women—that is, in fact, justice to all society—deserve the most ample acknowledgment. It requires, and this is true of every one of us, man or woman, much imagination, much sympathy, much reflection in the first instance, to shake off the influence of ancient prejudice instilled into us from birth and inherited from ages. Many minds are wholly incapable of this effort. How many unconscious and even benevolent oppressors, throughout the long history of class and race dominations, down to the modern slave-holder (for there have been kind-hearted slave-holders, we doubt not), have been able to comprehend, or to how many has it ever occurred, that traditional acquiescence on the part of the subjected does not necessarily constitute a natural or a religious sanction; that a time may come when it is actually not enough to tell the subject-class that they have everything they want or ought to want, that they ought to be thankful to be taken care of, for they cannot take care of themselves, that they are by nature inferior? There comes a time when irresponsible power appears in a different light to those on whom it is exercised from that in which it

is seen by those exercising it. It is long, indeed, before both parties become equally aware that *both* are injured by it; that justice, in such cases as these, “blesses both him that gives and him that takes,” much in the moment of giving, more in its after results.

This domination of one sex over the other, that is, of one half the mature human race over the other half, has lasted longer than most others, because the physical force is permanently on the side of the first. And this, indeed, is sometimes itself considered as a decisive reason why women should not plead right and justice; they cannot enforce them; therefore Nature means that they should not have them any further than man finds it convenient to allow. But to refuse justice because it cannot be enforced is not in other relations of life reckoned the highest morality.

To many men, conscious in their hearts of nothing but kindness, indulgence and generosity to the women they associate with; to many who see, or think they see, fairly happy marriages all round them; who see how often women “get their own way,” as it is called, by the good nature of their own particular rulers, by cajolery, by unconscionable teasing, by temper, by the obstinacy of their prejudices—those prejudices that men have fostered in women as “so feminine”—or even by superior good sense; to those who have perceived that society, even as it is, can produce noble-minded women, and have possibly worshipped such in their hearts, or who ask for nothing better than to be allowed tenderly to protect some tender creature whom they love, to these it may seem exaggerated, unreal, and ridiculous to talk of the domination of men over women, at least in England and most civilised countries. I think, with all deference to the feelings of such men, it is because the evils it has produced and is still producing are so deep-seated and complex, and extend so far beyond their own especial social surroundings, that they have escaped their notice; their very position of legal superiority, of which they are scarcely conscious, so habituated are they to it, having blinded their eyes.

And so are many, many women's eyes blinded; many who, happy in their own circumstances, have never dreamed, any more than their masters, of questioning the authority of old tradition; have never connected the vices of the society around them, or their own shortcomings in any way, however indirect, with the position women hold in it. These will generally seem unconscious that their contentment with their own condition, their ignorance how far even it might be higher or more useful, do not necessarily constitute an argu-

ment for other women in other circumstances. They will perhaps protest, when female suffrage is spoken of, against women "stepping out of their right place." The question, however, is, what, after all, is woman's right place, the precise line beyond which it is profanation for her to step? Is it necessarily, precisely, and only the line pointed out by men, the point fixed by them in different ages, countries, and even classes, being different? Obediently as such women have adopted the traditional teaching of men, yet the question will arise, is it not just possible that men, too, have a little stepped out of *their* place in imposing these limits on women? It is allowed that they have done so in more barbarous times, are they not doing so still?

Others again—multitudes—married and single, and of all classes, are conscious of something wrong in their own and others' lots, are pained by a vague uneasiness or suppressed bitterness, whilst without the culture needed to guide them clearly to *one* source of the evils—we say *one*, for we are of course aware that the countless inequalities and iniquities growing up with a complicated civilisation, and pressing so hardly even on many men, must have many sources. The evils, however, from which women suffer, are especially aggravated by their legal position being essentially unchanged, whilst all things are changed around them.

In arguing for the principle of female citizenship, I must observe that the suffrage has no inherent magical or divine property in it to remove as by a charm all the evils of which we complain; yet under our present institutions, the extension of it to women is the only way of expressing that principle, and is, I believe, an absolutely necessary balance to the increasing number of men now admitted. I am not, however, anxious to dwell much in this essay on the directly political aspect of the question, nor yet on the terrible wrongs and miseries of women under its legal aspects, but rather to call the attention of candid minds to various social considerations deeply affected by their political and legal position. For all these, I maintain, are interdependent, acting and reacting on each other.

In carrying out this view, I may seem sometimes to be wandering rather far afield; but I hope that some few, both of men and women, will perceive that these apparent wanderings do, in fact, all lead up very directly to the point at which I am aiming.

Before going further in this direction, however, I will just notice the chief objections that have been raised to the emancipation of women, objections mostly of detail, raised

by those who, unable to grasp a large, general idea, instinctively fix their eyes successively on the supposed difficulties in carrying it out. Some of these objections—most of them, in fact—serve to display the curious ingenuity of the human mind in imagining hindrances to any alterations of an established order of things, the first feeling being always, not—how can we see our way to grant this? but—how shall we discover a sufficient number of objections to justify our refusal?

The objections in question have been answered over and over again; and it is a curious fact that in this discussion masculine opponents to the emancipation of women seem to have changed their traditional parts with women. Women urge a principle, men stumble at the details. Or they do acknowledge the principle, but decline to carry it to its legitimate results. Women ask for justice, men offer privileges; women advance reasons, men answer with their own feelings and instincts; women meet assertions with evidence in disproof, men reassert them without attempting further proof.

Here, however, is the first, perhaps only, objection which really deserves attention, that the majority of women do not desire the suffrage.

I answer, that the minority that does desire it is a constantly increasing one (not adequately represented even by the increasing number of signatures to petitions. I must further point out that a large portion of the majority, which does not desire it, has simply not been educated to think about it, and has passed a greater part of life without the subject having been brought before it at all; whilst the minority, that does desire it, includes very many women of the highest intellect and cultivation, who have thought deeply on the subject, and many who, feeling for themselves and their neighbours the need of better protection than masculine legislation has hitherto allowed them, gladly welcome the faintest hope of emancipation. Next, as to those who desire the suffrage without signing petitions for it; few men can realise, without some effort of imagination, the pressure put upon women in all cases where their views differ from those of the masculine public. There is, to begin with, their own tenderness for the prejudices of those with whom they live, not to say positive prohibition by fathers and husbands—such arbitrary interference with the independence of mature minds being so sanctioned by law and custom that it is hard, even for those who suffer from it, to resist it. Next, we must take into account that intense

shrinking from masculine sarcasm and mockery which has been so carefully fostered in women that they have justly been said to "live under a gospel of ridicule." And it is part of the argument that this moral coercion *has* been lavishly employed to supplement the legal subjection of women, much of their boasted acquiescence in what *we* consider a faulty state of things having been thus produced. Few can realise, I repeat, without some reflection, some sympathetic insight, how much silent revolt goes on in subjected classes before they openly rebel. In men this silent revolt is generally held to be dangerous, and worth enquiring into; in women, for obvious reasons, it is not. And with women it will be longest maintained, and with more corroding bitterness in proportion, in spite of the persuasions, half contemptuous, half flattering, which now, more frequently than before, alternate with sneers.

Others again, thinking and conscientious women, are still undecided to put their names to the movement, deterred by an overstrained sense of their responsibility; but these may at any moment conclude in its favour, and cannot be reckoned in the majority against it.

I am ready to allow that there are women—and doubtless even some thinking and cultivated ones amongst them—(oftenest, however, such as profess no knowledge and reason on the subject, only "instincts" and "feelings"), who deprecate female suffrage altogether; many more who are absolutely indifferent, and all of these are apt to conceive that their own individual dislike or indifference is argument enough against extending the suffrage to those who do desire it, reason enough for withholding even their sympathy. Of all such women I would speak with respect and indulgence; yet may I not point out to them, and to the men who appeal to their authority, that it is scarcely reasonable that numbers of the thinking, the cultivated, the sensible, the practical, the suffering and oppressed amongst women, should be denied their desire in deference to the "feelings and instincts," the individual disinclination, or indifference of the others? Many, too, of these others are precisely those whom the present demand for the female franchise would not affect personally. I hold, nevertheless, that even these, the indifferent—all, in fact—would be directly or indirectly benefited in time by the change. Those who do not want the franchise need not exercise it, that is their own affair, as it is of men, who in like manner may decline to vote, though we hold that the choice ought to be given to them nevertheless. I doubt, however, whether these very female dissentients will

not be glad, when the time comes, to use their own votes, after seeing how easily and quietly other women have used theirs before them. And what is more, I suspect the masculine objectors will be equally glad to profit by these votes.

Finally, the argument that women do not want the franchise and would be better without it, is in spirit the same as that by which slaveholders have always justified slavery. We do not hold that the negro's ignorance of the moral evils of his position was an argument for keeping him in it.

Of the other objections it may almost be said, that to state them is to refute them. First of these we will take men's "instincts and feelings." To us it does not seem more fair to decide the question of justice by the "instincts and feelings" of men than, as we have said, by the "instincts and feelings" of some women, as against the reason and practical needs of the others. And these "instincts and feelings" have been cited as authoritatively in sanction of restrictions which would *now* be thought barbarian, as of those still enforced and not yet thought barbarian.

Again, it is said that women are unfit for the vote, because they are women. It is true that the training enforced upon women, directly and indirectly, for ages, by men, whereby their characters and minds are in some sort the artificial creation of men, has seemingly had for its object to make them unfit for the powers men exercise. Women have, in consequence, for ages, made no combined effort for emancipation; but exactly as they become aware of the real nature of this traditional training, does this supposed unfitness lessen, and the best way, at this moment, completely to fit them to exercise those powers is to grant them.

What mental or moral "fitness" is sought for as a qualification for the masculine voter, except by that rough sort of classification which does not exclude the drunkard, the wife-beater, the illiterate, the liberated convict, and the semi-idiot? And when you place beside these Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale, George Eliot, and many more whose names we all know, as well as the numbers of women who show every kind of practical fitness in common life, to say that *these* are unfit because they are women, and *those* are fit because they are men, is very like begging the question.

But there are special unfitnesses urged against women. I cannot condescend to dwell on the argument that they are incapable of giving their vote for want of physical strength, or that the chronic state of "blushing and fear," prescribed for them by

Mr. Bouverie, would make it improper and impossible for even a middle-aged woman to face the bustle of polling-places, otherwise by observing that if it were wished to grant women votes, means might easily be found for making it possible to deliver them. But I will mention one other (I think the only special) unfitness alleged against them (except indeed their want of training in political and official life, which they share with a large number of franchise-holding men). This special unfitness resides in their greater "impulsiveness," "excitability" and "sympathy," which are supposed to include and imply "unreasonableness" and "injustice." Till, however, it is argued that Ireland, for example, is naturally disqualified for the suffrage, because the Celt is more "excitable," "impulsive" and "sympathetic" than the Saxon, or indeed till, as I must repeat, moral or intellectual qualifications are made a *sine qua non* in any class of masculine voters whatever, this objection can hardly stand. I will, therefore, only suggest that the co-operation of impulse and sympathy with the more solid and matter-of-fact element in legislation may not be wholly without its political advantages.*

Next it has been alleged that already too many *men* have the suffrage, as a reason for withholding it from women. Even granting the fact, it is not just to say that, because A has had too much given him of a good thing, therefore B shall have none at all, especially when B even requires it as a protection against A. At all events, the extended suffrage has been granted, and cannot now be withdrawn, one reason the more, as I have implied, why women should desire it in their turn, since they now see the drunkard, the wife-beater, the illiterate called, in much larger numbers than before, to legislate indirectly for their dearest and the most delicate concerns, those alike of the most refined and cultivated, as of the most helpless and uneducated of their sex.

Here naturally comes the assertion that "women are virtually represented by men." Indeed, on every proposed extension of political rights, it has been usual for the classes who thought their interests opposed to it to urge that *they*

* It has been argued that the supposed excitability of women will drive them downright mad, if they are allowed to vote. Mrs. Anderson has met this droll suggestion by affirming, from her own personal experience, the good effect more interesting occupations, more important objects in life, have on women's health, bodily and mental. If a woman finds her interests in politics bringing her to the brink of insanity, she will perhaps, under proper medical advice, be able to refrain, but that is her own affair. We do not legislate to prevent men going mad if they choose.

virtually represented the others. This assertion is disproved by the whole course of class legislation in all ages and everywhere; and the harshness of masculine legislation for women certainly forms no exception to the rule.*

If I am reminded that some classes of men are still unrepresented, I answer, putting aside the possibly near approach of universal household suffrage), that *all* women of *all* classes are unrepresented, are all declared to labour under an irremediable birth-disqualification. Individual men of the unfranchised classes can rise to acquire a vote; a woman never can. And women only ask for the vote on the same conditions as those on which it is conferred upon men.

Let us consider here the confessed difficulty of protecting wives in certain classes against the violence of their husbands, as bearing on the plea of "virtual representation." I would not brand any class of our countrymen with hard names, least of all those who have so long suffered, in common with women, such grievous legislative wrongs, such cruel deprivation of education, and are even now struggling to emancipate themselves, scarcely conscious yet that the women's cause rests on the same ground as theirs. But it is too sadly notorious that, in these working and labouring classes, public opinion and the growth of education have not yet banished drunken habits and consequent brutality, and that the difficulties in the way of adequate legal interposition are almost insuperable. Compare the penalties inflicted in these cases with those in which a wife has assaulted a husband, or one man another man. *Here* there is no difficulty in carrying out the full severity of the law. I do not assert that those who administer it do not *wish* to enforce it in behalf of women, though judges and juries do sometimes give us cause to suspect them of considering an assault by the inferior on the superior, by the weaker on the stronger, as more heinous than one with the conditions reversed.

The wife is, in these classes, so helplessly in her husband's power, so trained to feel the violence of her master as a part of his conjugal superiority, that she very often dares not, perhaps actually does not, resent his brutality. It seems to us that at least one approach towards remedying this state of things would be to surround her social status with every

* Take as one instance, the laws of the custody and the guardianship of children, whereby the married (only the *married*) mothers, they whose sex's special and highest function is said to be the maternal, are denied any legal right over their own offspring past the first few years of infancy, as against the will of the father, whatever or whoever he may be, living or dead.

equal right and dignity the law can give her. Law should not aim at rendering her *more* helpless, *more* dependent than inferior strength would naturally make her. The same barbarian prejudice which excludes all women from every political right also subjects the wife to a law which has been called "the most barbarous in Europe." It has naturally taken its full effect on the uneducated classes, that is, it has degraded both man and woman together. That almost superstitious dog-like patience and loyalty which lead a wife to submit to a beating without complaint, and which some men tenderly praise as the *ne plus ultra* of wife-like excellence, might, I think, be exchanged for a nobler form of devotion by making her her husband's legal and social equal; and one indirect step towards this will be giving women some share in making the laws which concern themselves.*

A favourite objection is, that the exercise of the suffrage will interfere with women's duties. It cannot be seriously meant by this that the taking up of a few hours every few years in delivering a vote will hinder a woman—even the most hard-working—in her daily duties more than it would a hard-working man. Indeed, in the present case, it is only asked for unmarried women and widows, many of them possessed of ample leisure and sufficient means. But is it meant that the possession of this franchise would so much more excite and unsettle their minds, and throw them so much more violently into political agitation in the quiet intervening years, than men, as to unfit them for those duties which we are assured it is their nature to perform, and which they find their chief happiness in? This argument rests on the following assumptions:—That it is the business of the legislature to provide more rigorously for the performance of women's private duties than men's; that their good sense and conscience will be found less trustworthy in proportion as they have liberty to exercise them; that whilst we legislate to prevent the race in general from following blindly its natural instincts, we must also legislate to prevent women from *forsaking* theirs at the first opportunity; and finally, that women (unlike men) have no rights, only duties. Assuredly to a noble soul the word "duties" has a higher inspiration than the word "rights"; only some of the highest duties cannot be so well performed without rights. The circle of a slave's duties are very small, and that of a woman's—though

* This is the more needful since legislation for women, whether so-called protective or other, is more and more taking the shape of restrictions on their personal liberty. Factory Acts, 1874. Contagious Diseases Act, 1866-69.

she is no longer in England a slave—has been restricted to a point that future generations will view with wonder.

Again some who do not so much object to the admission (taken by itself) of the unmarried possessing the legal qualifications, cannot see their way to the admission of wives, and consider that objection conclusive against the admission of any, as this would be granting privileges to the recognised "failures" of society while they are withheld from their recognised superiors. I can but say, that if to grant the suffrage be an act of justice, you ought not to refuse it to some because you cannot yet see your way to extending it to all. This theory of the inferiority of women in general to men, and the special inferiority to be enforced by legal subjection on the married amongst them, who are yet declared to be the superiors of the single, involves some curious contradictions.

And further, these objectors fear that if you grant the suffrage to the single having the proper qualifications, wives will by and by demand it as well—either by a change in the qualification for a vote, or in the marriage law. I answer, let that question be discussed when the time comes. It is neither just nor generous to refuse a rightful concession for fear other concessions may be asked for. Meanwhile the supposed moral difficulty of granting the suffrage to wives still rests mainly on the old assumption that women only wait the opportunity to discard their natural duties and affections; that men can be safely trusted with absolute authority over their families, but women not even with the exercise of an independent opinion; that wives at present neither have, nor in fact ought to have, any difference of opinion from their husbands (except on trivial points), but certainly would, if they were once permitted to act on their opinions, and that they will necessarily seize the vote as an occasion for quarrel; also, on the assumption that it is the business of the State to provide against these little domestic difficulties in married life (but only, of course, by laying restrictions on the wife). I can scarcely suppose, however, that any man blessed with an affectionate wife seriously anticipates that, once possessed of a vote, she would make it her business to thwart and oppose him. If his wife is not an affectionate one, I fear the legislature cannot help him, and I am very sure it is not its business to do so. I think this fancied difficulty would be best met in the case of a wife not quarrelsome disposed, but having an independent mind, by her husband good-humouredly reconciling himself to her possible difference of opinion in politics, as he often has to do in matters of theology. But if such differences of opinion do so

seriously affect the happiness of married life, let them be more carefully considered before marriage.

There is also the contradictory assumption that the wife's vote will be merely a double of her husband's, thus giving him two votes instead of one. Between these last two assumptions of perverse opposition on the one hand, and undue submission on the other, we may fairly strike a balance, and hope the State will fare none the worse in the end for the female married vote, should it be granted.

To be serious, I do not believe the harmony and dignity of married life—not even the dignity of the husband—can be best promoted by legislation to prevent quarrels; or by the theory that, as has been said, husband and wife are one, that the husband is *the* one (Blackstone), and that the two ought to have only one opinion in politics between them—*viz.*, the husband's. If we are accused of overlooking the practical difficulties which might arise in adjusting the votes of husband and wife, we answer that we may leave these to the moment when it is actually proposed to extend the franchise so far; if the principle is once conceded, a way will be found of carrying it out; for the rest, husbands and expectant husbands may defend their rights hereafter when they are attacked.

Having said thus much, I must add my own distinct opinion that the sooner this notion of marriage in any way disqualifying women for the exercise of personal rights or responsibility to the State is got rid of, the better for all parties. And I believe, moreover, that, when once the vote is granted to single women, married men will themselves begin to perceive this, and will desire that dignity for their wives which has been attained to by others.

The same answer will apply to the objection that women, when once admitted to the vote, will (logically) be eligible to a seat in Parliament. I think we may confidently leave this question also to be decided on its own merits by some future generation, and by the constituencies concerned.

Lastly, there is the objection—the most formidable of all to some minds—that all female aspirants to the suffrage are “strong-minded women,” and that strong-minded women are very disagreeable.” If by “strong-minded women” is meant women of masculine character and idiosyncrasies, I believe as many of these might be found on one side as on the other, if it were worth while to inquire. If “strong-minded” means having a highly enlightened understanding, large ideas, and an ardent desire for the improvement of other women, I may suggest that these objectors would often be surprised to find

how very charming such persons can make themselves. I dare say that the agitators for the abolition of slavery made themselves very disagreeable when urging their engrossing topic in season and out of season. People engaged in a great struggle will not always pause to consult the conventional rules of good taste, yet the cause may be a good one nevertheless. But I cannot gravely discuss this objection any further.

And now come two more serious reproaches addressed to women. “They have done so much mischief.” “They are agitating from a love of power.”

The accusation of “doing mischief” means, I imagine, only that women are not infallible in their judgment any more than men (why is a human liability to mistake *more* disqualifying to women than to men?), or that there are points on which the objectors differ from some women, or that there always will be points on which some men will differ from some women, it being assumed, of course, that women will always be in the wrong. If the objectors mean that women, having power given them by the legislature to do mischief, will do a great deal more than men in the same position have ever done, that is, in fact, begging the whole question. No past experience can be appealed to as decisive, since women have never been placed in the position supposed; although the absolute denial of all direct legitimate exercise of power sometimes drives intense and ardent natures into exercising it by methods less wholesome than a recognised responsibility would employ. But even granting this—alas! have men never done mischief, terrible mischief, during the long ages of masculine domination? Take, as one instance, the legislation for Ireland up to this century, and more recent times still; could any female legislation be more blind, unjust, inhuman, and mischievous?

Is the world, as governed by men, a thing even now to congratulate ourselves upon? and may not women think that even a slight co-operation of their own with the other sex in the councils of the nation—we are not now speaking of admission to Parliament—might have prevented, might still prevent, some of this mischief?

The reproach that “women are agitating from love of power” does not come with quite a good grace from that sex which has hitherto monopolised all power, exercised, as we think, with such grievous injustice to the other. But, in fact, the reproach is undeserved. Those who make it show such a misunderstanding of the deeply conscientious feelings and convictions on which this new movement is founded, as

almost disqualifies them from discussing the question with us at all. Power to protect themselves from injustice, women may be allowed to desire. But a still stronger motive is the belief that the welfare of society requires a different position for their whole sex.

Finally, recurring from all these details to the broad principle with which we started, that justice to women is morally the same as justice to men, I will only add, let this be acknowledged in the full meaning of the word, and all the ingeniously devised objections founded on woman's assumed inferiority to man fall at once to the ground. In the original fallacy, other false principles are involved, as that absolute perfection, moral and mental, is more needful in female than in male electors, and that to guard against possible inconvenience to men is a more pressing obligation than to remove an actual wrong to women.

I now come to those selfish inducements held out to woman herself to acquiesce in her present subjection, first glancing, however, at the half-triumphant warning that, with the privileges of citizenship, she must accept its burdens. That special burden which, I believe, the true Briton regards as the weightiest, that of taxation, she bears already, without the very privilege attached to it by divine right, as understood in Britain—to wit, the electoral franchise. This, though a flagrant departure from a cherished principle, I do not complain of as her hardest practical grievance; because, in this case men, in fighting their own battle, must necessarily also fight that of women, and in some sort, therefore, do really represent them.

I must also advert to that appeal to women themselves on which men seem most triumphantly to rely. They say that, if they are obliged to grant women equal social and legislative rights, *i.e.*, justice, they will no longer receive from men that so-called "chivalrous homage," which they regard apparently as sufficient compensation for every disadvantage and every humiliation attending the whole sex in and out of drawing-rooms, and which they think women cannot reasonably look for except as a tribute to their legal inferiority and helplessness—that, in short, every virtue of which we can imagine women possessed, every gift of grace, beauty, and intelligence, joined, too, as they must *still* inevitably be, to inferiority of physical strength, will fail to secure for her man's respect and tenderness unless she will accept him as her master and irresponsible political ruler. How is this? Is the spirit of "chivalry" a spirit of bargain? and a very one-sided bargain? Or, putting aside the idea of deliberate

bargain, is this a faithful picture of man's nature—at least of Englishmen's, which is our chief present concern? Is it contrary to his nature, for instance, to yield kindly aid to inferior strength unless it will meekly confess to mental inferiority and will promise obedience? Is it contrary to his nature to be just and generous at the same time? We believe that men do themselves injustice in affirming this.

As for those outward symbols of "chivalrous homage" with which we are all familiar in drawing-rooms and such-like scenes, it is certainly at first sight hard to connect the forfeiture of these with the elevation of some women, or all women, to citizenship. But though it might be quite possible to do without these little privileges for so great an object, yet, truth to speak, the force of custom in regard to social etiquettes, even those generally felt to be burdensome and absurd, is so great that probably such harmless ones as these will long survive. I incline to think it will be long before all gentlemen remember to press out of drawing-rooms before their lady acquaintances, to help themselves first at table, to stand by whilst the objects of their former homage step out of their carriages, or into boats, without offering a hand, or in railway travel to remember not to be charmed by the looks or conversation of a lady fellow-passenger till they have satisfied themselves that she has not a vote. Seriously, I incline to think that men will observe all this innocent little ceremonial, which is partly a civilised regulation to secure orderliness in social intercourse, partly an assumption of a difference in physical strength, which, false or true, will not be affected by the possession of a vote, till women forfeit men's respect by forfeiting their own, a result not certain to follow from their acquiring a sense of higher responsibility to the State. These things will last probably till all society is placed on a different, perhaps simpler and nobler footing, by other concurrent changes in civilisation and education still far distant. But what is best in our social humanity need never disappear—mutual courtesy, kindness, such consideration between the sexes and such help and sympathy from each to each, as are surely no more to be grudged from men to women, in any case, than from the younger and stronger man to the old and infirm and respected of his own sex, however his equal in political rights and political intelligence.

On the other hand, there is surely something more real, more trustworthy in manly heroism, manly devotion to duty, than even in that "chivalrous homage" so admired as the most perfect compensation for female subjection, the most

satisfactory modification possible of barbaric female slavery, and which generally expects in return some natural little gratification to its own self-love or vanity. I am not going to quarrel with it for thus seeking its reward—only it must not boast itself too much. We may be sure, too, that the spectacle of any brave, honest work, whether of the hand or the brain, done for love of duty, kindles the heart and imagination of the true woman, and exalts her respect for her partner, far more than that other spectacle of man making or upholding laws to secure to himself his wife's obedience, the possession of her property, and his own individual control over his and her children, far more than his assurance that he classes her politically with idiots, lunatics and criminals, in order to increase his own respect for her, and because she likes it, or, at least, ought to do so.

If these "chivalrous" opponents have the faith they profess in woman's native grace and refinement; if they do not believe these qualities to be entirely the creation of certain artificial restrictions on her liberty of action, which no education of thought and reason can supply the place of; if they do not believe she is dignified and refined solely by accessories and surroundings, having *within herself* under no circumstances the power to dignify and refine *them*; if they do not hold this strangely "unchivalrous" and dishonouring doctrine of woman's nature, then how is it that they suppose all these precious attributes can be got rid of so very easily? They can scarcely believe she will lose them by learning to take an interest in the concerns of her country, and to express that interest every few years by a conscientious vote, in the delivering of which she may be as well protected as in witnessing the procession of a royal bride, a race, a play or an opera. If there should appear, in any woman's ardour on these subjects, anything ungraceful or exaggerated, there is probably some such defect in her natural organisation manifesting itself alike in all her doings. On the whole a woman will be in politics pretty much what she is, by her natural temperament, in all other spheres. But in fact such objectors, however "chivalrous," however kind-hearted—as many of them truly are—*have no faith* in woman, no faith in the goddess they worship with flattery, incense, and gay pageantry; and it would be well if they would frankly confess this. Then we should know exactly where to meet them. In the meanwhile, till men can acquire this faith, this generous trust, society will make small moral progress, and need we remind the shallowest student of human nature

that to make human beings trustworthy you must take courage to trust them?

That women's tender interest in those they love would be deadened by these enlarged views of political and social life, that they would thus grow somehow more selfish and less useful to men in consequence, is a prejudice such as has been held to justify even harsher restrictions, and one I think unworthy to influence for a moment a generous mind. That the blind idolatry with which they have often injured, sometimes ruined, their idols will be exchanged for a feeling more elevated and elevating is very likely; but we need not regret this transformation.

There is a refined and tender side, as I shall again and again admit, to these remonstrances. The ideal of graceful, clinging weakness, the "smiling domestic goddess"-ship (divorced both from intellect and good sense), so admired by Thackeray, the sacred pedestal-worship of poetic theories, have such a charm for some manly imaginations, that the suggested introduction of some newer type is as terrifying to them as the threat of a new railway or row of houses to the inhabitants of a rural paradise. I predict, however, that amongst the many varieties of the female type we hope to see developed, whatever is really good and beautiful in their own favourite one is likely still to "abound"; what is not so good and beautiful will be less easily rooted out than we could wish, and many a "fair defect" will long remain to rejoice their hearts and fancies. Such will be as the childish element in the race, and, as such, worthy of all indulgence and tenderness.

But I must also remind the "chivalrous" that their ideal is, and always has been, the monopoly of a small privileged class. For "chivalrous homage" has nothing to say to the poor, hardworking wives and mothers outside that, nor to the thousands of courageous single women who are too strenuously fighting the battle of life—often for others as well as for themselves—to have time to cultivate graceful clingingness, or to stand on pedestals. It would be hard, truly, to withhold citizenship, and whatever dignity and support it may confer, from these "lonely, unadmired heroines," for the sake of keeping up a special feminine ideal as the monopoly of a special class.*

We see, indeed, where this long subjection of women, most

* The number of women supporting themselves by manual labour, alone is stated at three millions—now nearly four millions—one-third of all women in the Kingdom.

favourably exhibited in the placing of some of them on a fancied pinnacle, has landed us at last. It finds us confronted by a glaring discrepancy between profession and performance, which must make the very word "chivalry," even if they heard it, seem a mockery to the rest.

Some theorists, we know, will say, "True, all is not right as it now is, but there is a remedy. She is now *too* independent, she has got *one* hand free; bind *both* again, bind her hand and foot, put her more completely in men's power; but educate men and women better, so that man may be less likely to abuse his power, and woman may know her proper place; protect her exactly as you would a child, by stringent legislation, leaving her no discretion, no option, and then trust the rest to man's generosity, and the perfect dignity this perfect subjection and perfect powerlessness will give her." But women have a right to a voice before this theory of a dominant sex can be forced on them.

Moreover, let me remind the upholders *par excellence* of "feminine delicacy and refinement," how very different are, and have been, the ideas attached to these words in other ages and other countries, and maintained with obstinate persistence and confidence that they rest on the immutable sanction of nature and religion. Ask the respectable Turkish father of a family what will happen to society when the harem doors are unlocked, and the women allowed to go forth unveiled—nay, ask the respectable Turk's lady-like wife and daughter—and their answer will be the same. Go back to the days, not so very long ago, when in all countries, Christian and pagan, a woman was married without her consent being asked; when worthy fathers of families would have been shocked at the indelicacy of a girl presuming to have a choice, or even a veto on her parent's choice. Nay, when the bold idea was first started of teaching women to read, "Fancy"—can we not see it said in some popular journal of those mythical days?—"fancy a woman forsaking the spindle and frying-pan, her own peculiar sciences, to plunge into the unfeminine mysteries of the alphabet!" Not to mention some *very* civilised European countries where, even in the present day, if a girl (of the drawing-room class, I mean), were known to have once walked out in town unattended, it would destroy her chance of marriage, and where it is with difficulty believed that such liberty in England is not abused.

Why, then, is it so certain that we here, in England and now, have reached that exact point of feminine freedom beyond which we cannot go without contradicting nature—

that exact type of refinement which admits of no further modification? Let us remember that with every fresh instalment of liberty and independence granted to women by advancing civilization, every step forward from her primitive condition of slavery to her present position of legal subjection, she has received not less, but more, kindness and respect from men, and the masculine ideal has not ruinously suffered thereby. Women have attained to far more self-reliance and liberty of movement in the United States of America than in England; but no one has asserted that they are as a consequence of less importance to men, or treated with less deference. To say that their manners are not to the taste of those Englishmen who know them only by hearsay is beside the argument, nor is this distaste generally shared by Englishmen who know them by personal acquaintance.

Why, then, should we fear that one step further in the same path of independence would do all that the others have failed to do—at once revolutionise all the natural relations of the sexes, and transform, as we are so often told, women into men?

The truth is, social circumstances in all civilized communities, and notably in this, have outgrown the old theory of women's proper place in the world. The increased difficulty of living felt in all classes, the 800,000 (now over 900,000) women in excess of men, the exclusion of women from all but one or two modes of gaining a precarious livelihood, the increased importance of education with so small an increase of the facilities offered to women, making it impossible for them to cope with men in the struggle for actual existence, and all these causes rendering marriage for women at once more necessary and too often more impossible, such realities have reduced to a mere figment the theory of universal protection, dependence, and homage.

The men of the past did what seemed the best in those days; the men of the present are not to blame for the altered conditions which have made it the worst. But they will be to blame if they persist in upholding it, and in regarding attempted reforms as attempts to "remove the landmarks of society;" if, in a word, they endeavour to force the life of successive generations of women into the old Chinese shoe of subjection and restraint, fancying that if they just make it a little easier, all will be right. The shoe must be made to fit perfectly, and women themselves must decide whether it does so.

And now comes the question of the influence actually

exercised by women, in the cultivated and comfortable classes that is, for no other female influence over men is generally spoken of as of any importance. Gentlemen, when they speak of women, mean "ladies." And as "ladies" are the wives, mothers, and the sisters of the class which at present governs us, their influence *should* be important, fearfully important; though this is no reason for casting aside so much as, in common parlance we are wont to do, the interests of women in the sphere beneath that recognised by "chivalry," and the influence which they *ought* to be able to exercise.

But let us see what this influence of "ladies" is. We are told that it is very great, and those who say so are apt to go further, and fling all responsibility for social vices on the women of society. Let women humbly acknowledge to themselves their own shortcoming; they could not do much, but some of them, perhaps, might have done more. Capable, it may be, of better things, too many have been led ignobly astray by vanity and frivolity, too many by precept and example have done harm where they might have done good, thus, and in a thousand other ways, under a thousand disguises, rendering back to man the ill that the long domination of masculine ideas has wrought upon them. But while it is safe to be severe on themselves individually, it is not so safe to be blind to the faults of the social system under which they live. The fact remains that the influence of women for good, is very small, compared with what it is said to be, and might be, if men so willed it. No good influence, worth naming such, can be exercised but by an independent mind, and such independence is made tenfold more difficult to women at the present day, not only by men's prejudices, but by the difficulty of marriage resulting from the conditions before alluded to. This, an evil over which neither men nor women have any immediate control, is no doubt in great part the secret of the humble attitude which women are apt to take towards men, and the triumphant scorn of the sex so frequently displayed by popular journals. But once conscious of these facts, the efforts of society to counteract their mischievous results should be unremitting.

This dependence, then, acknowledged, for men to lay the blame of their own weaknesses on their so-called "weaker" sisters, to seek to silence their remonstrances by assuring them that *they* are the guilty party, or at least equally guilty with their masters, of those social corruptions we all cannot but see around us, is an unconscious baseness which even good men sometimes fall into when judging of the other sex.

In order that women may really exercise that wholesome

and purifying influence ascribed to her, as her natural attribute, she should herself be left free and unbiassed by fear or favour. If she is to inspire men with a refinement and morality a little deeper than drawing-room decorum, she must not herself have first to learn by rote from him the lesson she is to teach him again; she must not be cheated into taking all the rules of life unquestioning on man's traditional authority, and mistaking the dread of his reproach and ridicule for the voice of innate womanly conscience. She must not be coaxed from earliest girlhood, by ball-room admirers, and even the gravest philosophers, into preferring her own (so-called) "feminine instincts," that is, prejudices, to the dictates of reason, sense, and duty, to find in later life "feminine unreasonableness" a bye-word in men's mouths, to find herself exposed to the good-humoured contempt of the placid husband and the scolding of the irritable one, and to hear—no longer as the delighted tribute to youthful charms, but as a grave disqualification—that women "have no sense of justice." She must not be taught that narrow views of religion are especially becoming to women, and the only safeguard to their virtue in the eyes of the laxer sex. She must not, as the mother of a family, have always that warning voice in her ear that "men hate learned women," or "that men don't want intellect in their wives" (which indeed is not so surprising in those who themselves have neither intellect nor learning) till her very schoolboy sons catch up the cry. She must not be brought up utterly to ignore all great social and national interests, all enlightened views of politics; she must not be taught that the one great object of a woman's life is marriage, when every day the social obstacles in the way of marriage are increasing; and, above all, she must not be forced or hoodwinked into accepting from masculine dictation two distinct moral codes—one for men and the other for women.

Where these teachings have not been perfectly enforced, as of course will often be the case, either from partial enlightenment in the teacher or instinctive revolt in the taught, they will be found to have caused in simple and noble minds more mental and moral suffering than actual moral deterioration. But what society has lost, still loses, by the waste of such good material, it has not yet attempted to reckon up. A movement has now been set on foot, and is slowly gaining strength, to repudiate these teachings, which have, as we have said, found rebels scattered here and there at all times; yet while legislation, man's legislation for woman, still represents the ideas embodied in them, still ignores the incongruity

between the theory and the facts of woman's position in the world, so long will it be, not the elevating and purifying influence of woman upon man (the theory of "chivalrous" moralists), but the depressing and deteriorating influence of man upon woman, that regulates society. Let men, even philosophers, repeat as they will that "women have everything in their own power, that it is their own fault if men are not better than they are," I affirm that the more we look below the surface, the more we shall be convinced that whilst man remains the irresponsible legislator for women, these things will be as I have said.

The social phenomena developed by man's domination in woman's education, ideas and character, are so numerous and complex as almost to defy classification. I am far from classing the women, even of the sphere which we have taken for our text, "all in one," but this seems evident, that the general result has been a most disheartening mediocrity. We have hopes, it is true, that the efforts now being made by those social benefactresses, who are so earnestly fighting the educational battle for their sisters, powerfully aided by like-minded and generous men, will greatly mitigate this state of things for a fortunate part of the younger generation. But, for the present, though "the softening influence of domestic life," "the purity of English homes" are pretty phrases, yet, all the same, men and women are doing their best to degrade each other to a pitiful mediocrity. Not all the prettiness of blooming girlhood (and a pretty English girl is a charming object, whether one is in a moralizing mood or not), not all the brightness, activity and kind-heartedness of narrowly-educated women, however "clever" they may be, can hide this sad truth from our eyes.

Let us begin—working upwards from seeming trifles—with one time-honoured social institution, through which the wholesome and refining influence of one sex over the other is supposed to make itself felt. I tremble as I approach this sacred field, and find myself compelled in sober sadness to drop disrespectful words on the privileged flirtations of the young. I would not be severe either on those who encourage or those who practise this favourite diversion. Yet, after all, in spite of the glamour thrown by youthful excitement and inexperience, by the regretful and sympathetic retrospect of age, and by the imagination of poets and painters over the ball, the croquet, the picnic, and all the other playgrounds of "society," it must be owned that the prospect is not encouraging to our hopes of the young. The "flirtation" which reigns here between the two sexes, encouraged by all

social customs, provided for at the cost of time, money, health, and mental improvement, has in it mischief which lies deeper than at first appears. It is more than "matter for a flying smile." Many will agree with me so far, but will strenuously resist the application of radical remedies to the whole position of society. Palliatives, not prevention, not cure, have ever been the favourite study of English philanthropy.

It is at this point of transitory, counterfeit courtship (in itself damaging to the freshness of youthful affections) that we first trace the effect of that low standard of excellence required from women. Man in general requires little from the woman he loves, still less from the woman he flirts with; we all know that a pretty face, a pretty dress, and a few "womanly" coquetries generally suffice for him in either case, and he takes his chance of finding other qualities behind these when it is too late to make a fresh choice; while woman, dwarfed to meet these small requirements, requires little from him in return. And so the taste is formed, so marriages are made, and so society and the race are deteriorated.

The last thing I would wish to disparage is the natural, light-hearted, innocent enjoyment of each other's society in the young of the two sexes. I wish it were far more easily come by and begun earlier, too, and were freed from that uneasy self-consciousness which is so often and so needlessly substituted for the frank courage of innocence. From that morbidly-watchful egotism which, under the name of "propriety," used to be so much enjoined, and which would be ill-exchanged for the "fastness" of which, in certain circles, one hears so much, we turn with relief to that artless enjoyment of life and society which characterizes unspoiled girlhood, accompanied by a really strong interest in some pursuit. It finds its salvation in those genuine tastes which carry us out of ourselves (not necessarily "learned" or "intellectual")—it may be gardening, or music, or painting, or some kindred art—only, for Heaven's sake, let it be *real*, let it be good of its kind, let it be honestly followed; and the more of such the better.

On such common ground of genuine tastes and pursuits, young men and women may healthfully meet each other and prepare for the closer partnership and co-operation of after life, and much, very much, I trust, will this common ground be enlarged by wider education. But what has this happy, true-hearted sympathy, which one longs to see prevail everywhere, purged more and more from vanity and *arrière-*

pensée, to do with the artificial sentimentalities, the unmeaning personalities, and empty rattle of flirtation, either between two equally trifling beings, or a so-called sensible man and a poor girl taught that to be admired she must "flirt" prettily, and dress prettily, and need not be well-informed? *These* have nothing in common but the common interest of vanity; and whether such a flirtation end in marriage or not, they who pursue it are equally injuring their own tastes and characters, and unfitting themselves for true marriage.

Sometimes indeed, as we all know, great misery follows from this playing with fire, especially in the woman, where an untrained, unoccupied mind is joined to a warm heart or vivid imagination. But how much of this suffering might be saved to either party, if a frankness now thought impossible between men and women, could be cultivated! Were this united to a more trained judgment and more engrossing occupations for women, we might less often see the sensational coquette followed by trains of admirers, her heart ever half-touched, and only half-satisfied, her frivolous vanity never satiated: we might less often see truer and more passionate hearts racked by the ignoble indecision, or still more ignoble insincerity and heartlessness, of a counterfeit lover. Women would then oftener see through the unworthiness of such a nature before it was too late, and the irretrievable waste of many a precious year of life be averted. The coquette, too, and even the much-abused "fast girl," would find better fields for their love of power (as natural to some women as to some men), as well as for the restless animal spirits and healthy untrained energies which are perhaps chiefly answerable for those vagaries to which the world is so severe.

And what must the marriages be to which this style of social intercourse leads up—putting aside for the moment moral questions of a more tragic significance? Will not this account partly for the falling off of youthful love and all the poetry of life which is thought almost inevitable in marriage? And may not much of the ignobleness of society, of class selfishness, national selfishness, have something to do with these commonplace impulses by which marriages are brought about, and families are formed?

In this discouraging view, it must be observed that we are speaking of what are considered the better kind of average marriages—that is, those which are more or less of choice (perhaps they might just as well be called of chance); not of the many which are in great measure dictated by motives of interest or convenience, which latter, on the

woman's side, is too often the supposed desperate necessity of being married at all. And this, too, is the result of our social arrangements!

It seems wonderful how that prevalent taste among men for female mediocrity is shared even by such as appear fit for better things. Negatives seem to attract, as if a woman were to be admired rather for what she is without than what she has; the absence of some power or intellectual gift being constantly mentioned as a positive quality, not to say merit, rather than as a deficiency—a mode of estimation never used with men. And the qualities which do attract are too often superficial attributes, often those semi-childish prejudices and conventionalities, the result of a narrow education for generations, which are generally called "feminine instincts," and considered charming. This is partly the result of a prevalent idea that tenderness of feeling and good household management can seldom be found apart from these, and that the clinging subjection to man which is thought the natural position, the crowning grace of woman, is incompatible with a cultivated mind and original views. As often as not, however, his fancy invests with this poetic charm some nature below even the low standard he prefers; since whenever we limit our aspirations after excellence, we are liable to fall short even of that limit. Even these limited ideals vary, however; some profess to be content with the ideal of the intelligent cook and housekeeper, and hold that a woman cannot and ought not to have time for anything else.

Yet do not those men of sense and intellect who seek for attractive mediocrity, if they think about it at all, expect their sons to inherit their own masculine superiority, and their daughters to renew the maternal type? But there is no natural law forbidding—what in fact we so frequently see—the descent of intellectual gifts to the daughters, and the more commonplace attributes to the sons. These sons will probably marry their likes; the daughters, not finding their natural mates, and not able to seek for them, as probably as not remain unmarried.

Fortunately there are various types between the extremes we have mentioned, some, if rare, yet beautiful—tender, sympathetic, refined female natures, incapable of initiative, but appreciative and reverent of true superiority, by associating with which they gradually educate themselves, and in whose society a man tender and refined enough to appreciate their charm, may well feel himself blest. Yet even such beloved and tender beings feel too often a vague, painful sense of incompleteness and inferiority never quite absent—the greater

because of its instinctive admiration of what is excellent. These, too, suffer practically from that deficiency in the masculine ideal of women, which originally stunted their education.

One can understand and respect the man of uncultivated intellect who has the manly humility to acknowledge that a highly educated woman would not be a fit mate for him, and that tenderness, simplicity, and purity of heart, without even the perfecting grace of intellect, are enough for his needs. But what does fill us with regretful wonder is, that this incapacity to appreciate the best and completest should be ever made a boast by men, and expressed with the evident feeling that men's preference for the mediocre is a crushing sentence against the woman of trained intellect. Our most popular novelist, whilst sneering at the "heroic female character," bids us regard as the standard to which women should most aspire, the having "all the men in a cluster round her chair, all the young fellows battling to dance with her." According to this judgment, this special court of appeal to which the loftiest minded woman must bow—her wisest policy, her most womanly grace, will be to disguise at least, if she cannot extinguish, her superiority.

No woman of real refinement and right sympathies can wish to disparage *true* grace, beauty and sweetness. They form together a power worthy of respectful homage. But they can hardly exist—at least, hardly last—without a certain strength and elevation of character. True sweetness means strength, not servility, not indiscriminating devotion (beautiful and commendable in a dog we allow, but not quite an adequate expression of womanly affection), not characterless good-nature, not the mere liveliness of youth, nor silliness; true grace implies a harmonizing artistic faculty and a moral balance which can scarcely belong to a commonplace nature, guided only by conventional laws. As for true beauty, how little do we yet realize what glorious types of form and feature are in store for the world, when strength of body and mind, health, courage, and freedom have been developed by generations of enlightened culture—what radiance and fulness of life, what new intelligence and ardour of expression, what splendour of frame, such as we should now look on as fitter for another planet! These are dreams as yet, but they have a practical value if they preserve us from seeking our ideal in a direction contrary to true progress.

But to descend from these poetic heights—at least since the young, pretty, and lively have an influence over men's acts and wishes at present quite out of proportion to their

power to use it well, they should be trained, if only with a view to the welfare of their own households, to a more enlightened sense of their responsibilities than men can at present appreciate. If any modest man is alarmed at the prospect of an era of learned and splendid women, let him be assured that it will be long, very long before it comes, and that when it does, by the necessity of the case, men will have risen too. There will long be a supply of the women whom men emphatically call "feminine"—a word which has been for ages the engine of women's oppression. Its meanings have varied, but having been all imposed, directly or indirectly, by man, they are all so many badges of female subjection, both material and moral. Here we know we shall be contradicted by most men and by many women. Men will confidently appeal to the "instincts" of some female friend—perhaps some pretty young girl—and be confirmed by her positiveness, or her flippancy, or her timid acquiescence, in his belief that all true womanhood is on his side. It is much as if a slaveholder should appeal to some faithful, ignorant slave, born on his estate, as to the divinely-appointed necessity of slavery, and the virtues proper to his condition, and be quite satisfied with his "Yes, massa," in reply. It is quite possible that the slave does believe in the divine origin of slavery; it will not be the fault of his master's theological teachings if he does not. Women have been taught to do more than this—not merely to acquiesce, but to glory in their subjection.

One feature of this subjection is, as has been somewhere pointed out, that a double code of laws has been imposed on woman—one supposed to be common to all humanity, the other containing special regulations for herself—not merely supplementary of, but sometimes even contradicting, the other. These seem devised to keep up an enfeebling self-consciousness, and to turn the simple government of a healthy conscience into a sort of Lord Chamberlain's office of etiquettes. But there is, or ought to be, only one law for men and women; and such a "codification" will be, we trust, the great moral work of our age. One conscience, one education, one virtue, one liberty, one citizenship for men and women alike. It will not force them to do the same work, but it will enable them freely to choose their work. It will not make them the same, but it will make them perfect of their kind, and the world twice as great, and twice as happy.

Would it not, to begin with, be well to instruct girls that weakness, cowardice, and ignorance, cannot constitute at once the perfection of womankind and the imperfection of

mankind—to cease, in short, to impress upon her the lesson epitomized in Mr. Charles Reed's short dialogue :

She.—I feel all my sex's weakness.

He.—And therein you are invincible.

May they not be led to cultivate grace, refinement, taste, and beauty, because these things are good in themselves and make the world brighter and happier, not because men admire this, that, and the other in women, and are disgusted at its absence, and that therefore this, that, and the other are feminine attributes, and will get them partners at a ball, and perhaps for life. The original motive to this cultivation of grace and charm colours the whole of the after-life and character. On this depends whether she is to be a truthful free woman, the equal, sympathetic, and ennobling partner of man, or a sort of attractive slave, as man so often likes to picture her, to coax him by her personal charms into tenderness and morality without any trouble of his own.

"Female instincts," a favourite idea of unphilosophical minds, are called "feelings" as opposed to "reason," and some mysterious moral advantage is supposed to accrue to the more "rational" sex from the presumed incapacity of their partners in life to look beyond personal and family interests, to draw rational inferences from facts, and to be just as well as generous. The "sacred nonsense" of mothers' talk to the child at their knee, recalled in Parliamentary utterances as one blessing to be destroyed by female suffrage, is a good illustration of this theme.

A good many sensible men, whilst unprepared to grant women equal rights and citizenship with themselves, will advocate a better education for them generally, will by no means confess to admiring ignorance and prejudice, and will even enjoy the conversation of a clever woman, if she be not *too* clever, and too much in earnest. But these notwithstanding, the view of woman's supposed defects, which I have stated before, defects either charming or provoking as you choose to take them, or as the subject of them is fifteen or fifty years old, is what has met and thwarted enlightened women at every turn.

Now, as regards "feeling" and "instinct," held, as they often are, as preferable respectively to "reason" and "judgment," let us compare that untrained, unenlightened maternal instinct which leads the mother to indulge her child to its own future injury, with that instinct, trained and enlightened, which leads her for its future good not to shrink from its present suffering. Compare "feeling" which, in the shape

of ignorance and prejudice, leads to narrow views of religion and to intolerance of some of the noblest and wisest of human thoughts and sentiments, with that "feeling" founded on knowledge and reason which leads to enthusiasm for what is noblest and wisest, whilst yet it can be kindly indulgent to that very ignorance which despises knowledge. The obstruction to social progress, caused by the fostering of these theological prejudices in women through the indulgence of even those husbands and fathers who have them not themselves, can only be glanced at here. It is not a question of reason against feeling, but of allying the two, instead of keeping them apart by an irreligious divorce. To some minds the voice of reason is as the voice of conscience, and such, once awake to their responsibilities, can no more disobey the one voice than the other. These seem absolute truisms; yet how few there are, even of those who cannot contradict them, who will accord them practical recognition!

"Good Heavens! a young lady reason!" was once the exclamation of an educated Roman Catholic when mildly argued with by one of the angelic sex. Of course, as we were told in Parliament, "women's minds are absolutely closed to logic," this said in the face of an ever-increasing number of women who can reason, and reason well, and whom men have not yet been able to answer. And why should it be "unfeminine" and "ungraceful," and all the rest of it, to appreciate the æsthetic beauty of a well-woven chain of reasoning? Partly, perhaps, because women have not the monopoly of reasoning ill. It is the superficially dexterous arguers, possibly, rather than deep and sincere thinkers amongst men who find a charm in female perverseness and irrationality in religion, politics, and subjects of thought generally. I can no more regard the power of right reasoning as a mental luxury, a privilege to be kept for the enjoyment of one sex, than I can regard correct drawing or correct intonation in music as perfections necessary in professionals, but merely unpleasing pedantry in amateurs.

Yes, surely the ardour of reason, so nearly akin to the passion for justice, is as proper for a woman as any other ardour looked upon as feminine *par excellence*. And there is an earnest vein in women which, as far as we have been able to observe, is opposed to the sophistications of the *merely* logical intellect, the cold-hearted amusement of arguing an important question without any real convictions. Such conscientious sincerity, even from a man's point of view, cannot be unwomanly.

"Unfeminine"—Alas, how much of good and great has that word blighted at its birth! On women's sensibilities, artificially fostered to an intense tenderness to the lightest sting, it does fall like the cut of a lash. But, after all, the government of the lash can only make slaves. As woman takes larger and loftier views of duty, she will learn to dread the stings of her conscience more than the lash of man's ridicule. She will look at the sun itself with undazzled eyes, not through the smoke-dimmed glass man has handed her for her special use. As it is, this fear, inculcated through ages, haunts women from the cradle (and men cannot realise the effort it costs, even those who seem bravest, to shake it off), this fear which holds them back from expressing their real opinions, hinders woman herself, as much as it hinders man, from knowing what she really is.

It is too true that a very large number of the women of one class, the comfortable drawing-room class, have ranged themselves with well-meaning docility in the ranks of this social police, have been the unconscious agents of a social terrorism, which man himself exercises almost unconsciously, while they innocently repeat the warning words of "feminine delicacy" and "ladylike propriety" which men have put into their mouths, and which they believe are the utterances of nature and religion, and the immutable conditions of civilized life.

Let us think how much we need a counteracting influence against those base motives of personal and class-selfishness which now honeycomb and almost threaten to destroy society, and how little women's "instincts" and "feelings" have done to supply this. I do not forget that, in all ages, at times of temporary excitement, there have been women found to sustain a man in the sacrifice of those whom he loves to duty, even when she and her children are to be the sacrificed; but one longs to see something of this spirit in every-day life and in peaceful times. The same woman who will cheerfully destroy her own health in nursing one she loves, who will uncomplainingly share with him his involuntary poverty, or even deserved disgrace, would, on the other hand, discourage him with all her powers of persuasion from risking his worldly fortune or bringing on himself the world's reproach, at some call of conscience with which she has not been taught to sympathise. Again, a husband should blush before his wife for a mean public action, a vote given through self-interest or class-interest, or faction, as he would for cheating his neighbour, for official falsification as he would for perjury in a court of justice, for conniving at the bribery of an

elector as he would for receiving stolen goods, for taking an unfair advantage in trade as he would for picking a pocket. But we hear nothing of the desirableness of feminine influence in such matters as these.

I turn now to the married state as affected in England by the marriage law, "the most barbarous," as it has lately been said, "in Europe." "A woman," as has also lately been said, "loses when she marries her name, her freedom, her individuality, her property, her vote" (municipal and other). A man takes from the woman he marries everything she has, yet is not bound to maintain her while she lives with him,* can use the forms of law to force back a reluctant wife in spite of her aversion to live with him, and finally can take her children from her and give them to the care of some other woman if he pleases. This law, of which these are some of the most striking features, though, more or less, of course, a dead letter in affectionate marriages, but an easy instrument of iniquity in the hands of the unscrupulous, would almost seem indeed to be maintained for the special use of the bad. This law which, however modified in its practical workings by individual character, cannot but lower the whole conception of marriage for all but the exceptional few, even good men will tell us somehow helps to secure the happiness of married life generally. In its remote origin it was doubtless a valuable modification of worse evils, and in the days when no personal freedom was allowed to any woman, married or unmarried, when marriage was therefore merely an exchange of one servitude for another, there was at least no glaring incongruity in the theory of a wife's subjection.†

But now, when she is supposed, once arrived at the years of discretion, to be a free agent, and to have a free choice in marriage, the position has become an antiquated anomaly. It would seem still to be upheld on the principle that because woman is weak, she should therefore be made helpless, because man is strong, he shall have additional protection against the weak. In the classes where this law is most

* He is supposed to be bound to keep her off the rates, no more; but this practically means merely that she will be refused relief, if her husband is known to be able to support her.

† Those who lay stress on particular texts of Scripture bearing on this subject should remember that there is sanction for domestic slavery in the New Testament, and the conclusion is that the first teachers of Christianity took social institutions as they found them.

abused, because there education has done least to counteract its brutalising effect on public opinion, there has been found a tendency in women (notably in manufacturing towns), to prefer unmarried unions to legitimate ones, for the sake of the greater protection of their self-earned contributions to the household, and the greater willingness of their partners to contribute their share, instead of spending all on themselves, and in case of cruelty and neglect the union can be severed. I know many cases. Here, at least, is one natural result of a degrading and tyrannical law of marriage on those who suffer from it most helplessly. Before this new form of union tends universally to supplant the other, it might be better instead of vaguely deploring the immorality of the "lower classes," or contriving such piecemeal mitigations as have lately been enacted, to see if a radical reform of the old institution be not worth considering.

The truth is, our ideas are still perverted by the old fetish worship of husbands, so ludicrously expressed in the literature of past generations, that curious religion which made it a wife's highest virtue to pay the obedience of a slave to a master, however cruel, capricious, or irrational he was, however noble and wise she might be, in short, the greater his mental and moral inferiority to her, the greater the merit of her absolute submission. This doctrine, which turned him into a monstrous idol to be propitiated by an abject ceremonial, this ideal of wifehood, maintained by men with astonishing complacency, was carried to its highest perfection in the legend of "Patient Griselda," in which many men, we believe, still see a kind of pathetic beauty. It really exhibits the most repulsive perversion of moral feeling on both sides to which such a grotesque theory of marriage is capable of leading. This fetishism continues in a modified shape to be represented by the law of the land, and it colours more or less the ordinary ideal of marriage. There is, to be sure, a sort of humility in insisting on this right divine of husbands, since no more than the divine right of kings does it require any inherent superiority in the individual possessing it. But this kind of humility has in neither case proved beneficial to the governing or governed. Mr. Herbert Spencer has observed in the *Social Statics* that even as we "loathe" the custom which in savage nations forbids women to eat in company with men, so shall we come to loathe the civilised theories of the wife's subjection to her husband. The wonder is that any man can endure it.

Till absolute social and legal equality is the basis of the sacred partnership of marriage (the division of labours and

duties in the family, by free agreement, implying no sort of inequality), till no superiority is recognised on either side but that of individual character and capacity, till marriage is no longer legally surrounded with penalties on the woman who enters into it as though she were a criminal, till then the truest love, the truest sympathy, the truest happiness in it, will be the exception rather than the rule, and the real value of this relation, domestic and social, will be fatally missed. People may get on pretty well together, and be fairly fond of each other, without their married life presenting a spectacle particularly worthy of admiration, or suggesting a very excellent development of human nature. Of course, in numberless cases, a wife will find it her best wisdom as well as comfort in the conduct of life (especially as society is now constituted) to yield to the judgment of a husband who may probably be her superior in age, experience of life, and knowledge of the world; but this accidental part of marriage, if I may call it so, has nothing to do with the theory of divine right on the one side, and indelible inferiority on the other.

Connected with this faulty view of the marriage relations, is that other difficulty with which woman has been burdened by immemorial prejudice, grievously overweighted as she is already without it. I mean the stigma of conventional humiliation attached to those women who pass their lives unmarried. It is, no doubt, like the fetish-worship of husbands, a relic of barbarism, but it is still strongly felt, and has been impressed by men on women themselves to their great detriment. It is not simply the opinion that, as a general rule, women are happier married than single; but that the unmarried woman, when she has ceased to be young, is an object not merely for pity, but more or less for contempt, though it is not always held good taste to express it, and some men are too sensible and manly to feel it. Apparently this notion rests on three assumptions, all of barbaric origin, namely, that a woman's highest glory and merit is to please men, that if she has not married she has failed to please men, and that her whole *raison d'être* is wifehood and motherhood. A *man* who has not become a husband and father may feel himself an honoured and important member of society; and till it is universally understood that a woman who from choice or chance is not a wife and mother, may fill an equally honoured and important position, true respect will not be paid to woman in any capacity, whether married or single. For the rest, the fact—not, I hope, without a possible good result on her general position as time goes on—of the eight hundred thousand women in

excess of men in England, who must of necessity remain unmarried (and the disproportion continues, we believe, to increase) justifies us still further in protesting against this old world prejudice.

But the spectral difficulty it has raised is already diminishing. Women have done much for themselves towards that result, and if they will persevere it will be removed from their path altogether. The dignity and independence of womanhood must be maintained by an upright scrupulousness of choice in the first instance, to help which a much larger variety of occupation should be open to women; and by faith in themselves, whether married or single. But in fighting this battle, as in so many others, she has been too often hindered rather than encouraged by the stronger sex.

"It is nonsense," Hawthorne remarks in the *Blithesdale Romance*, "and a miserable wrong—the result, like so many others, of masculine egotism—that the success or failure of a woman's existence shall be made to depend wholly on the affections, and on one species of affection, while man has such a multitude of other chances, that this seems but an incident. For its own sake, if it will do no more, the world should throw open all its avenues to the passport of a woman's bleeding heart."

Before quitting the subject of the married relations, we must say a few words on the typical and most painful exemplification of the different moral codes imposed on men and women, one having a most important bearing on these relations and the family and social influences which spring from them. We allude to the prevalent assumption that man is not bound by the same rule of moral purity as woman. An obvious development of the primitive barbaric notion of woman as the natural property of man, it is still held as a moral axiom, we believe, by the large majority of men. Unacknowledged in so many words by good men, abhorred, I doubt not, by many, denounced by the religion in whose dogmas the vicious still generally profess belief, it receives practical and almost universal recognition in the most civilized countries. Virtuous women, even, are perverted by conventional custom, persuaded, or tricked by their carefully maintained ignorance into assenting to it, and legislation is based upon it, as witness, amongst other examples, the law of divorce. Yet what does this distinction mean, unless it be wholly *un-meaning* and self-contradictory, except that *some* women are bound to lead purer lives than men, but *not all*? That is, by man's traditional doctrine, the women of his own family, the women of the class he intends to marry

into, are bound to be of unblemished purity, whilst the degradation in his behalf of less privileged classes is to be acquiesced in, nay almost desired, as a social necessity. And it is at *this* price we purchase the boasted purity of English homes, with all its graceful accompaniments of chivalrous homage, by the maintenance, in a sort of pretended secrecy, of an unparalleled humiliation and slavery of woman, in a so-called free country, by those who profess to honour her the most?

Even good men, with conscience individually clear as to this matter, will shake their heads and say it *must* be—that this evil cannot be expelled from society—indeed some say it ought not to be expelled, lest a greater evil take its place. And the good, by their silence, their acquiescence, play into the hands of the majority. But those women who think for themselves on this terrible subject, indignantly ask: By what right does any society exist on such a foundation? What right have certain classes of women to enjoy, safe and untempted, an aristocracy of virtue at the expense of the poor, the ignorant, the young, orphaned, helpless and thoughtless, the desolate and deserted, yearly, daily bribed, entrapped, tempted, goaded, and betrayed into a hell upon earth—that men may go on talking about the "purity of English homes"—the beautiful result of high civilization and feminine subjection? Upon the seething surface of this infernal region men build their own happy households, content if no sound from below rises up to shock the ears of unconscious wives and daughters! The denizens of that region are not waiting at leisure till it shall please them to forsake their evil lives, and become the happy and honoured heads of families; that crowning reward is reserved for the men who have profited by, and shared in, their degradation, whose easy repentance is gloried in as one more tribute to the moralizing influence of women, and in whose persons the sacred names of husband and father are thus daily and triumphantly profaned. For when they are weary of base dissipation, there is always some ignorant girl ready to confer these names upon them, to learn, probably, by degrees, that men are not bound to be as pure as women, to resign herself to her sons leading the same lives as their father before them, and to her daughters marrying men who lead the same lives as their brothers. But if this is what is meant by "the purity of English homes," are we so very sure that even this one-sided purity will always be maintained? Is it certain that no moral contamination from men's earlier associations ever enters there? Are we sure that the house built on such a foundation will always stand firm?

This brand upon society, this blight on every effort at true reform in any direction, will not be removed by sentimentalism, by costly subscriptions to churches, refuges, and reformatories, nor any other of the palliatives society seems to prefer to prevention, and which so often tend to maintain the original evil—no, nor by efforts to keep the women of one class ignorant of the degradation of women in another. The zealous trade-unionism of men which meets women at every turn in the struggle for existence, does not close the avenues of *this* trade to her. All the restrictions on her honest industry which well-meaning masculine philanthropy can devise, on the theory that she is a grown-up child, do not debar her from *this* calling. The romantic homage of the chivalrous does not shield her from *this* dishonour.

Many influences, no doubt, not directly traceable to masculine domination, tend to swell this evil. Against these the two forces of the human race should be brought to bear in combination, as they have never yet been brought. The single government of man has proved unequal to the task. Till woman has an equal or something more like an equal share in the councils of humanity, till she ceases to be the submissive subject of man, the two will not be brought to agree together on one standard of moral purity for both; and till then, man will not learn to reverence and desire purity, not in the women of one class only, but in all women, and not in woman only, but in himself as well.

In what I have just said I shall have, I am sure, some sort of sympathy and agreement from any who can nowadays go along with me as to the proposed radical treatment of social mischief. Some of these have set before them a never yet realized and unrealizable ideal, in which I must once again acknowledge with all sincerity and respect, a certain refinement, tenderness, and artificial beauty, nay, a kind of generosity gone astray. Such I oppose with regret. These would fain crystallize for all time the whole system of sentimental and sublimated injustice embodied in the chivalry theory. For them woman is always to be a glorified, but well-educated invalid, who is to influence man for his good by her physical imperfections, as much as by her ethereal and intuitive morality and docile affections. She is to guard this physical incapacity as well as her supposed incapability of sharing in the highest national concerns, and her unfitness for any social business beyond the precincts of home, as sacred treasures, because man, it is said, requires this contrast to himself as a moralizing element in his life. In his own particular walk of life, which is apparently to be kept

as separate from hers as possible, it would almost seem he may be hard and coarse with a safe conscience, because the woman he leaves at home remains soft and delicate.

And so on. To me the whole theory seems a morbid one. One longs to take off these golden chains, open the hothouse doors, and turn the ethereal prisoner into the fresh air, to develop her moral and intellectual muscle and stature at her will. The proposed arrangement consistently carried out, as we know it never has been, and I believe never can be, seems to us much as if we mortals should invite an angel from heaven to cast in his lot with us, to purify our morals and affections by his example and sympathy, to educate our children, and housekeep for us, on condition of strictly acknowledging our absolute authority and his own unalterably subordinate position, renouncing as unangelic all independent action and opinion, all share in deciding those earthly laws under which he is to live amongst us, and promising to *stay at home*, we on our side engaging to pay the obedient angel semi-divine honours, and in general to treat him with every indulgence and consideration. But then, if the angel should not like the bargain, he would at least be free to stay in heaven—whilst woman is here, and has no neutral ground to retire to, pending the negotiation. It seems scarcely fair to take advantage of her necessary presence amongst us, to impose on her conditions more stringent than, with absolutely free choice, and full comprehension of the state of the case, she would care to accept.

No, let her have as free play for her natural capacities as man; not necessarily, as I have said before, to do always the same things as man, but to try fairly what she can do, and possibly thus greatly widen the sphere and vary the details of what she ought to do. If *then* she is willing to forego all the new, natural, healthful and legitimate ambitions and aspirations (as I hold them to be), growing up within her, and lightening even that burden of glorified invalidhood, thought to be her divinely appointed portion (except indeed in the working classes); if, after full and intelligent consideration, she decides she is not fit to share any of the higher responsibilities of citizenship with man; if, after trying what liberty of thought, conscience and action means; if after enjoying a free field for those gifts and faculties which are as various, and as imperatively cry out for exercise in women as in men; if, after learning to look on marriage as the happy alternative to other happy and satisfying occupations—not a social necessity; if after finding her voice in all that concerns the morals and welfare of society, deserving of, and listened

to, with as much respect as man's; if after feeling herself a part of the state, not a servant submitting by compulsion to the will of the men in it, whether or no her judgment concurs in theirs; if after experiencing the blessing of having some little control over the laws by which the most sacred concerns of her life are to be governed; if, in one word, after being grown up, and after enjoying the privileges of a free woman, she is willing to become a child once more, and to fall back again into absolute subjection to an irresponsible sex, well and good. But the fair opportunity of choice, of understanding even the nature of the choice, has not yet been given her. If her instincts and characteristics are really as indelible as the "metaphysical" chivalry theory makes them, then, with all freedom of choice possible, she will of course renounce the new life opening upon her. But we shall see.

For myself I fervently believe that generations of a nobler and freer culture will ennoble and liberate her very bodily frame (as I have before said) into a health, strength and beauty hitherto undreamt of; not transform her into man—why was such a senseless misrepresentation ever dragged in to degrade a serious discussion into burlesque?—but into glorified womanhood. This change, alone, would in time revolutionise the whole race, and man himself would grow to a greatness he denies himself whilst he ignorantly insists on stunting woman. Hitherto nature has always been brought into court as a hostile witness whenever it has been a question of elevating her condition in any one direction. We shall see whether nature, allowed to speak freely, is not *the* irresistibly conclusive witness on woman's side.

I must now add a remark, the truth of which is, indeed, obtaining general recognition, *viz.*, that men themselves are often, as might be expected, the victims of the faulty social system of which we complain, and are as unconscious as the majority of women are of the causes and possible remedy of its evils. Certainly many a hard-worked father who wears out health and spirits in an irksome profession that his daughters may enjoy amusements and luxuries in which he has little share, and to the earning of which they contribute nothing, might well be confounded at finding himself classed amongst the oppressors of women, and the women of his family as victims. Assuredly, it is not these latter whom we pity, except for that melancholy conventionality, fostered by false views of woman's position in society, which has so long sanctioned such contented idleness in young ladies' lives, and for the possibly bitter regrets of after years. Women, too, have their own class privileges over other women; they, too,

have to be constantly on their guard against a consequent blindness to the claims of others. There are class-abuses, class-difficulties, which it will take the whole united strength of society to sweep away. But of all class-reforms in store for the future, we can still conceive of none so vitally important to the whole human race as the emancipation of woman. It will be the beginning of a new world-era, a new revelation, a new religion to man.

Yet one word more, I have still to thank with heart and soul, and in the name of all women who have the same aspirations as myself, those men who for us represent whatever is most truly wise and most truly just in the other sex, who for us, that is, represent man as he will be in the new era. It is they, who by their faith in us strengthen all our efforts to deserve it; whose noble sympathy, and patience with the mistakes which women, as well as men, must needs fall into when entering on an untried course, may most worthily be repaid by care to appreciate what is best even in those who as yet oppose our dearest wishes, and, as we think, our highest destinies. Those men whose self-respect and dignity of nature forbids them to fear loss or injury to themselves from the elevation of others so long held to be their inferiors, should, by their willingness to abdicate their old conventional supremacy, inspire a corresponding generosity and a true humility in ourselves.

I will conclude my whole subject with a quotation from the American writer who, having made a successful practical protest, during the late war, by the training of a negro regiment, against the theory of indelible race-inferiority, has since generously taken up the case of sex-domination. He writes:—

"Thus far my whole argument has been defensive and explanatory. I have shown that woman's inferiority in special achievements, so far as it exists, is a fact of small importance, because it is merely a corollary from her historic position of degradation. She has not excelled because she has no fair chance to excel. Man, placing his foot on her shoulder, has taunted her with not rising. But the ulterior question remains behind—How came she into this attitude originally? Explain this explanation, the logician fairly demands. Granted that woman is weak, because she has been systematically degraded; but why was she so degraded? This is a far deeper question—one to be met only by a profounder philosophy and a positive solution. We are coming on ground almost wholly untrod, and must do the best we can.

"I venture to assert, then, that woman's social inferiority in the past has been to a great extent a legitimate thing. To all appearance history would have been impossible without it, just as it

would have been impossible without an epoch of war and slavery. It is simply a matter of social progress—a part of the succession of civilizations. The past has been inevitably a period of ignorance, of engrossing physical necessities, and of brute force—not of freedom, of philanthropy, and of culture. During that lower epoch, woman was necessarily an inferior, degraded by abject labour even in times of peace—degraded uniformly by war, chivalry to the contrary, notwithstanding. . . . The truth simply was, that her time had not come. Physical strength must rule for a time, and she was the weaker. . . . and the degradation of woman was simply a part of a system which has indeed had its day, but has bequeathed its associations. . . . The reason, then, for the long subjection of woman has been simply that humanity was passing through its first epoch, and her full career was to be reserved for the second. . . . Woman's appointed era, like that of the Teutonic races, was delayed but not omitted. It is not merely true that the empire of the past has belonged to man, for it was an empire of the muscles, enlisting at least but the lower parts of the understanding. There can be no question that the present epoch is initiating an empire of the higher reason, of arts, affections, aspirations; and for that epoch the genius of woman has been reserved. Till the fulness of time came, woman was necessarily kept a slave to the spinning-wheel and the needle; now higher work is ready; peace has brought invention to her aid, and the mechanical means for her emancipation are ready also.”*

* *Ought Women to learn the Alphabet?* By T. W. Higginson.

CHIPCHASE,

WARK-ON-TYNE,

June 8, 1896.

TO THE DELEGATES OF THE WOMEN'S LIBERAL FEDERATION.

I wish most strongly to urge you to support the Resolution that is to be moved by MRS. EVA McLAREN about Women's Suffrage.

Some of you may remember that four years ago I spoke against the Resolution that was then proposed, that W. L. Associations should refuse to work for Parliamentary Candidates who were opposed to Women's Suffrage. I did so because I felt at the time that the power of persuasion and of patience had not been sufficiently tried.

But things have altered since then.

1. For four years Resolutions passed unanimously by the Council of the W. L. F., asking that duly qualified women should be enfranchised, have been sent up to the Liberal Government Leaders, but, as we all know, no practical notice has been taken of our repeated request.

The special appeal to Members of Parliament which has lately been presented has, by all parties in the House of Commons, been regarded more as a matter of amusement than anything else.

Clearly, then, Persuasion and Patience and Appeal have failed to advance our cause, and their failure teaches us that, if we are to win it, we must try stronger measures.

2. We were told a few years ago, when this subject was last discussed in the W. L. F. Council, that if W. L. Associations decided not to work for any Candidate who was opposed to Women's Suffrage they would be injuring the Liberal Party, and might thereby wreck the chance of passing such measures as Home Rule, the Direct Veto, and Welsh Disestablishment.

This was true then, and so, for the sake of the hope of passing Home Rule, of obtaining some Temperance legislation, and a measure of Religious equality, many hundreds of the keenest promoters of Women's Suffrage consented to work for Candidates who they knew would oppose any measure of Women's Suffrage that might be brought forward.

But the position is entirely different now.

It is admitted on all sides that the Liberal Party is for the present eclipsed; that the Newcastle Programme has practically been torn up; and that a new Liberal Programme will have to be formulated.

The questions, therefore, for us as Liberal women to consider now are—

On what lines is the new Programme to be formulated?

Is Women's Suffrage to be included in it or not?

How are we to act so as to secure its inclusion?

As for four years no notice has been taken of our entreaties, it is clear that we can only shew that we are in real earnest on the subject by refusing to work in future for any Parliamentary candidate who is opposed to the measure.

In so doing we cannot now be accused of 'injuring the Liberal Party,' or of 'wrecking important Liberal measures.' We shall be giving due notice of our intentions, and so acting in perfect fairness; and we shall be shewing plainly that we not only 'want' Women's Suffrage, but that we mean to have it.

3. It is repeatedly urged that each Member or Association is allowed entire freedom in the matter of working or not working for any candidate. **But freedom of this sort is a dead letter.** For, when belonging to a large Society like the W. L. F., each individual Member or Association feels, and rightly feels, it disloyal and anomalous to act in opposition to the general wishes and policy of the Federation.

4. I said, four years ago, that any appearance of threat on the part of the W. L. F. would be useless, because it was not then of sufficient importance to be regarded by the Liberal Party as a power to be reckoned with. We were then not strong enough to strike a blow for ourselves.

But this also has changed.

The W. L. F. during the last few years has so grown in strength and organisation that it has come to be recognised as a distinct power in elections. Those who have strength can strike; and if the W. L. Federation says now in Council, 'It is time that Women's Suffrage be included in the Liberal Programme, and we will not in future work for any Parliamentary candidate who is opposed to it,' you may rely on it that Liberal leaders and candidates will think twice before they throw overboard such a large army of zealous workers.

I urge you, therefore, to be strong and fearless; to have the courage of your convictions; and to sound a clear and unmistakeable note on the subject by carrying the Resolution that stands in Mrs. Eva McLaren's name.

✓ M. TAYLOR.

Leaflet No. 1., by Mrs. Jacob Bright.

✓
UNION OF
PRACTICAL SUFFRAGISTS,

Within the Women's Liberal Federation.

Hon. Sec.: Mrs. LEEDS, Tower House, Birdhurst Road, Croydon.

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**SHALL WE WORK FOR CANDIDATES WHO ARE AGAINST  
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE ?**  
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Some women say "I'm a Liberal first and a Woman's Suffragist after."

Another answers, "I'm a Woman before I'm a Liberal," Very good! but can we not broaden even that into "I'm a responsible human soul with duties not only to my sister women, but to the whole world."

How does that bear on the woman's vote and what is our duty with regard to it?

Voting means the power to influence legislation directly and the woman's vote is an essential condition for obtaining the reforms urgently needed for them. We have the right to ask also "Is it not equally needed for the furtherance of the measures in the Programme of the Liberal Party?"

The Liberal Programme, so far as it goes, is a noble Programme, based on the moral law of justice and equality, but the nation has rejected it! No! **NOT** the nation, but the men of the nation.