

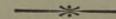
SPEECH
 OF
 JOHN STUART MILL, M.P.
 ON
 THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN
 TO THE
 ELECTORAL FRANCHISE.

SPOKEN IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,
 MAY 20TH, 1867.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

To be obtained from the Secretary,
 CENTRAL NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,
 29, PARLIAMENT STREET, S.W.

ON THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN
TO THE
ELECTORAL FRANCHISE.



I RISE, Sir, to propose an extension of the suffrage which can excite no party or class feeling in this House; which can give no umbrage to the keenest assertor of the claims either of property or of numbers; an extension which has not the smallest tendency to disturb what we have heard so much about lately, the balance of political power; which cannot afflict the most timid alarmist with revolutionary terrors, or offend the most jealous democrat as an infringement of popular rights, or a privilege granted to one class of society at the expense of another. There is nothing to distract our attention from the simple question, whether there is any adequate justification for continuing to exclude an entire half of the community, not only from admission, but from the capability of being ever admitted within the pale of the Constitution, though they may fulfil all the conditions legally and constitutionally sufficient in every case but theirs. Sir, within the limits of our constitution this is a solitary case. There is no other example of an exclusion which is absolute. If the law denied a vote to all but the possessors of £5,000 a year, the poorest man in the nation might—and now and then would—acquire the suffrage; but neither birth, nor fortune, nor merit, nor exertion, nor intellect, nor even that great disposer of human affairs, accident, can ever enable any woman to have her voice counted in those national affairs which touch her and hers as nearly as any other person in the nation.

Now, Sir, before going any further, allow me to say, that a *primâ facie* case is already made out. It is not just to make distinctions, in rights and privileges, without a positive reason. I do not mean that the electoral franchise, or any other public function, is an abstract right, and that to withhold it from any one, on sufficient grounds of expediency, is a personal wrong; it is a complete misunderstanding of the principle I maintain, to confound this with it; my argument is entirely one of expediency. But there are different orders of expediency; all expediencies are not exactly on the same level; there is an important branch of expediency called justice; and justice, though it does not necessarily require that we should confer political functions on every one, does require that we should not, capriciously and without cause, withhold from one what we give to another. As was most truly said by my right honourable friend the Member for South Lancashire, in the most misunderstood and misrepresented speech I ever remember; to lay a ground for refusing the suffrage to any one, it is necessary to allege either personal unfitness or public danger. Now, can either of these be alleged in the present case? Can it be pretended that women who manage an estate or conduct a business,—who pay rates and taxes, often to a large amount, and frequently from their own earnings,—many of whom are responsible heads of families, and some of whom, in the capacity of schoolmistresses, teach much more than a great number of the male electors have ever learnt,—are not capable of a function of which every male householder is capable? Or is it feared that if they were admitted to the suffrage they would revolutionize the State,—would deprive us of any of our valued institutions, or that we should have worse laws, or be in any way whatever worse governed, through the effect of their suffrages? No one, Sir, believes anything of the kind.

And it is not only the general principles of justice that are infringed, or at least set aside, by the exclusion of women,

merely as women, from any share in the representation; that exclusion is also repugnant to the particular principles of the British Constitution. It violates one of the oldest of our constitutional maxims—a doctrine dear to reformers, and theoretically acknowledged by most Conservatives—that taxation and representation should be co-extensive. Do not women pay taxes? Does not every woman who is *sui juris* contribute exactly as much to the revenue as a man who has the same electoral qualification? If a stake in the country means anything, the owner of freehold or leasehold property has the same stake, whether it is owned by a man or a woman. There is evidence in our constitutional records that women have voted, in counties and in some boroughs, at former, though certainly distant, periods of our history.

The House, however, will doubtless expect that I should not rest my case solely on the general principles either of justice or of the Constitution, but should produce what are called practical arguments. Now, there is one practical argument of great weight, which, I frankly confess, is entirely wanting in the case of women; they do not hold great meetings in the parks, or demonstrations at Islington. How far this omission may be considered to invalidate their claim, I will not undertake to decide; but other practical arguments, practical in the most restricted meaning of the term, are not wanting; and I am prepared to state them, if I may be permitted first to ask, what are the practical objections? The difficulty which most people feel on this subject, is not a practical objection; there is nothing practical about it; it is a mere feeling—a feeling of strangeness; the proposal is so new; at least they think so, though this is a mistake; it is a very old proposal. Well, Sir, strangeness is a thing which wears off; some things were strange enough to many of us three months ago which are not at all so now; and many are strange now, which will not be strange to the same persons a few years hence, or even, perhaps, a few months. And as for novelty, we live in a world of novelties; the despotism of

custom is on the wane; we are not now satisfied with knowing what a thing is, we ask whether it ought to be; and in this House at least, I am bound to believe that an appeal lies from custom to a higher tribunal, in which reason is judge. Now, the reasons which custom is in the habit of giving for itself on this subject are usually very brief. That, indeed, is one of my difficulties; it is not easy to refute an interjection: interjections, however, are the only arguments among those we usually hear on this subject, which it seems to me at all difficult to refute. The others mostly present themselves in such aphorisms as these: Politics are not women's business, and would distract them from their proper duties: Women do not desire the suffrage, but would rather be without it: Women are sufficiently represented by the representation of their male relatives and connexions: Women have power enough already. I shall probably be thought to have done enough in the way of answering, if I answer all this; and it may, perhaps, instigate any honourable gentleman who takes the trouble of replying to me, to produce something more recondite.

Politics, it is said, are not a woman's business. Well, Sir, I rather think that politics are not a man's business either; unless he is one of the few who are selected and paid to devote their time to the public service, or is a member of this or of the other House. The vast majority of male electors have each his own business, which absorbs nearly the whole of his time; but I have not heard that the few hours occupied, once in a few years, in attending at a polling booth, even if we throw in the time spent in reading newspapers and political treatises, ever causes them to neglect their shops or their counting-houses. I have never understood that those who have votes are worse merchants, or worse lawyers, or worse physicians, or even worse clergymen than other people. One would almost suppose that the British Constitution denied a vote to every one who could not give the greater part of his time to politics: if this were the case, we should have a

very limited constituency. But allow me to ask, what is the meaning of political freedom? Is it anything but the control of those who do make their business of politics, by those who do not? Is it not the very essence of constitutional liberty, that men come from their looms and their forges to decide, and decide well, whether they are properly governed, and whom they will be governed by? And the nations which prize this privilege the most, and exercise it most fully, are invariably those who excel the most in the common concerns of life. The ordinary occupations of most women are, and are likely to remain, principally domestic; but the notion that these occupations are incompatible with the keenest interest in national affairs, and in all the great interests of humanity, is as utterly futile as the apprehension, once sincerely entertained, that artisans would desert their workshops and their factories if they were taught to read. I know there is an obscure feeling—a feeling which is ashamed to express itself openly—as if women had no right to care about anything, except how they may be the most useful and devoted servants of some man. But as I am convinced that there is not a single member of this House, whose conscience accuses him of so mean a feeling, I may say without offence, that this claim to confiscate the whole existence of one half of the species for the supposed convenience of the other, appears to me, independently of its injustice, particularly silly. For who that has had ordinary experience of human affairs, and ordinary capacity of profiting by that experience, fancies that those do their own work best who understand nothing else? A man has lived to little purpose who has not learnt that without general mental cultivation, no particular work that requires understanding is ever done in the best manner. It requires brains to use practical experience; and brains, even without practical experience, go further than any amount of practical experience without brains. But perhaps it is thought that the ordinary occupations of women

are more antagonistic than those of men are to the comprehension of public affairs. It is thought, perhaps, that those who are principally charged with the moral education of the future generations of men, cannot be fit to form an opinion about the moral and educational interests of a people: and that those whose chief daily business is the judicious laying-out of money, so as to produce the greatest results with the smallest means, cannot possibly give any lessons to right honourable gentlemen on the other side of the House or on this, who contrive to produce such singularly small results with such vast means.

I feel a degree of confidence, Sir, on this subject, which I could not feel, if the political change, in itself not great or formidable, which I advocate, were not grounded, as beneficent and salutary political changes almost always are, upon a previous social change. The notion of a hard and fast line of separation between women's occupations and men's—of forbidding women to take interest in the things which interest men—belongs to a gone-by state of society, which is receding further and further into the past. We talk of political revolutions, but we do not sufficiently attend to the fact that there has taken place around us a silent domestic revolution: women and men are, for the first time in history, really each other's companions. Our traditions respecting the proper relations between them have descended from a time when their lives were apart—when they were separate in their thoughts, because they were separate equally in their amusements and in their serious occupations. In former days a man passed his life among men; all his friendships, all his real intimacies, were with men; with men alone did he consult on any serious business; the wife was either a plaything, or an upper servant. All this, among the educated classes, is now changed. The man no longer gives his spare hours to violent outdoor exercises and boisterous conviviality with male associates; the two sexes now pass their lives together;

the women of a man's family are his habitual society; the wife is his chief associate, his most confidential friend, and often his most trusted adviser. Now, does a man wish to have for his nearest companion, so closely linked with him, and whose wishes and preferences have so strong a claim on him, one whose thoughts are alien to those which occupy his own mind—one who can neither be a help, a comfort, nor a support, to his noblest feelings and purposes? Is this close and almost exclusive companionship compatible with women's being warned off all large subjects—being taught that they ought not to care for what it is men's duty to care for, and that to have any serious interests outside the household is stepping beyond their province? Is it good for a man to live in complete communion of thoughts and feelings with one who is studiously kept inferior to himself, whose earthly interests are forcibly confined within four walls, and who cultivates, as a grace of character, ignorance and indifference about the most inspiring subjects, those among which his highest duties are cast? Does any one suppose that this can happen without detriment to the man's own character? Sir, the time is now come when, unless women are raised to the level of men, men will be pulled down to theirs. The women of a man's family are either a stimulus and a support to his highest aspirations, or a drag upon them. You may keep them ignorant of politics, but you cannot prevent them from concerning themselves with the least respectable part of politics—its personalities; if they do not understand and cannot enter into the man's feelings of public duty, they do care about his personal interests, and that is the scale into which their weight will certainly be thrown. They will be an influence always at hand, cooperating with the man's selfish promptings, lying in wait for his moments of moral irresolution, and doubling the strength of every temptation. Even if they maintain a modest forbearance, the mere absence of their sympathy will

hang a dead-weight on his moral energies, making him unwilling to make sacrifices which they will feel, and to forego social advantages and successes in which they would share for objects which they cannot appreciate. Supposing him fortunate enough to escape any actual sacrifice of conscience, the indirect effect on the higher parts of his own character is still deplorable. Under an idle notion that the beauties of character of the two sexes are mutually incompatible, men are afraid of manly women; but those who have considered the nature and power of social influences well know, that unless there are manly women, there will not much longer be manly men. When men and women are really companions, if women are frivolous, men will be frivolous; if women care for nothing but personal interest and idle vanities, men in general will care for little else: the two sexes must now rise or sink together. It may be said that women may take interest in great public questions without having votes; they may certainly; but how many of them will? Education and society have exhausted their power in inculcating on women that their proper rule of conduct is what society expects from them; and the denial of the vote is a proclamation intelligible to every one, that whatever else society may expect, it does not expect that they should concern themselves with public interests. Why, the whole of a girl's thoughts and feelings are toned down by it from her school-days; she does not take the interest even in national history which her brothers do, because it is to be no business of hers when she grows up. If there are women—and now happily there are many—who do interest themselves in these subjects, and do study them, it is because the force within is strong enough to bear up against the worst kind of discouragement, that which acts not by interposing obstacles, which may be struggled against, but by deadening the spirit which faces and conquers obstacles.

We are told, Sir, that women do not wish for the suffrage.

If the fact were so, it would only prove that all women are still under this deadening influence; that the opiate still benumbs their mind and conscience. But great numbers of women do desire the suffrage, and have asked for it by petitions to this House. How do we know how many more thousands there may be, who have not asked for what they do not hope to get; or for fear of what may be thought of them by men, or by other women; or from the feeling, so sedulously cultivated in them by their education—aversion to make themselves conspicuous? Men must have a rare power of self-delusion, if they suppose that leading questions put to the ladies of their family or of their acquaintance will elicit their real sentiments, or will be answered with complete sincerity by one woman in ten thousand. No one is so well schooled as most women are in making a virtue of necessity; it costs little to disclaim caring for what is not offered; and frankness in the expression of sentiments which may be displeasing and may be thought uncomplimentary to their nearest connections, is not one of the virtues which a woman's education tends to cultivate, and is, moreover, a virtue attended with sufficient risk, to induce prudent women usually to reserve its exercise for cases in which there is a nearer and a more personal interest at stake. However this may be, those who do not care for the suffrage will not use it; either they will not register, or if they do, they will vote as their male relatives advise: by which, as the advantage will probably be about equally shared among all classes, no harm will be done. Those, be they few or many, who do value the privilege, will exercise it, and will receive that stimulus to their faculties, and that widening and liberalizing influence over their feelings and sympathies, which the suffrage seldom fails to produce on those who are admitted to it. Meanwhile an unworthy stigma would be removed from the whole sex. The law would cease to declare them incapable of serious things; would cease to proclaim that

their opinions and wishes are unworthy of regard, on things which concern them equally with men, and on many things which concern them much more than men. They would no longer be classed with children, idiots, and lunatics, as incapable of taking care of either themselves or others, and needing that everything should be done for them, without asking their consent. If only one woman in twenty thousand used the suffrage, to be declared capable of it would be a boon to all women. Even that theoretical enfranchisement would remove a weight from the expansion of their faculties, the real mischief of which is much greater than the apparent.

Then it is said, that women do not need direct power, having so much indirect, through their influence over their male relatives and connections. I should like to carry this argument a little further. Rich people have a great deal of indirect influence. Is this a reason for refusing them votes? Does anyone propose a rating qualification the wrong way, or bring in a Reform Bill to disfranchise all who live in a £500 house, or pay £100 a year in direct taxes? Unless this rule for distributing the franchise is to be reserved for the exclusive benefit of women, it would follow that persons of more than a certain fortune should be allowed to bribe, but should not be allowed to vote. Sir, it is true that women have great power. It is part of my case that they have great power; but they have it under the worst possible conditions, because it is indirect, and therefore irresponsible. I want to make this great power a responsible power. I want to make the woman feel her conscience interested in its honest exercise. I want her to feel that it is not given to her as a mere means of personal ascendancy. I want to make her influence work by a manly interchange of opinion, and not by cajolery. I want to awaken in her the political point of honour. Many a woman already influences greatly the political conduct of the men connected with her, and sometimes, by force of will, actually governs it; but she is

never supposed to have anything to do with it; the man whom she influences, and perhaps misleads, is alone responsible; her power is like the back-stairs influence of a favourite. Sir, I demand that all who exercise power should have the burthen laid on them of knowing something about the things they have power over. With the acknowledged right to a voice, would come a sense of the corresponding duty. Women are not usually inferior in tenderness of conscience to men. Make the woman a moral agent in these matters: show that you expect from her a political conscience: and when she has learnt to understand the transcendent importance of these things, she will know why it is wrong to sacrifice political convictions to personal interest or vanity; she will understand that political integrity is not a foolish personal crotchet, which a man is bound, for the sake of his family, to give up, but a solemn duty: and the men whom she can influence will be better men in all public matters, and not, as they often are now, worse men by the whole amount of her influence.

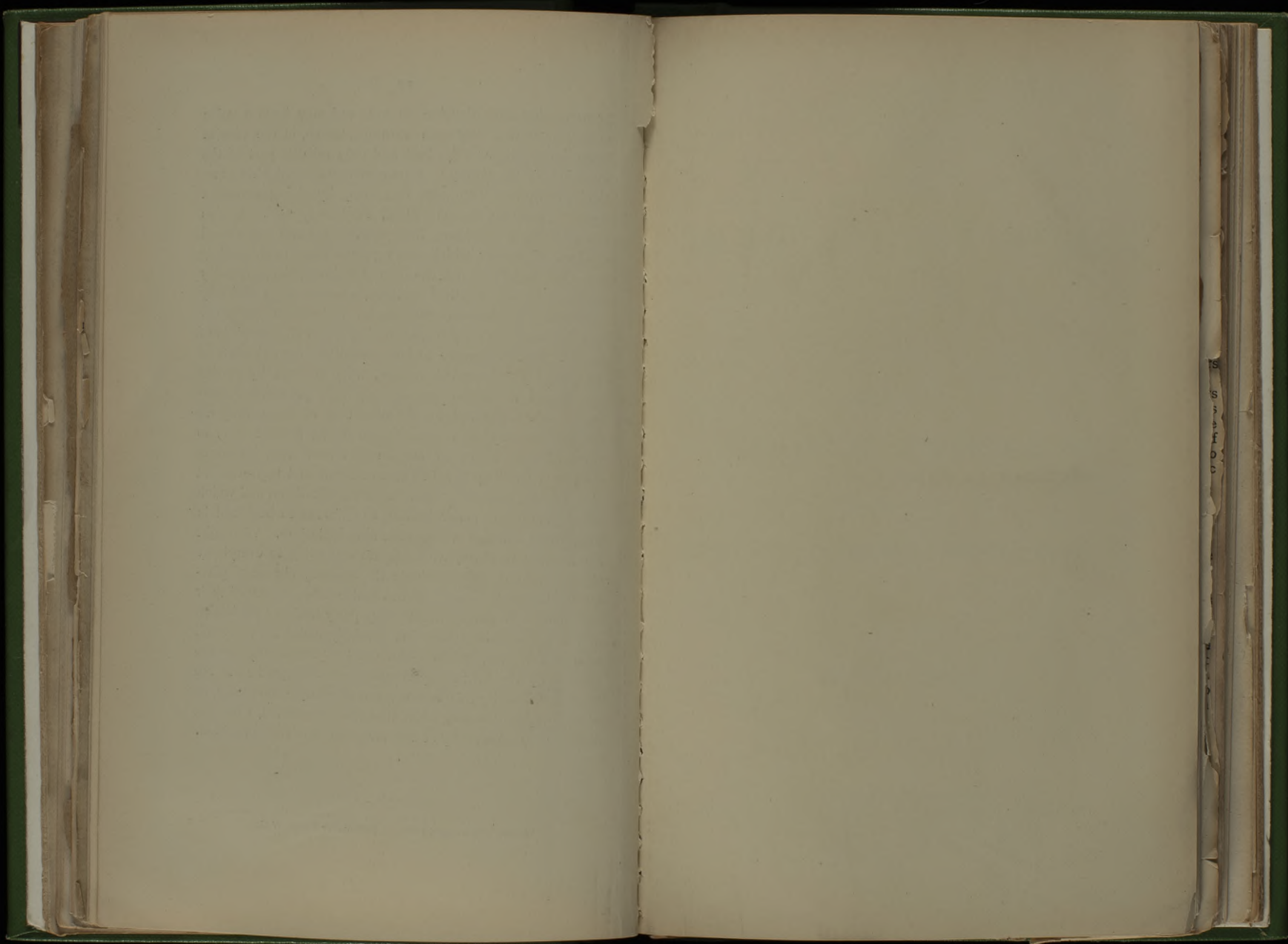
But at least, it will be said, women do not suffer any practical inconvenience, as women, by not having a vote. The interests of all women are safe in the hands of their fathers, husbands, and brothers, who have the same interest with them, and not only know, far better than they do, what is good for them, but care much more for them than they care for themselves. Sir, this is exactly what is said of all unrepresented classes. The operatives, for instance: are they not virtually represented by the representation of their employers? Are not the interest of the employers and that of the employed, when properly understood, the same? To insinuate the contrary, is it not the horrible crime of setting class against class? Is not the farmer equally interested with the labourer in the prosperity of agriculture,—the cotton manufacturer equally with his workmen in the high price of calicoes? Are they not both interested alike in

taking off taxes? And, generally, have not employers and employed a common interest against all outsiders, just as husband and wife have against all outside the family? And what is more, are not all employers good, kind, benevolent men, who love their workpeople, and always desire to do what is most for their good? All these assertions are as true, and as much to the purpose, as the corresponding assertions respecting men and women. Sir, we do not live in Arcadia, but, as we were lately reminded, *in facie Romuli*: and in that region workmen need other protection than that of their employers, and women other protection than that of their men. I should like to have a return laid before this House of the number of women who are annually beaten to death, kicked to death, or trampled to death by their male protectors: and, in an opposite column, the amount of the sentences passed, in those cases in which the dastardly criminals did not get off altogether. I should also like to have, in a third column, the amount of property, the unlawful taking of which was, at the same sessions or assizes, by the same judge, thought worthy of the same amount of punishment. We should then have an arithmetical estimate of the value set by a male legislature and male tribunals on the murder of a woman, often by torture continued through years, which, if there is any shame in us, would make us hang our heads. Sir, before it is affirmed that women do not suffer in their interests, as women, by the denial of a vote, it should be considered whether women have no grievances; whether the laws, and those practices which laws can reach, are in every way as favourable to women as to men. Now, how stands the fact? In the matter of education, for instance. We continually hear that the most important part of national education is that of mothers because they educate the future men. Is this importance really attached to it? Are there many fathers who care as much, or are willing to expend as much, for the edu-

cation of their daughters as of their sons? Where are the Universities, where the High Schools, or the schools of any high description, for them? If it be said that girls are better educated at home, where are the training-schools for governesses? What has become of the endowments which the bounty of our ancestors destined for the education, not of one sex only, but of both indiscriminately? I am told by one of the highest authorities on the subject, that in the majority of the endowments the provision made is not for boys, but for education generally; in one great endowment, Christ's Hospital, it is expressly for both: that institution now maintains and educates 1,100 boys, and exactly 26 girls. And when they attain womanhood, how does it fare with that great and increasing portion of the sex, who, sprung from the educated classes, have not inherited a provision, and not having obtained one by marriage, or disdaining to marry merely for a provision, depend on their exertions for subsistence? Hardly any decent educated occupation, save one, is open to them. They are either governesses or nothing. A fact has recently occurred, well worthy of commemoration in connection with this subject. A young lady, Miss Garrett, from no pressure of necessity, but from an honourable desire to employ her activity in alleviating human suffering, studied the medical profession. Having duly qualified herself, she, with an energy and perseverance which cannot be too highly praised, knocked successively at all the doors through which by law, access is obtained into the medical profession. Having found all other doors fast shut, she fortunately discovered one which had accidentally been left ajar. The Society of Apothecaries, it seems, had forgotten to shut out those who they never thought would attempt to come in, and through this narrow entrance this young lady found her way into this profession. But so objectionable did it appear to this learned body that women should be the medical attendants even of women, that the narrow wicket through which Miss

Garrett entered has been closed after her, and no second Miss Garrett will be allowed to pass through it. And this is *instar omnium*. No sooner do women show themselves capable of competing with men in any career, than that career, if it be lucrative or honourable, is closed to them. A short time ago, women might be Associates of the Royal Academy; but they were so distinguishing themselves, they were assuming so honourable a place in their art, that this privilege also has been withdrawn. This is the sort of care taken of women's interests by the men who so faithfully represent them. This is the way we treat unmarried women. And how is it with the married? They, it may be said, are not interested in this motion; and they are not directly interested; but it interests, even directly, many who have been married, as well as others who will be. Now, by the common law of England, all that a wife has, belongs absolutely to the husband: he may tear it all from her, squander every penny of it in debauchery, leave her to support by her labour herself and her children, and if by heroic exertion and self-sacrifice she is able to put by something for their future wants, unless she is judicially separated from him he can pounce down upon her savings, and leave her penniless. And such cases are of quite common occurrence. Sir, if we were besotted enough to think these things right, there would be more excuse for us; but we know better. The richer classes take care to exempt their own daughters from the consequences of this abominable state of the law. By the contrivance of marriage settlements, they are able in each case to make a private law for themselves, and they invariably do so. Why do we not provide that justice for the daughters of the poor, which we take care to provide for our own daughters? Why is not that which is done in every case that we personally care for, made the law of the land, so that a poor man's child, whose parents could not afford the expense of a settlement, may retain a right to any little

property that may devolve on her, and may have a voice in the disposal of her own earnings, which, in the case of many husbands, are the best and only reliable part of the incomings of the family? I am sometimes asked what practical grievances I propose to remedy by giving women a vote. I propose, for one thing, to remedy this, I give these instances to prove that women are not the petted children of society which many people seem to think they are—that they have not the over-abundance, the superfluity of power that is ascribed to them, and are not sufficiently represented by the representation of the men who have not had the heart to do for them this simple and obvious piece of justice. Sir, grievances of less magnitude than the law of the property of married women, when suffered by parties less inured to passive submission, have provoked revolutions. We ought not to take advantage of the security we feel against any such consequence in the present case, to withhold from a limited number of women that moderate amount of participation in the enactment and improvement of our laws, which this motion solicits for them, and which would enable the general feelings of women to be heard in this House through a few male representatives. We ought not to deny to them, what we are conceding to everybody else—a right to be consulted; the ordinary chance of placing in the great Council of the nation a few organs of their sentiments—of having, what every petty trade or profession has, a few members who feel specially called on to attend to their interests, and to point out how those interests are affected by the law, or by any proposed changes in it. No more is asked by this motion; and when the time comes, as it certainly will come, when this will be granted, I feel the firmest conviction that you will never repent of the concession.



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SPEECH

OF THE LATE

✓ JOHN STUART MILL

AT THE

GREAT MEETING

IN FAVOUR OF

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,

HELD IN THE

MUSIC HALL, EDINBURGH, JANUARY 12TH, 1871.

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PRICE ONE PENNY
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To be obtained from the Secretary,
CENTRAL NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,
29, PARLIAMENT STREET, S.W.

SPEECH

OF THE LATE

JOHN STUART MILL.

MR. JOHN STUART MILL (who was received with great enthusiasm, the audience rising and waving their hats and handkerchiefs) said—If there is a truth in politics which is fundamental—which is the basis of all free government—it is that when a part of the nation are the sole possessors of power, the interest of that part gets all the serious attention. This does not necessarily imply any active oppression. All that it implies is the natural tendency of the average man to feel what touches self of vastly greater importance than what directly touches only other people. This is the deep-seated and ineradicable reason why women will never be justly treated until they obtain the franchise. They suffer, assuredly, much injustice by the operation of law. But suppose this changed; even then—even if there were no ground of complaint against the laws, there would be a break-down in their execution as long as men alone have a voice in choosing and in removing the officers of Government.

All our recent constitutional reforms, and the whole creed of reformers, are grounded on the fact that the suffrage is needed for self-protection. All experience proves that if one part of the community is held in subjection by another part, it is not trusted with the ordinary means of self-defence, but is left dependent on the good-will and pleasure of those who are more privileged, the most vital interests of the subject-portion are certain to be, if not recklessly trampled upon, at least postponed to almost anything else.

The treatment of women is certainly no exception to the rule. They have neither equal laws nor an equal administration of them. The laws treat them as they could not long be treated if they had the suffrage; and even if the laws were equal, the administration of the laws is not. Police magistrates and criminal judges cannot be exceptionally bad men; they are not chosen for their bad qualities; they must be thought, by those who appoint them, to represent fairly, or better than fairly, the moral feelings of average men. Yet, what do we see? For an atrocious assault by a man upon a woman, especially if she has the misfortune to be his wife, he is either let off with an admonition, or he is solemnly told

that he has committed a grave offence, for which he must be severely punished, and then he gets as many weeks or months of imprisonment as a man who has taken five pounds' worth of property gets years.

We are told that the good feelings of men are a sufficient protection to women. Those who say so can never, one would suppose, look into the police and law reports. If good feeling does not protect women against being beaten and kicked to death's door every day of their lives, and at last beaten and kicked to actual death, by their special guardians and protectors, can we expect that it will secure them against injuries less revolting to humanity? Most men, it will be said, are incapable of committing such horrible brutality. Perhaps so; but it seems they are quite capable of letting it be committed. If women who are maltreated by their husbands found a defender in every other man who knew of it, they might have some chance of protection without the weapon of the suffrage. But it is never so; slaves did not find it so; serfs did not find it so; conquered nations do not find it so; and neither do women. There are many men who would not consciously do them any wrong; but there must be a great moral improvement in human nature before most men will exert themselves to prevent or to redress wrongs committed by others under the sanction of law. And of these two things—the suffrage for women, and a grand moral improvement in human nature—the suffrage, to my thinking, is likely to be the soonest obtained. (Cheers.) I could afford to stop here. I have made out an ample case. There is a portion of the population, amounting in number to somewhat more than half, to whom the law and its administration do not fulfil their duty, do not afford even the bodily protection due to all—this half happening to be that which is not admitted to the suffrage. Their most important interests are neglected—I do not say from deliberate intention, but simply because their interest is not so near to the feelings of the ruling half as the ruling half's own interest. The remedy is plain: put women in the position which will make their interest the rulers' own interest. Make it as important to politicians to redress the grievances of women as it is to redress those of any class which is largely represented in Parliament.

If nothing more than this could be said in support of their claim to the suffrage, no claim could be more fully made out. (Cheers.) And if the claim is just, so also is it strictly constitutional. One of the recognised doctrines of the British Constitution is that representation is co-extensive with direct taxation. The practice of the Constitution, it is true, for a long time did not correspond with the theory; but it has been made to conform to it at last, in cities and boroughs, provided the tax-payer is of the male sex; but if a woman,

she may be the largest tax-payer in the place, and the person of greatest practical ability besides; no matter, she has no vote. This is something very like punishing her for being a woman. The conditions which in the eye of the law and of the Constitution confer a title to a voice in public affairs are all fulfilled by her, with the single exception of having been born a male. This one deficiency, which I humbly submit she cannot help—(laughter)—is visited on her by the privation of a right as important to her as to any man, and even more important, since those who are physically weakest require protection the most. This is not an injury only, but an indignity. I grant that those who uphold it are in general quite unconscious of its being so; but this comes from the inveterate habit of having one rule and measure for all that concerns women, and another for everything else.

Men are so much accustomed to think of women only as women, that they forget to think of them as human. (Hear, hear.) It is not only for their own sake that women ought to have the suffrage, but also for the sake of the public. It is for the interest of us all, both men and women, and of those who are to come after us. The reasons that may be given for this are many, but I may content myself with two. One, and the strongest, is what we sometimes hear unthinkingly urged as an argument on the other side—because women have so much power already. (Laughter.) It is true they have much power. They have the power which depends on personal influence over men. They have the power of cajolery—(laughter)—and often that of a petted favourite; power sadly inadequate to their own just and necessary protection against wrong, but sufficient at times to produce only too much effect upon the public conduct of the men with whom they are connected. But as this power, instead of being open and avowed, is indirect and unrecognised, no provision is made for its being rightly used. As it is conventionally assumed that women possess no power outside the domestic department, the power which they do and always will possess is exercised without the necessary knowledge, and without the proper responsibility.

It having been decreed that public matters are not a woman's business, her mind is carefully turned away from whatsoever would give her a knowledge of them, and she is taught to care nothing about them—that is, until some private interest or private likings or dislikings come in, when of course these private feelings have it all their own way, there being no public principles or convictions to control them. The power, therefore, which women now have in public affairs is power without knowledge. It is also power without responsibility. A man's wife is very often the real prompter either of what he does well and nobly, or of what he does foolishly or selfishly; but as she gets no credit for the one, so she is not held

accountable for the other; if she is selfish, a very little art suffices to exempt her from censure though she succeeds in compassing her ends; if she is simple and well meaning, she does not feel bound to inform herself, so as to have a reasonable opinion on what is solely the man's business, though all the while her ignorant prepossessions or her natural partialities may be acting as a most pernicious bias on what is supposed to be his better judgment. From this combination of absence of instruction and absence of responsibility, it comes to pass that, though women are acknowledged to have, as a rule, stronger conscientious feelings than men, it is but a very small minority of women who have anything that deserves the name of a public conscience. How great an evil this is, there needs no argument to show. What is the greatest obstacle which the friends of political and social improvement have to struggle with—the drag which is constantly obstructing their efforts and disappointing their hopes? Is it not the weakness of the average citizen's political conscience? Is not this the special danger and failure to which popular institutions are exposed—that the elector does not sufficiently feel his obligations to the public, and either stays away from the poll, or goes there and votes on the prompting of some private interest? And how can we hope that he will learn to postpone private interests to public, while he has beside him, in the person of his closest intimate, one who has been trained to have no feeling whatever of his duties to the public, but who has the keenest feeling of his duties to his family, and who, even without intending it, cannot but sway his mind strongly in the direction of the only interests which she understands and appreciates? (Applause.) It must be remembered, too, that this is a growing evil. Time was when the wife was very little a companion of her husband—their lives were apart; the associates of his leisure and of his recreations were other men. But now the home and its inhabitants are so much to a man, that no other influence can, as a rule, compete with theirs. The time, therefore, is come when, if we would have public virtue in our men, we must have it in our women. (Hear, hear, and applause.) And how can a woman have a conscience about the public good, if she is told, and believes, that it is no business whatever of hers? Give women the same rights as men, and the same obligations will follow. Instead of hanging a dead weight on men's public conscience, their greater general susceptibility of moral feeling will make their habitual influence a most valuable support to the honest performance of public duty. (Loud applause.) This, then, is one of the reasons why it is for the good of all that women should have an admitted right to take part in public affairs. Another is the vast amount of brain power and practical business talent which now runs to waste

for want of an outlet into those great fields of public usefulness, in which no one, I suppose, will pretend that such qualities are not very much wanted. Few men, I suspect, are sufficiently aware of the great amount of administrative ability possessed by women; for want of considering that the essential qualities which lead to practical success are the same in what are called small things as in great.

It is my belief that, in all those parts of the business of life which depend on the vigilant superintendence and accurate estimation of details, women, when they have the necessary special knowledge, are better administrators than men. And I am now speaking, not of women as they might be—not as some improved mode of education would make them—but of women as they now are, and of the capacities which they have already displayed. If an example is wanted of what women's powers of organisation can accomplish in public life, I appeal to one of the most striking facts of modern times, the Sanitary Commission in the late American War. The history of that Commission ought to be as well known all over the world as it is in America. From the beginning, and throughout, it was women's work. It was planned, organised, and worked by women. The Government was jealous of them at first, but the hopeless inferiority of its own arrangements made it soon glad to make over the first place to them. Not only had such work never been so well done, but nobody had ever supposed it possible that it could be so well done. I am aware that this argument would carry us much further than the suffrage; but I suppose it will be acknowledged that those who are themselves eminently capable of practical business, must be fit to take a share in the choosing of those to whom practical business is to be entrusted. The ability which is specially required for the exercise of the suffrage—that of selecting the persons most capable for the work that is to be done—is one of the qualifications for business in which women have always excelled. Great queens have in nothing shown themselves greater than in their choice of Ministers. When the ladies of the Sanitary Commission wanted men to help them, they knew the right men and how to use them; and they distinguished themselves not less by the work which they caused to be done, than by that which they did in their own persons. (Applause.) These are some of the reasons which make it equally just and expedient that the suffrage should be extended to women. It must, at the same time, be borne in mind that, by admitting them to the suffrage, no other question is in the smallest degree prejudged.

Supposing it true, what some people are so fond of affirming, that women have nothing to complain of, and that the vast majority of them do not desire any change; if so, giving them the suffrage can do nobody harm, and would afford them an

opportunity of showing their perfect contentment with their present lot, in a manner beyond the reach of dispute. (Applause.)

If what we are told is true, that women ought to be, and always must and will be, in a state of domestic and social subordination to men, why, then, they require the suffrage so much the more, in order that the sovereignty of men over them may be exercised under the fitting responsibility. None need political protection so much as those who are in domestic dependence, since none are so much exposed to wrong. On every possible supposition, therefore, they have a claim to the suffrage. And we live at a period of human development, when the just claims of large numbers cannot be permanently resisted.

The whole movement of modern society, from the middle ages until now, greatly accelerated in the present century, points in the direction of the political enfranchisement of women. Their exclusion is a last remnant of the old bad state of society—the regimen of privileges and disabilities. All other monopolies are going or gone. The whole spirit of the times is against predetermining by law that one set of people shall be allowed by right of birth to have or to do what another set shall not, by any amount of exertion or superiority of ability, be allowed to attain. (Applause.) If nature has established an ineradicable and insuperable difference in the capacities and qualifications of the two sexes, nature can take care of itself. What nature has decided may safely be left to nature. But when we find people making themselves uneasy for fear that nature's purposes should be frustrated unless law comes to her assistance, we may be pretty certain that it is not nature they are so careful about, but law pretending to be nature. To all such pretences the growing improvement of mankind is making them more and more adverse.

I do not know how long a time it may require to get rid of women's disabilities. Great changes in the habits and opinions of mankind are always slow. But of one thing I am certain—that when once they have been got rid of—when their true aspect is no longer disguised by the varnish of custom and habit—they will appear in the retrospect so devoid of any rational foundation, and so contradictory to the principles by which society now professes to guide itself, that the difficulty which will be felt will be to conceive how they can ever have been defended, and by what possible arguments they can ever have been made to appear plausible. (Loud and prolonged cheering.)

[PRICE THREEPENCE.]

THE
ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN:
AN ANCIENT RIGHT, A MODERN NEED.

A PAPER READ

BY

✓ MRS. M^CILQUHAM

(POOR LAW GUARDIAN),

TO THE

• BEDMINSTER (BRISTOL) CHAMPION HABITATION

OF THE

PRIMROSE LEAGUE,

ON THE 11TH DECEMBER, 1891.

(REVISED AND ENLARGED.)

WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION UNION.

Hon. Sec.:—MRS. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY,
BUXTON HOUSE, CONGLETON.

THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN :
AN ANCIENT RIGHT, A MODERN NEED.

IT is with very great pleasure that I find myself enabled to address the Bedminster Champion Habitation of the Primrose League on the Constitutional aspect of Women's Suffrage. The Primrose League, as you are all perfectly well aware, was established as a perpetual remembrance of the great services which Lord Beaconsfield rendered to the Conservative Party. It is, therefore, peculiarly appropriate now to speak of Lord Beaconsfield, who was one of the earliest friends of the enfranchisement of women. His clear and astute mind plainly discerned the injustice and anomaly of denying to women in Parliamentary representation those rights which, from time immemorial, have been theirs in local representation. Speaking in the House of Commons, on the 27th of April, 1866, Lord Beaconsfield, then Mr. Disraeli, said—

I have always been of opinion that, if there is to be universal suffrage, women have as much right to vote as men. And, more than that, a woman now ought to have a vote in a country in which she may hold manorial courts and sometimes act as churchwardess.

So also, in reply to a memorial from upwards of eleven thousand women of Great Britain and Ireland, which was presented through Mr. Gore Langton, M.P., on April 29th, 1873, Mr. Disraeli wrote—

DEAR GORE LANGTON,—I was much honoured by receiving from your hands the memorial signed by eleven thousand women of England, among them some illustrious names, thanking me for my services in attempting to abolish the anomaly, that the Parliamentary Franchise attached to a household or property qualification, when possessed by a woman, should not be exercised, though in all matters of local government, when similarly qualified, she exercises this right. As I believe this anomaly to be injurious to the best interests of the country, I trust to see it removed by the wisdom of Parliament.—Yours sincerely,
B. DISRAELI.

Mr. Disraeli, moreover, voted for the second reading of the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill in 1871; paired for it in 1872; and voted for it in 1873, 1875, and 1876, up to the time when he was created a Peer. When, in 1884, the Representation of the People Bill was before the House of Commons, and an amendment enfranchising women was under consideration, another eminent Conservative leader, the late Lord Iddesleigh, then Sir Stafford Northcote, spoke, on June 12th, as follows:—

The point upon which we lay stress is that upon which the late Lord Beaconsfield laid stress, and upon which so much stress has been laid to-night, viz., that by excluding women, you are excluding a large portion of the property owners of this country from representation, and from their share in the legislation. (Hear, hear.) You are now asked to introduce a certain number of women. We believe there will be 400,000 or 500,000 women who will be so admitted. The number is not difficult to recollect, because that is nearly the exact number of persons you are going to add in Ireland from the lowest population in that country. It is a moderate demand we make when we ask you, as a

counterbalance to the effect of admitting so large a body of men, as to whose qualification and efficiency for the franchise you have no reason to believe that they have half as much knowledge of the real question at issue as most of the women of England have, when you are going to admit these people as capable citizens, is it unreasonable to demand that the same privilege shall be given to 400,000 or 500,000 women who are at the heads of households and are managers of property in this country.

On the same occasion, another well-known Conservative statesman, His Grace the Duke of Rutland, then Lord John Manners, said :—

Can anyone allege that the female ratepayers of this country have shown themselves unworthy of the trust which it is proposed to repose in them, from the manner in which they have discharged the functions which have already been entrusted to them? I ventured, in some observations which I made upon the second reading of the Bill, to allude to one class of these female ratepayers—the female farmers of this country. By way of illustration, I will again refer to that class, because, as a county member, I naturally have more knowledge of that class, and possibly more interest in them. But, I ask, can anyone allege that from the manner in which during the period of time, now ranging over a great number of years, the female farmers have discharged the duties which have devolved on them, many and important as those duties are, there is the slightest ground for asserting that they are likely to prove themselves unworthy, unfit, or incapable of exercising the Parliamentary franchise? I should like to quote the opinion delivered only the other day in a town with which I am acquainted—the borough of Grantham—by a gentleman well known in the agricultural world of Lincolnshire and Leicestershire on this very subject. I refer to Mr. Wilders, who said : “To my mind the greatest injustice is that the female ratepayer and owner should not be allowed to vote. Fancy a woman farming 500 acres of land, and paying the usual contributions to the taxes of the country, having no voice in the representation of the country, while her own labourers have. If any man disputes the business capabilities of women, let him begin an important business transaction with her, and I will answer for it that he will come off second best.” Well then, sir, I contend that there has been no reason assigned by anyone why the Parliamentary Franchise should not be conferred upon those fit and capable female ratepayers.

Coming to a still more recent date, at a meeting convened by the Primrose League, in the Lyceum Theatre, at Edinburgh, on November 29th, 1888, Lord Salisbury said :—

I earnestly hope that the day is not far distant when women also will bear their share in voting for members of Parliament—(cheers)—and in determining the policy of the country. I can conceive no argument by which they are excluded. It is obvious that they are abundantly as well fitted as many who now possess the suffrage, by knowledge, by training, and by character, and that their influence is likely to weigh in a direction which, in an age so material as ours, is exceedingly valuable—namely, in the direction of morality and religion.

Still more recently, the present leader of the House of Commons, Mr. A. J. Balfour, speaking at Bury, on Friday, the 23rd October last, said :—

I do not now express my opinions—my opinions are well-known—on the question of female suffrage, but if you are going to say that every intelligent person who is of age has a right to a vote, on what possible principle are you going to exclude the women?

These sympathetic utterances of eminent Conservative leaders will, I trust, have prepared you for the favourable consideration of the enfranchisement of women, as an ancient right and a modern need.

A feeling is rapidly gaining ground that, before the dissolution of the present Parliament, the enfranchisement of women ought to be assured. The straightforward utterances of Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour, and the resolutions passed by some Conservative Societies, and still more recently by the National Union of Conservative Associations at the Birmingham Conference, have led women to hope that at last they are to

have political justice. At this important juncture it may not be unprofitable to review the past and present position of women in regard to Parliamentary, Municipal, and Parochial Government.

To speak briefly, the present position of women in regard to the various franchises is anomalous and contradictory, unworthy of that great growth of freedom which the nineteenth century has given to men, and degenerate as regards the position which women held in the days of the Plantagenets and the Tudors. Freedom for women has not broadened down “from precedent to precedent.” Rather has it suffered by unnecessary legislative interference. Every woman, except the Queen, is politically non-existent. It was not always so. Restrictions unknown to our ancient constitution have crept in, as the following brief sketch of the public functions of women from the earliest times in Britain to the present day may serve to show.

Amongst the ancient Britons the position of women seems to have been broadly equal to that of men. Selden, in his “Epinomis” (Redman Westcot’s translation), cites Tacitus as saying of the Britons, “They were wont to war under the conduct of women, and to make no difference of sex in places of command or government.”* The pages of that historian reveal to us the treacherous queen, Cartismandua,† the betrayer of the gallant fugitive Caractacus, as ruling over the Brigantes (the people of Lancashire and Yorkshire) about 50 A.D. So, too, in pithy words, they tell us of the wrongs inflicted some years later by Roman hands upon Boadicea, the widowed queen of the Iceni, of her terrible vengeance, and her tragic fate. Almost she succeeded in driving the Romans from Britain; and in the final conflict, with passionate eloquence, stimulated by her intolerable wrongs, she harangued her army, led her troops to battle with the Romans, and when defeated in that bloody fight, in which Tacitus tells us 80,000 Britons were left dead upon the field, ended by poison her mournful life, and her valiant struggle for the freedom of her country.‡

Yet it was not simply in fierce fight and as valiant viragos that the women of Britain distinguished themselves. Selden, in his “Epinomis,” quoting Plutarch, tells us, “That, owing to the frequent intercessions of women in favour of peace, a custom grew up among the Britons that women also had prerogative in deliberative sessions touching either peace-government, or martial affairs.” It would thus appear that among the ancient Britons women were as capable of appreciating peace as of conducting warfare. Coming down to Saxon times, we find that Cenwealh, ruler of the West Saxons, after a vigorous reign of thirty years, distinguished by the aggrandisement of Wessex, dying without children, about the year 672 A.D., provided for the administration of his kingdom by committing it to his queen, Sexburh or Sexburga. This princess, in her brief reign of a year, appears to have made a deep impression on the minds of her countrymen, since William of Malmesbury tells us that § “she had a great spirit to discharge the duties of the kingdom. She levied new armies, kept the old ones to duty, governed her subjects with clemency, kept her enemies quiet by threats, and, in a

* Perhaps Selden’s reference is to the words of Tacitus, “Ann.” xiv. 35. “Solitum quidem Britannis feminarum ductu bellare testabatur.”

† Tacitus, “Ann.” xii. 36.

‡ Tacitus, “Ann.” xiv. 37.

§ W. Malm. lib. i. Speaking of her death, he writes, “Plus quam feminos animos anhelantem vita destituit, annua vix potestate perfunctum.”

word, did everything at that rate that there was no difference between her and any king in management but her sex." So, too, Ethelfleda, the daughter of the great Alfred, known in history as "The Lady of Mercia," ruled that kingdom after the death of her husband, from 912 to 920 A.D., with vigour and success, recovering Derby and Leicester from the Danes, and defeating her foes till the submission of the Danish Host confirmed her authority. Nor did ladies of less than royal birth fail to take their part in public affairs, since Gurdon, in his "Antiquities of Parliament," tells us that women sat in the Saxon Witas, and the Venerable Bede assures us that the abbess Wilda presided at an ecclesiastical synod.

After the Norman Conquest, we are assured by Mr. Chisholm Anstey "That 'ladies' sat and voted among the '*Magnates Regni*' in right of their fees or communities long before the name of Parliament was given to those great Councils, and long before the now justly exploded doctrine began to be broached by the Feudalists, which erected masculinity into an essential of every fief, is too well attested by our more ancient records, to justify us in disregarding the statement to that effect of eminent archæologists and sound lawyers."

We have, in the Saxon times, a glimpse of the early exercise of those rights which women, both lay and clerical, continued to enjoy for centuries after the Norman Conquest. We can trace, also, that blending of Church and local government which still exists in English rural parishes, where any ratepayer, irrespective of sex, may help to levy rates, and be elected, or take part in electing, the parochial officers. Despite the tendency of feudalism, women did not—in fact, the necessities of the times *could not* let them—sink into mere objects of chivalrous adoration. Tradition on the one hand, and Feudalism on the other (strange as it may seem to say it), were alike protective of the ancient rights of English women. The wars for the conquest of France, and those between the Houses of York and Lancaster, drew men from their homes and their civil duties, and threw power into the hands of women. King after king placed the administration of the realm and the control of the army in the hands of his Queen Consort. The Queen Consort of an Anglo-Norman or Plantagenet king was a person of scarcely less importance than her lord. William of Normandy frequently left the realm in the charge of his Queen. Queen Philippa, wife of Edward III., showed herself a sagacious ruler and victorious leader of the Feudal Militia. Queen Elinor, in the absence of Henry III., acted as judge in the Highest Court of Judicature, the "*curia regis*," and took her seat on the King's Bench.

So, too, women retained in the Parliaments of the Plantagenets the place and power that had belonged to them in the Saxon Witenagemot. When Parliaments were summoned, women were included in the summons.

Chisholm Anstey, citing Selden, tell us that in the 5th of Edward I., four lady abbesses were summoned by writ in right of their abbeys, as shown by the Patent Rolls still extant in his (Selden's time); and Gurdon, in his "History of the High Court of Parliament," tells us that in the times of Henry III. and Edward IV. the abbesses of Shaftesbury, Barking, St. Mary of Winchester, and Wilton were summoned to Parliament. The Rolls of the Parliament of the year 1404 show us that the Commons, having granted certain writs and subsidies for themselves and their constituencies, the "Lords Temporal" (*seignors temporelx*) concurred in so

far as the duties for raising those supplies were payable by themselves, and in so far as the "Ladies Temporal" (*dames temporelx*) were to become liable, they also concurred in the grant. These, their several consents were entered on the Roll, and made part of the Statute. At a later period the form of writ was so far changed as to direct the dame to whom it was addressed to choose and name her lawful proxy, to appear for her in the House of Lords, *ad colloquium et tractatum coram rege*; and in one year alone, the 35 Edward III., nine peeresses appear to have been so summoned. But the language used does not imply any disability to render the duty of personal attendance, but rather an exemption from its burden; whilst it unmistakably affirms, not only the capacity, but the duty to elect.

Nor was it in the High Court of Parliament alone that the women of those days served their country. The office of High Sheriff of Westmorland was held jointly by Isabella de Clifford, and Idonea de Leyburn. In the reigns of John and Henry III., Nicholaa de la Haye succeeded to her husband as Custodian of Lincoln Castle and Sheriff of the county.

Ela of Salisbury, the most distinguished of four ladies of that name, held office in the reign of Henry III. as High Sheriff of Wilts, and had charge of the Castle of Sarum. In the same reign of Henry III., Maude, Duchess of Norfolk, held custody of the Castles of Strigail and Carisberg, and took by inheritance the office of Marshall; whilst Isabella de Fortibus held the Borough and Camp of Plympton. Under Edward I., Joan, Dowager Countess of Pembroke, ruled the Palatinate for nine years; whilst Matilda, wife of Thos. de Mullen de Gilsland, who survived her husband, her son, and her grandson, ruled as Domina de Gilsland to the day of her death in 1295. In that capacity she sat on the Bench at Assizes at Penrith, and in the 19th of Edward I. was summoned to Parliament. In the reigns of Edwards I. and II., Isabella, widow of John de Vesci, had custody of the Castles of Bamborough and Scarborough; whilst during the latter reign Isabel de Burgo (Lady of Clare) governed the Earldom of Pembroke during the minority of the Earl; and the same Earldom was similarly governed under Edward III. by Agnes de Hastings. Margaret, Countess of Richmond, mother of Henry VII., was a Justice of the Peace, and in the reign of Mary Tudor the Lady of Berkeley was appointed a Justice of the Peace in Gloucester.

In Appleby Church may be seen the monument of Baroness Clifford of Westmorland (Anne de Clifford, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke, and Montgomery) who became, in 1643, Hereditary High Sheriff of Westmorland, and sat in that character with the Judges of Assize at Appleby. This is the lady who, when a candidate for one of her boroughs was, after the restoration of Charles II., somewhat too peremptorily urged upon her by the Secretary of State, wrote the memorable letter: "I have been bullied by an usurper, I have been neglected by a Court, but I will not be dictated to by a subject; your man shan't stand.

ANNE, DORSET, PEMBROKE, AND MONTGOMERY."

Even in our day, the office of Hereditary Great Chamberlain of England has been held by the Baroness Willoughby de Eresby, though, unlike the ladies whose names I have cited, she discharged its duties by proxy.

Since these earlier days various causes have been at work tending to

restrict the civil and political rights and duties of women. The blending of the claims of the Houses of York and Lancaster, by the marriage of Henry VII. and Elizabeth of York, had given peace to the nation. Masculine rule pushed itself to the front. The jealous persistency with which Henry VII. ignored the fact that his chief claim to the throne was through his wife, Elizabeth of York, was, doubtless, copied by less royal spouses. The law of compensation, however, was asserting itself for women. Though the Salic Law had never prevailed in England, no queen had reigned in her own right since the Norman Conquest. The claims of Matilda Atheling, the Empress Maud, and Elizabeth of York, had been made subservient to masculine supremacy. Mary Tudor, the first Queen-Regnant, was soon succeeded by her sister, Elizabeth, whose great regnal talents made her reign alike prosperous at home and brilliant abroad. Both these queens at their inaugurations were girded with the sword of State, and invested with the spurs of knighthood in token that they, equally with their male predecessors in the regal office, were not merely civil, but military rulers.

To come, however, to the more specific question of the exercise by women of the Parliamentary Franchise. It is manifest that from the earliest period our principle of representation has been supposed to be that all who were liable to taxation should have a voice in choosing the representatives by whom the taxes were granted. The first *statute* prescribing qualifications for the County Franchise is the 7 Hen. IV., c. 15, which enacts that all they that be present at the County Court, as well suitors summoned for the same cause as others, shall attend to the election of the knights for the Parliament; and neither in this statute, nor in any later one, down to the Reform Act of 1832, is any word used which implies any disability of sex for electoral purposes. The County Court, at which the elections were held, would appear to have been attended no less by women than men. An earlier enactment, the Statute of Marlbridge, 52 Hen. III., c. 10, exempts, amongst others, from attendance at the *tourn*, which was one of the divisions of the County Court, *viri religiosi et mulieres*, unless specially summoned. It is obvious that the intent was not to impose a disability, but to exempt from a burdensome duty, except when the necessities of the case demanded the performance of that duty.

The Borough Franchise, on the other hand, is more obscure in its origin; Hallam, in his "Constitutional History,"* referring to no fewer than four different theories on the subject. But from the earliest period, women, as well as men, were burgesses in our ancient boroughs, and as such, enjoyed and exercised whatever franchises accrued to their position as burgesses. The female burgesses of Tamworth are recorded in "Domesday Book" as having been free before the Conquest, and still free when the book was compiled.

Early in our Parliamentary History, the practice grew up of evidencing the return of a member, whether the knight of the shire, or the representative of a borough, by indentures entered into between the Crown and certain of the electors in the name of the rest. Prynne, in his "Brevia Parliamentaria Rediviva," refers to sundry Earls, Lords, Nobles, and some ladies, who were annual suitors (freeholders) to the County Court of Yorkshire, being the sole electors of the Knights, and sealing their indentures. He gives, pp. 152 and 153, two instances of such indentures.

* "C. H.," Vol. II., ch. 13, p. 384.

The earliest is dated 13 Hen. IV., and is signed by an attorney of Lucy, Countess of Kent. Another in 2 Hen. V., is signed by the attorney of Margaret, widow of Sir H. Vavasour. In the 7 Edward VI., the return for the borough of Gatton was made by the Lady Elizabeth Copley, widow of Roger Copley, and all the inhabitants of the borough. In a later return for the same borough, 1 and 2 Ph. and M., the same lady made the return in her own name alone, and there is a similar return in 2 and 3 Ph. and M., in which the writ is said to have been directed to her. When, long afterwards, in 1628, the question of whether Gatton was a close or open borough was investigated before a "Committee of Privileges and Elections," the point of the disability of sex was not raised, the only question being, was the lady the sole elector, or did she sign for herself and other inhabitants. Heywood, in his "County Elections," p. 256 quotes the following remarkable return for the borough of Aylesbury, in the 14th Elizabeth:—

"To all Christian people to whom this present writing shall come, I, Dame Dorothy Packington, widow, late wife of Sir John Packington knight, lord, and owner of the town of Aylesbury, sendeth greeting: know ye me, the said Dame Dorothy Packington, to have shown, named, and appointed my trusty and well-beloved Thomas Lichfield and John Burden, Esquires, to be my burgesses of my said town of Aylesbury. And whatsoever the said Thomas and George, burgesses, shall do in the service of the Queen's highness in that present Parliament, to be holden at Westminster, the 8th day of May next ensuing the date hereof, I, the same Dame Dorothy Packington, do ratify and approve to be my own act, as fully and wholly as if I were or might be present there."

In this case, the "sole elector being a minor," his widowed mother, *jure representationis*, had actually voted in his stead, elected the two burgesses, signed their indenture, and as returning officer made the preceding return, which was upheld as good. In the inquiry as to the controverted election for Lyme Regis,* a list was produced of burgesses of the town of Lyme Regis in the 19th Elizabeth, in which we find entered amongst "Burgenses, sive liberi tenentes, Elizabetha filia Thomæ Hyatt, Cuspina Bowden, vidua, Alicia Toller vidua." In the progress of the case a table was produced in evidence of the old usages of the borough, from which Luders† gives the following extract:—"The customs and freedoms of the said borough, used tyme out of mind, and in general words confirmed in charter by King Edward I., and after by his successors, kings and queenes of this realm ever since, doe partly concern:—

"Free Burgesses.—All those that had freehold within the borough, and would be free of the freedome, were made free by a fine and by an oath, and then they were called free burgesses.

"Free men.—All others, not having any freehold as aforesaid, and would be free of the freedome, were made free by fine and oath as aforesaid, and they were called free men.

"Free women.—The widow of a free burges, or of a free man, hath her freedom during her widowhood."

In another list of *liberi homines* of the 19th of Elizabeth, the names of five women occur, and in a similar roll of *liberi burgenses* and *liberi homines* dating from the 21st of Elizabeth, the names of six-

* 2 Luders 13.

† 2 Luders 32.

teen women are included. It will be observed that a woman became *liber burgo* or *liber homo* of her own right, or by her own deed; whilst the right of a "free woman" only accrued to a widow from her deceased husband.

It will be noted that in the time of Queen Elizabeth women do not seem to have been slack in availing themselves of their civic and political rights; yet that great Queen, little inclined to tolerate the shortcomings of female burgesses, is said to have reproached the women of Kent because they used their privileges so sparingly.

It is marvellous that Sir Edward Coke, who must have had, unless we are to credit him with "invincible ignorance," many of the facts already cited within his knowledge and recollection, should have ventured in the IV. Institute, by an arbitrary and wholly unsupported dictum, to deny to women the right to that Parliamentary Franchise which they were exercising freely enough down to his own day. Whether his masculine sex bias, manifest not only in this, but in other curious and unsupported *dicta* adverse to the just position of women, was aggravated by his unhappy domestic circumstances, it is not for us to say; but beyond all question his pronouncement on this matter has helped largely to suppress the political freedom of women, copied, as it has been, without examination or inquiry, into one legal text-book after another. Yet, in justice even to Sir Edward Coke, it should be remembered, as was pointed out by the present Lord Chief Justice, when acting as counsel in the case of *Chorlton v. Lings*, that the IV. Institute was not published till after Coke's death, and not having his revision, is of less high authority than the others. But as this is the sole legal authority on which the alleged disability of sex rests—all other voices being mere echoes of this dictum—I cite the actual text. Coke is speaking directly of "spiritual assistants, *procuratores cleri*," and only in this slight and passing way refers to the case of women. "And in many cases multitudes are bound by Acts of Parliament which are not parties to the elections of knights, citizens, and burgesses, as all they that have no freehold, or have freehold in ancient demesne, and *all women having freehold or no freehold*, and men within the age of one-and-twenty years."* I submit that the seven words just cited offer but a slight and unsatisfactory excuse for the virtual disfranchisement, during the past two centuries and a half, of the female portion of the community. No doubt women must also take blame to themselves; for had they diligently fulfilled their political duties throughout the troublous times which followed, there could be now no question of the re-enfranchisement of women, who would have been an active and essential part of the body politic. Sternly and clearly is the lesson taught, that the one substantial safeguard of political rights is the faithful performance of political duties. But, beyond all question, the weight of Coke's authority has borne heavily against women, since it has again and again been cited as adequate proof of the legal incapacity of women, under the common law of England, to hold or enjoy political rights. So far did Sir Edward Coke carry his hostility to the action of women in public affairs, that we find from the Commons' Journals, for 1620, that, sitting in that year as member for Liskeard, he objected even to the examination of women as witnesses by the House of Commons, on the plea that "a woman ought not to speak in the con-

* IV. Inst., p. 5.

gregation." On the particular occasion reported, this plea prevailed, and four members were ordered to examine the lady—Mrs. Newdigate—and to report her evidence to the House. The weight of Coke's authority has not, however, led our modern Courts of Law to refuse to hear in public the testimony of women; and there is no reason of common sense or justice why the "dead hand" of his mere opinion should be permitted to exclude them, in these days, from the polling booth.

Twenty years later, in 1640, on the occasion of an election for the county of Suffolk, the votes of some Puritan women, tendered for Puritan candidates, were taken by some of the clerks, but disallowed by the High Sheriff, Sir Simonds D'Ewes, "conceiving it a matter verie unworthy anie gentlemen, and most dishonourable in such an election to make use of their voices, *although they might in law have been allowed*." One can almost see the grave-faced Puritan women, moved by duty to exercise the rights their more careless sisters were letting slip into abeyance. And thus the political activities of women, so remarkable in the days of the Plantagenets and Tudors, slackened under the rule of the Puritans, the Stuarts, and the Hanoverians, and women gradually ceased to vote. Still, no statute barred their ancient electoral rights, although it was manifestly not possible, when the chief claim to Parliamentary representation lay in the possession of freehold property, that women in any large numbers could exercise the Franchise. Even now, intestate freehold property only descends to females in default of male heirs. But with the first great extension, in the present century, of the voting rights of men, came the first statutory recognition of female incapacity. The Reform Act of 1832, passed by the Whig Government of Earl Grey, in all its dealings with the ancient franchises carefully employs the word "*person*," and raises no question of sex incapacity. But in dealing with the new franchises which it conferred, the use of the words "*male person*" expressly excluded women. When the Representation of the People Act of 1867, passed by Lord Derby's administration, was drafted, the word "man" was carefully used in every reference to the qualification or right of voting. Mr. John Stuart Mill, who was then in the House of Commons, wished to put on record the express statutory grant of the suffrage to women. He therefore moved an amendment, that instead of the word "man" the word "person" should be used throughout the Act. This was not carried, but another amendment, substituting the words "male person" was also rejected. Accordingly, some thousands of women claimed to vote under the new Act, and their claims were consolidated in two cases—the one that of a woman-occupier in a town, the other that of a woman-freeholder in a county. These cases were argued before the then Court of Common Pleas, and in the result the judges declared, in defiance of history, precedent, and the ordinary construction of Parliamentary enactments, that a woman is legally incapacitated by her sex from voting, and that although in other legal enactments the word "man" includes woman, in matters affecting the franchise it is not large enough to do so. In effect, Lord Chief Justice Bovill, and Justices Byles, Willes, and Keating, committed themselves to the two very extraordinary doctrines—(1) That taxation and representation do not and need not go together, and (2) That one and the same word in Parliamentary enactments means *male and female* when duties and obligations are imposed, but "male" only when rights and privileges are conferred. From this decision no appeal was competent, the House of Commons having

thought fit to confer on the Court of Common Pleas the full right of jurisdiction as to the interpretation of the Act, thus practically abdicating that authority which, by long, uniform, and immemorial tradition, belonged to the House alone, of being the sole legal judge of all matters relative to its own constitution, and the qualifications of those who elect it. In examining the arguments of the Judges in giving their decision, it is impossible to resist the conviction that the real determining force was nothing more nor less than the same mere masculine sex bias which showed itself so painfully in the case of Sir Edward Coke. But the fact remains that great constitutional principles have been set aside in matters touching the freedom of women, and that the rights of half the nation have been summarily extinguished by a single decision of four Judges. To Parliament only can women, therefore, look for redress.

The history of the local franchises enjoyed and exercised by women from time immemorial is more encouraging. In parochial government they possess full and free rights to elect and to be elected. Nor have they lost those rights as parishes have grown into towns. Parochial government is a government of Church and State in miniature. Every year overseers and waywardens are elected, rates levied, parish business discussed, and churchwardens appointed. Women, when required, can be legally compelled to fill these offices. In the case of *Rex v. Stubbs*, it was finally decided that a woman may serve as overseer. This interesting case was heard in the year 1788, on the appointment of overseers of a township called the township of the monastery of Renton Abbey, in Staffordshire. One of the persons appointed was a Mrs. Stubbs, and the appointment was confirmed by the Sessions, but subject to the opinion of the Court of King's Bench. It was argued against the appointment that, if a woman were eligible because she was a "substantial householder," so might idiots and lunatics be eligible, as many of them were substantial householders. But Mr. Justice Ashurst confirmed the appointment, saying that the only qualification required of overseers by the Act 43 Eliz. c. 2, was that they should be "substantial householders"; and affirming that "the qualification has no reference to sex." It is right that it should be so; the only "substantial householder" in a sparsely-populated district may be a woman; and, even of recent years, since the nation has become more populous, women have been obliged, by the needs of the parish, to take on themselves more than one parochial office. The earlier case of *Olive v. Ingram*, heard before the King's Bench in 1739, determined (1) that a woman might be chosen sexton, and (2) that a woman could vote in the election of a sexton. Sir John Strange, then Solicitor-General, and afterwards Master of the Rolls, who took part in the case, says, in briefly reporting it (2 Strange, 1114) "as to the first, the Court seemed to have no difficulty about it, nor did I think proper to argue it, there having been many cases where offices of greater consequence have been held by women, and there being many women sextons now in London."

Both points were decided in the affirmative, the case, on account of its importance, having been four times before the Court before a final judgment was given. On one of these occasions Chief Justice Lee is reported to have cited a case (in a manuscript collection of Hakewell's), *Catherine v. Surrey*, in which it was expressly decided, that a *feme sole*, if she has a freehold, may vote for members of Parliament; and a

further one (from the same collection), *Holt v. Lyle*, in which it was decided, that a *feme sole* householder may claim a voice for Parliament men; but, if married, her husband must vote for her; whilst Justice Page declared, "I see no disability in a woman from voting for a Parliament man." So closely, in the minds of our Judges, were the local and Parliamentary franchises bound up, that a question as to the rights of women in local voting seemed to involve considerations as to their right to vote for Parliament men.

Yet, even in the matter of these local franchises, women have suffered, and do suffer, from legislative tinkering and sex-biassed decisions in our law courts.

Down to 1835, women, possessing the qualifications which entitled men to vote, voted freely in municipal elections, and in some important cities, such as London and Edinburgh, the civic rights even of married women, possessing a separate qualification from the husband, were well established. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, however (passed by the Whig administration of Lord Melbourne), was framed upon the evil precedent of the Reform Act of 1832, and by the use of the words "male persons," in treating of the franchises under it, disfranchised every woman in the boroughs to which it applied, and this disfranchisement lasted for thirty-four years.

Nevertheless, in non-corporate districts, women continued to vote as freely as before, and thus secured the ultimate restitution of the rights of their disfranchised sisters in incorporated districts; for, when in 1869, on the consideration of the Municipal Franchise Bill of that year, these peculiar facts were brought to the notice of the House of Commons, and it was shown that the incorporation of any district involved the summary disfranchisement of the women ratepayers, the House, without a dissentient word, or any shadow of opposition, adopted the proposal to omit the word "male" before the word "person" in Section I of the Bill, and thus restored the rights of the women ratepayers, of whom many thousands voted, as a consequence of the passing of the Act, in the municipal elections of the following November.

Shortly after this, in the year 1870, the passing of the first Married Women's Property Act, enabled a wife to own and hold her own earnings, and thus to enjoy some, at least, of the advantages of property. It was hoped that the passing of this Act would enable a small, but steadily-increasing, number of married women to become qualified as voters, against whose local rights, had the good custom of the City of London influenced opinion elsewhere, no objection could have been raised. But the case of the Queen *v. Harrald*, heard in the Queen's Bench, in January, 1872, decided that a married woman, though qualified by occupancy, and by payment of rates, and put on the Burgess List, cannot vote at the election of town councillors; and further, that a woman, who is rightly on the Burgess List, but married before the election, is also disqualified from voting. In favour of the married woman it was argued that women are capable of voting, and do vote, that no exceptions are made by statute as to married women; and that "coverture" being no longer a bar to the holding of property, should, therefore, be no bar to the enjoyment of the incidents of property, such as voting. On the other hand, it was argued that a married woman is not a person in the eyes of the law. She is not *sui juris*. Curiously enough the words of the Lord Chief Justice (Cockburn), in giving judgment, show plainly that it is possible, in the discharge of the highest legal functions, to

determine questions affecting the civil privileges of women, and yet be painfully ignorant of all matters relevant to the point to be decided upon. The Lord Chief Justice was obviously quite unconscious that women had possessed voting rights from time immemorial, and speaks of the Act of 1869, which we have just briefly considered, as though it were the first concession of them, instead of being merely the restitution of such of them as had, possibly inadvertently, been taken away thirty-four years before. It scarcely seems fitting that questions so gravely affecting the interests of women—present and future—should be thus lightly determined upon by persons ignorant of so many of the relevant facts. Since this decision, the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 has given to all women fuller rights of property and contract, and for women married since that year has virtually abolished "coverture" in regard to property. Nevertheless, revising barristers, in general, follow the ruling of the Queen *v.* Harrald, and still treat married women, however fully qualified as ratepayers, as not being persons in the eye of the law, at least for purposes of voting. So great is the influence for evil of one evil precedent. For this limitation has now been most unjustifiably extended to the voting of married women for Poor Law Guardians. The office of Poor Law Guardian is a parochial one, and there is no legal decision or precedent for this high-handed assumption of disqualification, which is the more grievous because every year the number of married women duly qualified to take part in local affairs is steadily increasing, and such women educated as they are, both by the duties of family life, and the control and administration of property, would form a most important and influential part of the electorate. These limitations are the more anomalous as women, both married and single, have been fulfilling the duties of Poor Law Guardians, and their right to do so has never been seriously questioned. Women also, both single and married, were nominated for the County Council elections. And here we come to two points worthy of very serious consideration. In the case of a man the presumption is that he who may vote, may be voted for, unless provision to the contrary is expressly made; and further that the Franchise being a duty as well as a right, cannot be forfeited by non-user or laches. So much is this the case that the law carefully safeguards the temporarily suspended rights of lunatics and felons. In regard to women, however, our Law Courts have decided various cases on assumptions the converse of these. For instance, in the case of *Chorlton v. Lings*, the judges did not pretend to deny that women had in the early period of our history, taken part in Parliamentary elections, but practically they said, "How can you claim that women have the right to vote, when for two centuries they have not voted?" And, in the case of *Beresford Hope and Lady Sandhurst*, heard in 1889, the position taken up by the judges may be summed up in the question, "How can you contend that a woman, because she may vote for a County Councillor, may also be elected to the County Council, when, though women have so long voted in municipal matters, no woman has ever yet been elected to the Municipal Council?" These two cases give us warning enough to use to the full whatever civic and political rights we do possess, lest we should be the means of narrowing and limiting, not only our own rights, but those of other women. As a consequence of these recent decisions, it is for the present the law of the land, that a woman may not sit and

act as a County Councillor, even though, as in the cases of Miss Cobden and Lady Sandhurst, the ratepayers give her a magnificent majority, nor as a County Alderman, though the Council, as in the case of Miss Cons, select her as one supremely fitted to discharge the functions of that office.

Curiously enough, when Lady Sandhurst's case was decided in the Court of Appeal, the Master of the Rolls took occasion to indulge in one of those *obiter dicta* from which women have suffered so much, dicta which presume either gross ignorance of law and of fact, or inveterate masculine bias. For, said he, "I take it that, by neither the Common Law nor the constitution of this country from the beginning of the Common Law until now, can a woman be entitled to exercise any public function."* Yet at the very time he spoke, women were acting as overseers, waywardens, churchwardens, Poor Law Guardians, and members of School Boards, which can scarcely be reckoned as private functions. Still more strange is it that a judge would seem, even for a moment, to have forgotten that he held his dignified and important station by the authority of a Queen, whose high office is surely the supreme public function.

To sum up, at the present moment all the parochial franchises in England are exercised fully and freely by women possessing the necessary qualifications. These franchises include the right of voting at vestry meetings, and for overseers, churchwardens, waywardens, parish clerks and sextons; whilst qualified women are legally eligible to fill, and do sometimes actually fill, these several parochial offices. Women have also, when unmarried or widowed, the fully established right, if duly qualified, of voting for Poor Law Guardians, members of Local Boards, School Boards, Town Councils, and County Councils. There seems to be no legal obstacle to the election of a woman as a member of a Local Board, whilst women, married and unmarried alike, are at present sitting and acting as Poor Law Guardians and members of School Boards. Women do not seem to be eligible for Town Councillors, and recent judicial decisions have ruled that they may not, though elected by an overwhelming vote of the ratepayers, sit and act as County Councillors, or, though selected for the office by a large majority of the Council, as County Aldermen. The absurd illogicality of the whole position is apparent when it is added that though married women can sit and vote freely as members of School Boards and Boards of Guardians, their votes for members of these Boards, as well as for Town Councillors and County Councillors, based upon qualifications otherwise unquestionable, are frequently (though not uniformly), and possibly illegally, rejected on the ground that they are married.

Women have, moreover, in the past, not merely exercised the Parliamentary franchise, but seem to have taken part in the Great Councils of the nation, whilst we have given evidence that they have acted as High Sheriff, Marshal, Warden or Governor of a Castle, Keeper of a Prison; none of which offices seem of recent years to have been entrusted to them.

* It may be worth mentioning in this connection, that in 1877 the Attorney-General of the day, in the House of Commons, expressed his doubt as to whether a woman could be a churchwarden. Women were acting as churchwardens at that very time, and one lady churchwarden during that Session signed and forwarded for presentation to Parliament a petition for the enfranchisement of women.

The absurd limitations, anomalies and contradictions of our present position are the more extraordinary, when we remember that they have been largely developed during the reign of a Queen, who as maiden, wife, and widow, has represented the highest estate of the realm. We, therefore, plead that the rights, which the women of the past carelessly let slip, may be restored to the women of this age who desire to possess them. It has been said that one good precedent establishes a constitutional principle. We have pointed to precedents, but were there no ancient precedents, the spirit of the age demands the enfranchisement of women.

Let us now consider the great modern need which has arisen for the emancipation of women. The women householders and ratepayers of England are computed at less than a million, but even the enfranchisement of this small number will be a great safeguard to the sex generally, since no excluded class is ever safe in its rights. The press of work in Parliament is so great that every unrepresented class must suffer, and from the same cause every excluded class is still more endangered by the inclusion of other classes. The Home Rule cry is growing fainter and fainter, that of "one man one vote" louder and louder. "One man one vote" means that property already deprived of its fair share of representation, when in the hands of women, is to suffer still further deprivation. This is a serious matter for women who have a large stake in the wealth of the country. One of the organs of the Gladstonian party calculates that the alteration of the Registration Laws, proposed by Sir George Trevelyan in the Newcastle resolution, will add two millions of men to the electorate. In these two millions are no inconsiderable part of the fluctuating population of men, labourers who do not want to labour, and workmen who have not sufficient self-respect to give a fair day's work for a fair day's wage, and are, therefore, continually on the move because no employer long retains their services. And even lower down in the social scale are the men who live on the labour, and, worse still, on the degradation of women. These men will be enfranchised, whilst the woman landowner, manufacturer, or trader—many of them finding employment for numbers of men—these women are, according to the programme of the Gladstonian Party, still to be kept outside the electorate. Sir George Trevelyan further proposes payment of members, "so that labour may have proper representation." It is believed that one-third of the women of England are bread winners for themselves and their families, and that seven-tenths of the women of England are dependant on their labour; but what protection is the labour of women to have? It is well known that Trades Unions have often objected to the free employment of female hands. It is reported that there is a chronic state of discontent among the male officials of the Post Office at the employment of women in Post Office work. We know that Parliament has more than once interfered with the labour of women. In the very last Session of Parliament it was enacted, by a clause of the Factories and Workshops Act, that no woman should be permitted to return to the workshop or factory within four weeks after giving birth to a child. Both Houses of Parliament seem to have been persuaded that women, unlike men, love hard work for its own sake, and through this insane love will imperil their own lives and that of their offspring. In vain did thoughtful women, such as Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Garrett Anderson, Lady Goldsmid, and others urge that women work from sheer necessity and to secure the means to live. Our male Legislature, in the election

of which women have no voice, refused to consider this plea, and legalised the enforced exclusion of mothers from their accustomed and best paid industry, but made no provision, or suggestion of provision, for their maintenance during the period of seclusion. And already demands are being made that the prohibited period should cover at least six months. The right to labour and the right to live must not become male prerogatives!

Payment of members, payment of election expenses, and payment of extra registration officials are all to be thrown on the rates; and women, who, for the convenience of the Gladstonian Party, are to remain politically non-existent, are to pay their quota towards these expenses. Already they have to pay a proportion of election inquiry expenses when corrupt male voters abuse the privileges withheld from women. On three important occasions within the last twenty-two years has Mr. Gladstone used his immense influence in Parliament to prevent the enfranchisement of women. More recently, at a time when he became the instrument of a valuable advertisement for a firm of soap manufacturers, whilst *en route* to Port Sunlight, Mr. Gladstone, at Wirral, took Lord Salisbury to task for declaring that whenever the question of "one man, one vote" comes before Parliament, the enfranchisement of women must also be considered. On this occasion Mr. Gladstone made use of exactly the same nautical simile which he used seven years ago, when he refused to have his Franchise vessel overweighted with Women's Suffrage. An unhappy simile indeed, because, in most cases of danger of shipwreck, the first thought in most Englishmen's minds is, "Let us save the women." Not so Mr. Gladstone. In 1884 he deliberately forced them overboard, in spite of the protests of many of his most faithful followers. And at Wirral and Port Sunlight he showed very clearly that the lives of women and the labour of women are nothing to him. It would have been remarkable, had it not been in harmony with his previous utterances that, on a day when he was addressing the workpeople of a firm which employs nearly as many women as men (for the Sunlight Soap Works employ 416 males and 385 females), that Mr. Gladstone should exultingly tell the men that "their interests were effectually guaranteed," because there had been placed in the hands of workmen a fair share of political power, so that if the workman suffers he will suffer by his own negligence. In the morning Mr. Gladstone indicated that he would have no Parliamentary Reform programme weighted with Women's Suffrage, and in the afternoon he reminded the women that there was protection for the labour of men, but none for the labour of women. Yet women have to hold their own, not only against the capitalist, but against the competition of men in that struggle for existence, which makes men, even against their better nature, sometimes jealous of women in the labour market.

Nor is it simply for self-protective purposes alone that women seek political justice. Legislation occupies itself more and more with the interests of the home and the family, and the home and the family are paramount with women. The great social problem in all its manifold aspects, the great moral questions which are surging to the front, will tax all the political sagacity of the future; nor can they be rightly solved without the help of the insight and experience of both halves of humanity, or without the recognition of justice between sex and sex, as well as between class and class. Mrs. Fawcett, in an admirable speech on Woman Suffrage, recently delivered, referred to the laws affecting

the custody and guardianship of children and the laws affecting the relations between men and women as outrageously unjust, and cited a case reported in the *Times* of that very day, illustrating most painfully the injustice of masculine law and masculine opinion in matters affecting women. The case, heard before the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge was, briefly stated, as follows:—A Mr. Charles Russell, a married man, of Jesus College, Cambridge, had spoken to the prisoner, a girl of 17, asking her, according to his statement, to let him accompany her to her lodgings. Notwithstanding the fact that he admitted speaking to the prisoner first, no attempt was made to charge this man with any share in her offence. On his evidence the girl was sentenced to a fortnight's imprisonment, whilst this married man, her senior in age, her superior in education and position, suffers no legal penalty whatever. So long as this base double code of morality and justice prevails, so long will men be degraded and so long will women suffer. But with the enfranchisement of women a nobler law and life will dawn, and man and woman shall no longer prey upon each other, oppressing or oppressed.

How soon shall this be? In the year 1873 Women's Suffrage formed part of the Liberal programme, approved at Birmingham. In 1891 it finds no place in the Liberal programme, approved at Newcastle-on-Tyne. As Mr. Balfour pointed out recently at Bury, the Liberals, who are shocked that one man should have two votes, find nothing shocking in the fact that the woman ratepayer and householder has no vote at all.

That nation is indeed foolish which does not use its greatest moral force. We know what France lost by the expatriation of the Huguenots. We know what Spain lost when the "Holy Inquisition" stifled the noblest aspirations of her children. How much longer is Mr. Gladstone, as leader of the misnamed Liberal Party, to perpetuate the "subjection of women," and restrain for his own purposes the great moral force in politics of the women of Great Britain and Ireland? and how long will the Constitutional Party permit this deprivation and suppression of constitutional right?

After the reading of this paper the following resolutions were adopted:—

Proposed by Mr. GREEN, seconded by Mr. WARD,

"That, in the opinion of this meeting, the Enfranchisement of Women is one of the most urgent Parliamentary reforms, and that a petition be signed by the Chairman on behalf of this meeting and forwarded for presentation, praying the House of Commons to pass a measure which shall include all duly qualified women."

Proposed by Mr. BURLAND, seconded by Miss DUNN,

"That Memorials be forwarded to the Most Noble the Marquis of Salisbury, and to the Right Honourable Arthur James Balfour, M.P., praying that Her Majesty's Government will, during the coming Session, introduce a measure to extend the Parliamentary Franchise to all duly qualified women, on the same conditions as it is, or may be, granted to men."

Copies of this Pamphlet, and other Papers, may be had from Mrs. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY, Congleton, Cheshire.

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12

The Dean of Winchester

ON

WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE.

"I CANNOT read the Gospels without seeing on every page a call to take up the cause of peace, the cause of the brotherhood of men; the cause of equality before the law, **the cause of woman**, the cause of those who toil and are heavy laden."

"We believe that every man should be unmolested, whatever views he may hold, and be able to give weight to his views without hindrance at the polls; we hold that the vote ought to represent each person's conscience and opinion; and that no one should, when of full age and standing, be without it, nor any one have more than one person's share of it. **I hold, too, that this is as true of women as of men**, and that the weight of the female vote will be thrown into the scale in favour of **peace, temperance, and morality**, whatever may be the result of it on our party organisations. I repudiate the degrading doctrine that only those should vote who can fight for their vote: such a doctrine is a long step backwards towards the barbarous 'Might makes right' theory of human life."

✓ G. W. KITCHIN, D.D., F.S.A.

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REASONS
Why Women should have the Franchise,
AND THE OBJECTIONS TO IT.

The first reason is because women are governed by the laws equally with men.

Whoever is compelled to obey a law which he has no share in making is under a despotism, and is a slave. The Liberal Party devoted its efforts for the whole of the past century to the liberation of men from this state of slavery. By giving them the Franchise, they have in a great degree attained their object, and made all men free. Nowadays no grown-up men are excluded, except lunatics, criminals, and paupers.

But by excluding women we class them as a body with lunatics, criminals, and paupers, and we make them slaves. We declare that they have no right to govern themselves, and that they must be governed by us. Orientals say that women have no souls, and thus justify treating them merely as animals. We admit they have souls, and, therefore, we have no justification for the like conduct.

The second reason why women should have the Franchise is that their opinion, thus expressed, would be of great value to the whole commonwealth.

There is scarcely any one of us who does not consult a friend—a mother, sister, wife, or daughter—as his very best adviser in his most important private matters. Their advice is of equal value in public matters. Women's intelligence brings views to bear on every question which are valuable, and which it is most important they should be able to enforce by their votes.

The third reason for giving the Franchise to women is that they have an equal interest, yet not always the same interest, in the subjects of legislation.

Women are interested like men in all questions of property. They, too, have property; they are interested in all questions of labour, for they, too, must work; they are interested in all questions respecting public and private morals, in all questions relating to family life, in all questions relating to children and education. This last alone we have admitted by giving them seats on School Boards. But on the other questions, in which we cannot deny that they have equal concern, we deny them the vote. This is at once unjust and self-contradictory, for unless they have the right to express their opinion by votes, they cannot be expected to take sufficient interest in the questions at issue to form ripe and well-considered opinions.

It is quite unnecessary to decide or discuss whether intellect of woman is equal to that of man. The intellect of all men is not equal, yet we give them all votes. The intellect of some women is much greater than that of some men, and on the same principle they are equally entitled to votes. They might possibly be well for the country if we could exclude the stupid or silly men. But we cannot. And it is evidently absurd to admit silly and stupid men and yet exclude women, however intelligent and thoughtful they may be.

The fourth reason for giving women the Franchise is that it would raise the character of both men and women.

It is bad for men to be despots; it is bad for women to be slaves. It makes men hard and unthinking; it makes women careless and frivolous. If both had the same responsibility for our laws, if they felt they had the same power in making the laws, they would be led to think of these questions more than they do, to talk them over more with each other, to feel their importance, and, by consequence, to pay less attention to trifling and idle matters.

A great evil in our political life is the indifference of many men to politics, and their abstention even from voting. They do not feel the responsibility to their fellow subjects which self-government involves. This leaves our government too much in the hands of professional party leaders and their pullers, who work for their own advantage and not for that of the country. This indifference among men, as well as the tendency to frivolity among some women, would be very greatly diminished by giving to all women a right to vote. The possession of this right in a family would lead to the frequent discussion of the questions on which it is to be used, and men and women would rouse the attention of each other in subjects in which they would have a joint interest and an equal power of decision.

Now let us consider the objections which are most commonly taken to the enfranchisement of women.

There are two which neutralise or answer each other. Although we very often find both put forward by the same objector. It is alleged that very few women would care to vote, and yet it is alleged that if they had votes they would vote in such numbers as to overpower men. Both assertions cannot be true. But to deal with the first, we may remember that few people care for things which they have no connection with. Women cannot be expected to study politics when they are forbidden to express their conclusions in any effective way. If they had votes it is certain that many more would think about political questions than do now—probably quite as many women as men; but yet (to come to the second objection)

they would not overpower men, for nothing is more certain than that women would not all vote on one side, and that side would be the opposite to that of all men. They would be divided as men are, into Liberals and Conservatives and Radicals, into Churchwomen and Dissenters, into Temperance supporters and opponents—into two parties, indeed, on every possible question. The fact that they are divided even on the question of their own enfranchisement is proof that they would be divided on every subject if they were enfranchised. Being divided, they could not overpower men, whatever number might vote.

This consideration further answers the next objection, that women should not have votes because they could not fight in support of their votes. They would not need to fight because they would never stand alone. In point of fact, not one man in a hundred ever fights in support or in consequence of any vote he gives. The objection that one cannot fight would disfranchise every old man, every cripple, every invalid. It is strange in the nineteenth century to hear brute force suggested as a necessary qualification for the franchise.

Yet once more the same reflection suffices to answer the objections conjured up of women actually sitting in Parliament. They cannot sit in Parliament, even if the law permitted them, unless they are elected, and a woman could not be elected for any constituency unless a majority, which must be very largely composed of men, thought her better qualified to represent them than any male candidate. And if a majority of men and women in any constituency should really wish to be represented by a woman, it is their own affair, and one can see no possible reason for other constituencies refusing to permit it.

The next proposition is that if a woman had a vote it would cause quarrelling in her family. We used to have this argument brought forward when it was urged that married women ought to retain their own property; and, indeed, there was something in it then, for it was conceivable that a husband and wife might quarrel over their property. But it has turned out that they do not. Why then should they quarrel about a member of Parliament? They do not quarrel over municipal elections, School Board elections, or even the election of a paragon, for which in Scotland every woman, married or single, has the same right of voting as a man. It may safely be affirmed that all these are subjects more interesting than political elections, and if these do not lead to domestic quarrels neither will the election of a representative in the House of Commons.

It is sometimes alleged that Nature has given to women the duty of managing their households and children, and therefore that it is unnatural that they should interfere with affairs of State. But Nature has also given to men the duty of working to provide bread for their households and children,

and we might as reasonably assert that it is therefore unnatural that they should do anything else. Because every man's first duty is to plough, or to weave, or to sail ships, has he not an interest in the social relations of himself and his fellow men? So because women's first duty is to direct the household, has she not also an interest in these same social relations? To put it briefly, the one earns the bread for the family, and the other makes it. Why should the one have a vote and the other have none?

Again, we are told that woman's delicacy, refinement, purity are inestimable blessings to us, and that they must not be endangered by contact with the rough, dirty work of politics. Yet the same men who thus argue are found urging women, at meetings of Primrose Dames or of Women's Liberal Associations, to stoop to the very roughest and coarsest work of politics, that of personal canvassing and solicitation of votes. Men are willing to sully them with this, while arguing that they would be unsexed by putting a cross on a paper in the polling booth! It were a more reasonable view that if politics are at present an avocation not very moral or honourable, it is because women are excluded from real influence in them. Their purity and lofty conscientiousness are precisely the qualities which are called for, in order to redeem politics from the baser elements by which they are at present degraded.

Last of all comes the objection that many women do not want a vote. That is very probable. We know that there are many men who never exercise their vote. Women who do not want to vote may abstain from voting; but they have no right to lay down a law that no other woman shall vote. Let every one have liberty, the indifferent to stay away, the earnest to vote. It is a new and monstrous proposition that the indifferent shall control and overpower the earnest and intelligent, and reduce all to their own level of frivolity.

A better era will dawn for our country when we can induce women to join with men in guiding the institutions in which both are alike so deeply concerned. Each can contribute what the other lacks. It will be better for us when each has a full sense of responsibility for the well-being of our country and when each takes counsel with the other in the difficulties and dangers, in the temptations to selfishness, and the call for self-sacrifice, in the hopes and the efforts of advancement by which, in this stage of national progress, we are environed.

✓ JOHN BOYD KINNEAR.

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THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN

A SPEECH

DELIVERED AT A MEETING OF THE CENTRAL NATIONAL SOCIETY
FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE, ON APRIL 18TH, 1893

BY

✓ J. V. JONES

(Principal of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire)

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THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I could wish that this afternoon there were a more experienced Chairman. But when I was asked by our hostess to preside, I found myself obliged to subdue my inclination to refuse the honourable duty lest I should seem wanting in devotion to the cause for the advocacy of which we are assembled. Of that cause I have long been a convinced adherent. I regard it not as an ideal for an ideal state to be carried out in the dim and distant future, but as a reform urgently demanded here and now. Without it I believe we shall fail to solve successfully many social political problems that are pressing themselves with ever increasing insistence on the attention of our statesmen. The argument for it is so simple that perhaps the uppermost feeling in my mind as I begin to speak of it is one of astonishment that we should be meeting here to-day sixty years after the first Reform Bill to advocate it as a new reform: one of surprise that it has not been settled long ago as a necessary and logical outcome from the principles of the English constitution. And yet perhaps one ought not to be surprised; at least those of you who are working for the cause ought not to be depressed. Great is the power of reason and it will prevail; but great also are the inertia of an old established and customary mistaken policy, and the impenetrability of a long-settled and widespread mental fog.

Is it not, I will not say "an absolute or ultimate principle of constitutional equity", but is it not a principle lying as fundamental in our system of parliamentary government, that every member of the community possessed of certain property qualifications, sane, well-behaved, of mature years, and capable of forming or being taught to form an intelligent opinion on public affairs should have a constitutional method of expressing that opinion by vote; and that it is to the interest of the state and of good and stable government that the aggregate opinion so expressed should determine our legislation and control our executive? Let us take that principle as our major premise. The minor premise is this:—There are women who fulfil all these conditions—

women who satisfy the conditions embodied in our Registration Acts, women who are sane, well-behaved, of mature years, and capable of forming an intelligent opinion on public affairs.

The conclusion is—therefore these women are entitled to a vote; these women are entitled to have their opinion registered as part of that aggregate opinion which determines the laws under which they as well as men have to live, and the taxes they as well as men have to pay. I have ventured to present you with a syllogism—and I have done so because it is an epitome of many arguments in favour of woman's suffrage, and because the reasoning is cogent enough to shift the burden of proof on to those who are opposed to that reform.

The objector must find fault with one or other of the premises. He must say either that women do not fulfil the conditions, or that even if they do it is contrary to the nature of things or inexpedient in the interests of the State that the term "members of the community" in our first proposition should be interpreted as including women. I am going to speak of the first two of these lines of objection. I cannot in the time at my disposal do more.

1. Do women fulfil the conditions? The only condition with which we need deal is that of fitness to form or capacity for being taught to form an intelligent opinion on public affairs. The objector may maintain, as many do maintain, as I have heard many maintain in nicest language in the presence of intelligent women, strangely enough acquiescing in the dictum, that women are not reasonable, and therefore on the whole incompetent to form just, true and enlightened opinions on political matters. Perhaps it is put in this form, "Women have insight but cannot reason out a thing," or perhaps, "Women walk by faith," or some other smooth utterance is made to gild the pill presented for their acceptance. But the gravamen of the charge is the same, however choice the language, and it means simply this—that women are not reasonable creatures.

Now my experience (you must take it for what it is worth) leads me to meet this statement with absolute and unqualified denial. I have for twelve years been connected with colleges in which men students and women students are taught in the same classes—and I have been convinced by my experience of their work that the human intellect cannot be divided into male and female; that the man's mind and the woman's mind

are made alike; that properly trained the woman may become man's equal in all intellectual pursuits; and that she is fitted to shine side by side with man in all departments of human knowledge.

Believe me, in a few years, when the education of women has had more time to bear its fruit, we shall hear no more of this objection. It already comes too late in the day. The battle of woman suffrage is being fought and won in our schools and colleges and universities. The present line of objection cannot be maintained in a country where women are being educated into self-reliance and a knowledge of their own power.

But let every man take heed how he makes it, for in so doing (I hope I weigh my words) he is conspiring with the powers of darkness. If the objection on this ground is made and women accept it, you obtain indeed a logical defence against the extension of the suffrage to women—but you obtain it at a fearful cost. For in answering the woman demanding her citizenship, you have insulted her womanhood. If she believes you she will live on a lower plane, and maybe let her faculties slumber till she becomes, as in the history of many nations she has become, not man's mate but man's slave. This objection on the ground of intellectual inferiority (for that is what it comes to) is like the grave in "Hamlet":—

Hamlet.—What man dost thou dig it for?

Gravedigger.—For no man, sir.

H.—For what woman then?

G.—For none neither.

H.—Who is to be buried in it?

G.—One that was a woman, sir, but rest her soul! she's dead.

But the woman in England is not dead, and the objection of the objector falls blunt. There is in her capacity for intellectual achievement and there is in her the will to achieve.

2. I pass on to the second possible line of objection—an objection to the major premise of our syllogism—the objection that it is contrary to nature for women to be citizens. This objection may be called, ladies and gentlemen, the doctrine of "the sphere".

In the Debate last year in the House of Commons on the question of Women's Suffrage, the arguments for and against were put with exemplary skill, and among the speeches made against it I single out Mr. Asquith's as putting in very forcible language this doctrine of the "sphere."

At the conclusion of his speech he said:—"I have heard this measure recommended in the name of democracy. But it is not a democratic measure. The doctrine of democracy demands that we should equalise where inequality exists among things fundamentally alike; but not that we should identify among things fundamentally unlike. The inequalities which democracy requires that we should fight against are the unearned privileges and the artificial distinctions which man has made and which man can unmake. They are not those indelible differences of faculty and function by which nature herself has given diversity and richness to human society."

Nature *herself*, ladies and gentlemen. We notice, by the way, that Mr. Asquith makes nature of feminine gender while appealing to nature as arbiter on this important political question.

From this passage I infer that Mr. Asquith thinks that men and women are fundamentally unlike; and that they are distinguished by indelible differences of faculty and function by nature herself; and that therefore it is contrary to nature that women should meddle with political matters, and in accordance with nature that so far as politics are concerned women should be like good children in the old saw, "seen but not heard". O nature! what impieties are uttered in thy name! Are men and women *fundamentally* unlike? Well, at any rate they are both *human*: that is a considerable fundamental likeness. That there is an indelible difference of function in certain respects is clear, but is it germane to our present discussion?

And if I were to ask for proof of the natural and indelible difference of faculty I imagine Mr. Asquith would refer me to the work done in the world by men and women respectively. But who will say that the distribution of work in this complex society is made by nature in the narrow sense in which it is used by Mr. Asquith as opposed to the arrangements "that man has made and that man can unmake". I think if we compare the position, the education and the opportunities of women with the position, the education, and the opportunities of men, we find that for the latter there are (to use Mr. Asquith's words) many of "the unearned privileges and the artificial distinctions which man has made and man can unmake". And I claim from his own argument that it is the business of a true democracy to fight against them. The

appeal to nature is always a dangerous one. We are so apt to identify nature with our idea of it, and to receive a rude awakening. Mr. Asquith's appeal to nature as arbiter upon the question of woman's sphere reminds me of the story of the advocate who said at the beginning of what was to have been an eloquent peroration, "My Lord, it is written in the Book of Nature—" and was stopped by the question of the Judge, "I beg your pardon, upon what page?"

The fallacy of assuming that unlikeness for certain purposes means unlikeness for others quite different is a common one in the art of debate. Let me pursue Mr. Asquith's method of reasoning a little further. Men and women are by nature fundamentally unlike, therefore if men write books, women ought not to write books. Men and women are by nature fundamentally unlike, therefore if men are school teachers women ought not to be school teachers. Men and women are by nature fundamentally unlike, therefore if men are cooks women ought not to be cooks. Men and women are by nature fundamentally unlike, therefore since men walk women ought not to walk—a conclusion which seems to be accepted in China. Each one of these propositions is as reasonable as Mr. Asquith's when he says that men and women are by nature fundamentally unlike, and that therefore if men vote at parliamentary elections, women ought not to vote at them.

And the fallacy, ladies and gentlemen, in respect of this particular question of the relation of women to political duty is nearly as old as human thought. It is laughed at, riddled with destructive criticism, and left a thing of shreds and patches in the fifth book of the Republic of Plato. Yet here it is still playing its part in all its old undiluted unreasonableness in perhaps the ablest speech made against woman suffrage in the House of Commons last year. Is it not time to have done with it? Even antiquity cannot make it venerable. Let us bury it without any sort of ceremony.

No, ladies and gentlemen, there is no resting place for our objector in this doctrine of "the sphere". He is forced to desert this high doctrine and to take refuge in denying our major premise on the ground that it is not at present expedient that women should be reckoned members of the political community.

We are now face to face then with the narrow issues of expediency. But the time I have allotted to myself is nearly up. I do not propose therefore to deal with

these very important points—and moreover it is unnecessary, for speakers coming after me will be able to grapple with many of them far more effectively than I could. I would only appeal to everyone to approach these considerations of immediate expediency with a free and open mind. If my arguments have been fair we must carefully clear our intellectual atmosphere of every trace of two impurities, of two things, difficult to get rid of indeed, but which we must expel even from the remote corners of our minds if we are to arrive at a true conclusion on this matter. (1) We must free ourselves from any idea that women so differ from men intellectually that they are unable to form true, just, intelligent and enlightened opinions on public affairs. (2) We must free ourselves from preconceived notions in regard to woman's sphere; from that inherited bias, that ancient prejudice handed down to us from the age of chivalry, which at once deified woman and enslaved her. Deified and enslaved? Yes, by no means an impossible combination. I remember reading a story when I was a little boy of a white man wrecked on a cannibal island. The cannibals counted him a god; so they did not eat him. But they so organised his life for him that he could do nothing he wanted to.

And I will in conclusion say only this:—Christianity has once for all secured the recognition of the moral individuality of woman. She stands as a person before God responsible for all her acts. In England she has achieved, too, legal personality; she can hold property, enter into contracts, and perform the duties of a legal person. But we still withhold from her political individuality, the rights of citizenship. And we do it *unjustly* to her detriment and to the detriment of the community. And so long as we do it one side of her nature is prevented from growing and can bear no fruit. We do her injury whether she is conscious of it or not, for we in part check the development of her truest and deepest self. But she does not and cannot suffer alone. For so stunted, unsympathising with men in many of the things that interest them most keenly, taking a scanty and unreal part in the discussion of many of the most vital questions of the time, she is the worse wife, the less perfect mother, the poorer friend: and the whole social and political organism suffers with her.

HOW MEN ARE INTERESTED IN WOMEN'S QUESTIONS.

It is the fashion among men to treat what are called women's questions with a smile, which is often a sneer. They may laugh thoughtlessly—and the bigger the fools the broader the grin—but the questions raised by the revolt of women are serious questions, which affect men at home, as well as in trade and politics.

There are admittedly serious problems of population, labour, marriage, divorce, and education, which can never be understood, much less settled, without the consent and co-operation of women. In fact all women's questions are, in their deepest relations, men's questions also.

As long as women received as gospel the tradition that men are their lords and masters by the fiat of God Almighty, the way of men's life was not difficult; but now, when women want to be supplied with reasons for every act of dominance on the part of men, and refuse to believe that God Almighty is their enemy, men's way is far from easy.

Women are discontented, and the discontent which has seized them must find a lodging in every house in the land, and sooner or later will make men realize that they *are* interested in women's questions in ways they little dream of.

The wife says to her husband that the old bondage galls. The sister says to her brother that their life must be equal. The daughter says to her father that she cannot be put off any longer by being told she is only a girl; and the mother says to her son that his sister is in no way his inferior.

Men cannot refuse to be interested in a movement that seeks to do justice to at least half the inhabitants of the country. They *are* interested, and what is more, they are uneasy. Some Liberals prophesy that women, if enfranchised, will all vote Tory, and force the country back a hundred years. It used to be said that if labourers were enfranchised, they would swamp every other interest. Labourers have votes, and they do *not* swamp every other interest; but their influence on the Legislature is seen in Allotment Acts, Free Elementary Education Acts, Workmen's Dwelling Acts, Parish and District Councils Bills, and other measures which aim at removing grievances under which they have long suffered.

This is just what would happen if women had parliamentary votes. They would not all vote Tory any more than men all vote Liberal; but men in general and Members of Parliament in particular would quickly change this attitude of indifference or contempt towards their new constituents, and many of the injustices and inequalities under which women now labour would be removed.

Whether men like it or not, they cannot avoid either the discussion or the strife involved in the movement, which is gathering force every day all over the world, for the full Emancipation of Women.

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THE SPHERE OF WOMEN.

MUCH has been said and written about the Sphere of Women, but what that sphere is nobody can possibly know until women are free as men are free, and are the perfect equals of men before the law.

When once the subject is examined, it is seen that there are no distinct spheres for the sexes, and that women have been driven by unjust and oppressive laws into narrow fields of action, under the pretence of natural incapacity.

It is not contended that the powers, qualities and endowments of men and women are identical; but that where nature has disqualified women, a prohibitive law enacted by men is a needless impertinence, and that where nature has not disqualified them, such a law is an injustice.

The sphere of men is whatever they can do, and they have left themselves perfectly free to choose. The same rule must apply to women, and they also must be free to do whatever they are able to do. It will never of course be the sphere of weak little women to do the work of big strong men; nor of timid women to do the work of brave men; but a weak man would be less in his sphere where strength was wanted, than a strong woman; and a timid man, even if he weighed twenty stone and could lift five hundred-weight, would be less in his place where courage was required, than a brave little woman of only seven stone and under five feet high. Men and women are not to be measured only by their height and weight; and what is true of strength and courage, is equally true of insight, discretion, deftness, wisdom, punctuality, and many other physical, mental and spiritual qualities, which are common to both sexes.

Until lately it has been taken for granted that politics at any rate were not women's sphere; but Primrose Leagues and Women's Liberal Associations have destroyed that ancient tradition, and although the Women's Suffrage Societies and their allies have not yet succeeded in gaining the political franchise for women, the services of women are eagerly sought by Parliamentary Candidates, and they canvass and make speeches at public meetings, without shocking or surprising

anybody, just as if it had never been a cherished article of man's creed that politics would degrade women and destroy their womanliness.

Mathematics, medicine, law, the classics and learned degrees, were all formerly supposed to be quite out of women's sphere; but they have recently proved, although handicapped in all sort of ways, that learning of all kinds is well within their capacity, and nobody now ventures to assert that women, simply as women, are less able than men to attain to the highest places in the scholastic world. Such barriers as remain will have to be removed, and women in the near future will meet men on equal terms in the ancient seats of learning, and take the honours they win in free and open competition.

Women have an equal right to freedom with men, and men have no right to coerce women either for the supposed good of the latter or for their own convenience. Women must judge of their own good, and choose their own line in life as men do. They must be free to succeed or fail as men do, according to the wisdom or unwisdom of their choice. The sphere of woman is in fact only limited by her capacity, and she must insist that every artificial limitation or barrier erected by law, custom or prejudice shall be completely removed, and that she shall be as free to act as man is free.

Copies may be had on application to the Secretary, 29, Parliament Street, at 1/- a 100.

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HOME AND POLITICS

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HOME AND POLITICS.

It is now more than twenty years ago since I delivered the first lecture I had ever given in public, on a Brighton platform, in support of women's suffrage. Twenty years is a long time in the life of an individual; it is a very short time in the life of a great movement, and I think, as we look back over these twenty years, those who have devoted themselves to the cause of the enfranchisement of women have good reason to congratulate themselves on the substantial progress which has been made.

We have a direct increase of our strength in Parliament, and we have further cause for congratulation on side issues bearing upon the general position of women; their admission to the Municipal and School Board Suffrages; their activity in many invaluable efforts of social and moral regeneration; their work as poor law guardians; and their success in the higher fields of education. There is also the increased activity of women in political life. Each party now seems to vie with the other in its eagerness in calling upon the women within its ranks to come forward and work for what they believe to be the right side in politics. But, perhaps, more encouraging than any of these direct evidences of the progress the women's movement is making, is the general feeling that is beginning to prevail that women's suffrage is a thing that is bound to come. The tendency of public opinion is felt to be set in that direction, and even those who oppose us seem to know that they are fighting a lost battle. Mr. Lowell used to say, "There is a sort of glacial drift in English public opinion; you cannot see it move, but when you look again you see that it has moved." I think there is no doubt that the glacial drift of English public opinion has moved and is moving in the direction of the active participation of women in politics. We have evidences of this in all parties.

With regard to the differences between men and women, those who advocate the enfranchisement of women have no wish to disregard them or make little of them. On the contrary, we base our claim to representation to a large extent on them. If men and women were exactly alike, the representation of men would represent us; but not being alike, that wherein we differ is unrepresented under the present system.

The motherhood of women, either actual or potential, is one of those great facts of everyday life which we must never lose sight of. To women as mothers, is given the charge of the home and the care of children. Women are, therefore, by nature as well as by occupation and training, more accustomed than men to concentrate their minds on the home and domestic side of things. But this difference between men and women, instead of being a reason against their enfranchisement, seems to me the strongest possible reason in favour of it; we want the home and the domestic side of things to count for more in politics and in the administration of public affairs than they do at present. We want to know how various kinds of legislative enactments bear on the home and on domestic life. And we want to force our legislators to consider the domestic as well as the political results of any legislation which many of them are advocating. We want to say to those of our fellow-countrywomen who, we hope, are about to be enfranchised, "do not give up one jot or tittle of your womanliness, your love for children, your care for the sick, your gentleness, your self-control, your obedience to conscience and duty, for all these things are terribly wanted in politics. We want women, with their knowledge of child life, especially to devote themselves to the law as it affects children, to children's training in our pauper schools, to the question of boarding out, to the employment of children of tender years, and the bearing of this employment on their after life: to the social life of children and young persons of both sexes in the lower stratum of our towns and villages, to the example set by the higher classes to the lower, to the housing of the poor, to the provision of open spaces and recreation grounds, to the temperance question, to laws relating

to health and morals, and the bearing of all these things and many others upon the home, and upon the virtue and the purity of the domestic life of our nation."

Depend upon it, the most important institution in the country is the home. Anything which threatens the purity and stability of the home threatens the very life-blood of the country; if the homes of the nation are pure, if the standard of duty, of self-restraint and of justice is maintained in them, such a nation has nothing to fear; but if the contrary of all these things can be said, the nation is rotten at the core, and its downfall is only a question of time. Up to the present, my belief is that the home side and the political side of things have been kept too far apart, as if they had nothing to do with one another. We have before us the picture of the whole of Europe armed to the teeth, and the great neighbouring nations ready to spring like wild beasts at each other's throats, all for the sake of fancied political advantage, while the true domestic interests of the nations concerned would be almost as much injured by victory as by defeat. I confess that I think women are all too apt to forget their womanliness, even in such cases as this, and allow their aspirations to be guided by those of the masculine part of the society in which they find themselves. But by strengthening the independence of women, I think we shall strengthen their true native womanliness;* they will not so often be led away by the gunpowder and glory will-o'-the-wisp, which is really alien to the womanly nature, but will much more certainly than now cast their influence on whatever side seems to them to make for peace, purity, and love.

A large amount of opposition to Women's Suffrage is based on the fact that to women has been given, by nature, the charge of the domestic and home side of things, and there is also the fear that contact with political life would blunt the gentler qualities of women. Let

* Mr. R. L. Stevenson in one of his stories makes his hero refer to this, when a woman to flatter him repeats, parrot like, what she conceives to be the man's formula on love and honour. "My honour?" he repeated, "For a woman you surprise me. . . . You speak, Madame von Rosen, like too many women, with a man's tongue,"—*Prince Otto*, p. 205.

us look at these two objections separately. To women, it is said quite truly, has been given the charge of the home and the domestic side of things. That is to say, most women's lives are wholly or almost wholly devoted to work for their husband and children within their home. I will apply myself to meet the argument against Women's Suffrage based on the fact that the daily business of most women's lives lies in the routine of domestic affairs. For the proper discharge of these duties many very high and noble qualities are needed, and no insignificant amount of practical knowledge. Women who are immersed in domestic affairs should be good economists, knowing how to save and how to spend judiciously; they should know a good deal about the health and training of children, about education, about what influences character and conduct; no quality is more important in the management of servants and children than a strong sense of justice. In proportion as women are good and efficient in what concerns their domestic duties, they will, if they become voters, bring these excellent qualities to bear upon public affairs. Most men are as much taken up by some trade, business, or profession in their everyday life as women are by their domestic duties; but we do not say that this man is so industrious and experienced in his business that it is a great pity that he should be admitted to the Franchise; we rather feel that all that makes him a useful member of society in his private life will also make him a good citizen in his public duties. I am well aware that there are some women who are not good for much in the home; in one class they think more of balls and fine clothes, than of home duties; cases have been known, I grieve to say, in all classes, where they have broken up their homes through drunkenness and idleness; though for one home broken up and destroyed by a drunken woman there are probably three or four broken up and destroyed by a drunken man. These women who are not good for much domestically will most likely not be good for much politically; but exactly the same thing can be said of the existing male voters. Taking women in the mass, I believe it can be claimed for them that they are faithful and conscientious in

the fulfilment of the duties already confided to them, and if this be so, it is the best assurance we can have that they will be faithful and conscientious in the new ones that may be entrusted to them.

I think we may surely claim for women in general a high standard of goodness and virtue. Most of us are probably fortunate enough to know many women who live up to the ideal described by the late Poet Laureate.

“ Because right is right
To follow right, were wisdom in the scorn
Of consequence.”

In so far as conduct is a test of virtue, we have a rough test in the number of men and women respectively who are committed for trial, for serious offences against the law, and we find that the women thus committed are less than a fifth the number of the men, although women are more numerous than men by about four per cent. I do not stop now to enquire what the causes of this may be, but I think the bare fact is a strong evidence that the admission of women to the suffrage would raise rather than lower the average quality, as regards conduct, of the existing constituencies.

Duty is what upholds all the structure of national greatness; why then exclude from the responsibilities of citizenship a large number of women among whom the standard of duty as measured by their conduct is conspicuously high and pure?

Let us now consider the fear that has been expressed that contact with political life will blunt the gentler qualities of women. We know that a very similar fear has been expressed with regard to the extension of higher education to women. It was thought that if a woman knew Greek she would not love her children, and that if she learned mathematics she would forsake her infant for a quadratic equation. Experience has set these fears at rest. It was imagined that if women were admitted to the studies pursued by young men at Oxford and Cambridge, they would imitate the swagger and slang of the idlest type of undergraduates. Experience has proved that these fears were baseless; may we not also hope that the fears expressed by some of the effects of

political life on womanly graces may prove to be equally unfounded? It seems to me very inconsistent and illogical to say with one breath Nature has made women so and so, and so and so, mentioning all kinds of graceful and delightful qualities, and then to add that all these qualities will disappear if a certain alteration takes place in the political constitution of the country. Nature is not so weak and ephemeral as this. All the Acts of Parliament that ever have been or ever can be passed cannot shake the rock upon which the institutions of Nature are founded. To think that we can upset the solemn edicts of Nature by the little laws of human invention is the most grotesque infidelity to Nature that has ever been dreamed of.

If you descend from these general considerations to look at the experience we have thus far had of the result of political activity upon the gentler qualities of women, I think we cannot do better than cite the example which has now for more than fifty years been given us by Queen Victoria. She has been from her early girlhood immersed in a constant succession of political duties and responsibilities, and yet no woman, as wife, mother, or friend, has ever shown herself more entirely womanly in her sympathy, faithfulness, and tenderness. I like very much the story told of the Queen in the early years of her reign, when one of her ministers apologised for the trouble he was giving her in regard to public business. “ Never mention that word to me again,” she replied, “ only tell me how the thing is to be done, and done rightly, and I will do it if I can.” That is womanly in the best sense, and the very quality we want more of, not in politics only, but everywhere and in every department of life.

When we speak of womanliness and the gentler qualities of the feminine nature, we must be careful not to mistake true for false, and false for true. Is there anything truly feminine in fainting fits, or in screaming at a mouse or at a black beetle? Fifty years ago a female of truly delicate susceptibilities was supposed to faint on the slightest provocation; but there was, I venture to think, nothing truly and essentially womanly in this accomplishment: it was merely a fashion which has now happily passed away. Women

don't faint now unless their heart or their digestion is out of order. Merely foolish foibles ought not to be dignified by the name of womanliness; their only advantage lies in their providing a cheap and easy means to persons of the other sex of establishing their own superiority. Those men who are not very sure, in the bottom of their hearts, of their own superiority, naturally like to be assured of it by finding a plentiful supply of women who go into hysterics if a mouse is in the room, know nothing of business except that consols are things which go up and down in the city, or of history except that Alexander the Great was not the son-in-law of Louis XIV. The world would wag on if this kind of womanliness disappeared altogether; what we cannot afford to lose is the true womanliness, mercy, pity, peace, purity and love; and these I think we are justified in believing will grow and strengthen with all that strengthens the individuality and spontaneity of womanhood.

In conclusion, I will only add that I advocate the extension of the franchise to women because I wish to strengthen true womanliness in woman, and because I want to see the womanly and domestic side of things weigh more and count for more in all public concerns. It is told in Nehemiah that when the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt after the captivity, women as well as men shared in the work. Our country now wants the hearts and brains of its daughters as well as the hearts and brains of its sons, for the solution of many perplexing and difficult problems. Let no one imagine for a moment that we want women to cease to be womanly; we want rather to raise the ideal type of womanhood and to multiply the number of those women of whom it may be said:—

“Happy he
With such a mother; faith in womankind
Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high
Comes easy to him, and though he trip and fall
He shall not blind his soul with clay.”

18

PAPER

READ AT THE BRISTOL MEETING

OF THE

Central Conference of Women Workers

AMONG WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

NOVEMBER, 1892.

BY

✓ MRS. HENRY FAWCETT

ON THE

Amendments Required in the Criminal
Law Amendment Act, 1885.

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AMENDMENTS REQUIRED IN THE CRIMINAL
LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1885.

I IMAGINE that all workers in the field which embraces the subject of this paper are aware of its special difficulties and dangers. The workers are in danger of getting coarsened and sullied by the foulness of the things with which they have to deal.

“ Thence comes it that my name receives a brand
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.”

It is best that we should recognise this as a fact and face the danger; take precautions to minimise it but not run away from it.

We should not greatly admire the immaculate whiteness of the most beautiful pair of hands in the world, if their owner had seen a child smothering in black slime and had made no effort to pull him out. Better black hands than a black heart: better risk some danger of getting our minds coarsened than leave human beings to wallow in the filthy ways of criminal vice without doing anything to amend the law and make these ways more difficult of access.

Another moral danger to ourselves connected with this work, I will just glance at. We are in danger of assuming a too hortatory attitude, a state of mind prone to condemn, rather than to help and understand. This danger too we shall best save ourselves from, I think, by a frank recognition of its reality. Mr. R. L. Stevenson, from whose essays we may get much help in this and other things, says: “There is an idea abroad among moral people that they should make

their neighbours good. One person I have to make good—myself. But my duty to my neighbour is much more nearly expressed by saying that I have to make him happy—if I may." Pursuing the same thought, however, he also says this wise word: "We are not damned for doing wrong, but for not doing right. Christ would never hear of negative morality: *thou shalt* was always His word, by which he superseded *thou shalt not*." It is this inexorable "*thou shalt*" which has nerved many a timid heart to heroic effort. *Thou shalt* work to make innocence safer, to make childhood secure, to break down the subterfuges and shams by which human devices have endeavoured to obscure the Divine Word:—"The wages of sin is death."

"It may be right to suffer patiently wrongs inflicted on ourselves, but it is no part of our duty patiently to endure the wrongs inflicted on others." To quote Mr. Stevenson again: "It is *our* cheek we are to turn, *our* coat we are to give away to the man who has taken *our* cloak. But when another's face is buffeted, perhaps a little of the lion will become us best. That we are to suffer others to be injured and stand by is not conceivable and surely not desirable." It is especially for those who have been injured by man and are again doubly injured by the present state of the law, whose case I shall put before you to-day in urging on you the amendments necessary in the Criminal Law Amendment Act. I will assume that my hearers are conversant with the subject in its main features, and the first point to which I shall draw your attention is the iniquitous provision known as "the three months' limit." Legal proceedings cannot be taken against the man who has connection with a child between thirteen and sixteen unless they are commenced within three months of the offence. The age of consent was raised by the Act of 1885 from thirteen to sixteen, but this three months' limit often makes this ostensible raising of the age a dead letter. A child of thirteen or fourteen is frequently intimidated or

bribed by the man who has wronged her, and thereby induced to say nothing to her parents or anyone else about what has taken place till after the three months has elapsed. The operations of the National Vigilance Society in bringing to justice the wretches who have no respect for the childhood and innocence even of their own daughters, are frequently frustrated by this clause in the Act. I can tell you of a case where a man wronged his own daughter, a child of fourteen, threatened to kill her and her mother too if she said a word to anyone about what had occurred. Nothing was discovered until the girl, a child herself, was obviously going to give birth to a child. The three months' limit had then passed, and *nothing* could be done. Another case came before the Society last spring. A child of fourteen was seduced, if you can use the word; but I should say with Marian Erle in *Aurora Leigh*, not seduced so much as murdered, by a married man aged forty-five. In this case the whole of the parties were in a respectable position in life; the girl's father was a County Councillor. The wretch who ruined her, induced her by presents and money to give him a sort of promise not to tell her parents what had occurred. She had been up to that time a healthy, happy, active child: from this time a great change came over her, for which, for a long time, her parents were wholly unable to account. She became languid and miserable, bursting into tears with no apparent cause and losing all her childish ways. At last a friend of her mother's drew the truth from her. The matter was brought into Court. Had not the Act of 1885 raised the age of consent to sixteen? But more than three months had elapsed since the offence, which had been committed in February and April, and Mr. Justice Hawkins said: "The matter does not seem to have been laid before the Public Prosecutor till August, and therefore, as then more than three months had elapsed, no proceedings could be taken under the Statute."

This "three months' limit" is confined in the Act to cases between thirteen and sixteen, and where the girl consents to her own ruin. But the principle of the Act is to raise the legal age of consent to sixteen. It assumes very properly that a child between thirteen and sixteen is not in a position to appreciate the true significance of the act to which she is being tempted, and it is obvious that this clause tends very largely to make the raising of the age of consent nominal only. It does not seem to me to minimise the offence, that the man who has persuaded the girl to her ruin, can also persuade her to say nothing about it. Unless all feeling of shame is dead within her, she is only too likely to say nothing. There is nothing like this, as far as I know, in the whole of the rest of our criminal law. Seven years is the limit of time within which you can take legal proceedings to recover a debt. There is no statute of limitations for felony; a murderer is always liable to be proceeded against for his crime, no matter if fifty years have elapsed since it was committed. But three months is the limit of time within which a prosecution must be commenced for one of the worst of wrongs, if not *the* worst, to which childhood is liable.

Mr. North, the Stipendiary magistrate at Merthyr, said not long ago, when he had been obliged to dismiss a case of this kind, that he could not understand why the exception had been put into the Act. "The Legislature had said in its wisdom that if a man was not found out in three months, he might go scot free." Nothing, however, is done, nor as far as I can judge is likely to be done, to amend the law. The House of Commons is too fully occupied with redressing the grievances of people who have votes, and can therefore decide the fate of members and ministries, to have time to attend to the wrongs and injuries of those who have no votes. It took something like a moral earthquake to get the Act of 1885 passed. The House of Lords Committee on these subjects, sat in 1881-2. The Bill was passed in the House

of Lords in 1883 and in 1884; but till the sensation caused by Mr. Stead's publication, the Bill was talked out, blocked, and abandoned by the Government in the House of Commons. I do not see now without women's suffrage, where the motive force is to come from to get the necessary amendments which the Act requires, passed.

The next point to which I will draw your attention is usually known by the words "*reasonable cause to suppose.*" The age of consent, as I before remarked, was raised by the Act of 1885 from thirteen to sixteen. But if a man who has wronged a child under the age of sixteen swears that he had "reasonable cause to suppose" her to be sixteen or above sixteen, he escapes punishment. Here again I contend that such a provision is entirely exceptional in our law for the protection of minors. The age of consent for parting with property, as we all know, is for both sexes twenty-one. A money-lender who makes advances, or a tradesman who supplies goods, other than necessaries, to young persons under that age, has no legal power of recovery. It would be of no avail for Messrs. Moses and Harpy to plead that in advancing money at 60% to a boy at college the development of his moustache or the blackness of his pipe gave them "reasonable cause to suppose" that he was over twenty-one. Yet this is the sort of plea that is urged in almost innumerable cases, and urged effectively, so that the culprit escapes over and over again unpunished. The jury are invited to look at the girl, and if they think it not unreasonable for a casual observer to guess her age at sixteen, this is considered to acquit the man who has robbed her of what no tears nor repentance can restore, of all blame or responsibility. Cases in which the man gets off on this miserable pretext are reckoned not by tens but by hundreds.

I now come to my third point, in some respects the most painful, and the most incredible of all: there is no punishment in our law as it stands for incest as such. Hideous and

loathsome as it is, so that it is a shame even to speak of it, it is by no means extremely uncommon. It not unfrequently happens that clergymen and others come to the office of the National Vigilance Association, 267, Strand, and narrate to the Secretary, Mr. Coote, some terrible case of this kind, generally as between father and daughter, and ask him to put the law in motion. *There is no law to put in motion.* If the girl is over sixteen there is absolutely nothing legally that can be done. Take the case of a girl between sixteen and eighteen. If she had been led astray and taken away from her home by a stranger, the father could proceed against the man for abduction and for depriving him of his daughter's services. But if he himself is guilty of the abnormal and hideous crime of incest with his own child, nothing can be done; the law does not recognise it as an offence. I hardly expect you to believe me: Mr. Coote tells me that the people who come to ask his help in these cases often cannot believe him when he tells them that the law affords no remedy and provides no punishment. Now this may very probably be a survival of the old evil doctrine of the subjection of women and the absolute supremacy of the head of the family over all members of it. In patriarchal government the subordinate members of the family group were absolutely subject to the head of the family: he had power of life and death over them; they had no rights; their one duty was comprised in the word "obedience." In all nations of progressive civilisation the history of their progress has consisted in the gradual emancipation of sons, servants, daughters and wives from their former subjection. In our own country the process has been completed with regard to servants and sons and has gone a great way as far as women are concerned; but with regard to women it is not complete, and if we can hasten its completion we shall have done the State some service and helped to make men and women freer and happier than they have been heretofore. I may possibly be misunderstood

if I do not say that in my judgment children of both sexes up to a certain age ought to be in legal and actual subjection to the authority of their parents. I believe this to be both just and wholesome: but I also think that wherever the law gives authority it ought also to enforce special obligations and provide special punishments for the abuse of that authority; and when a father towards a child, a guardian towards a ward, a master towards a servant, is guilty of using the position of authority the law gives him to induce the child or servant to commit immoral actions, the offence ought to be recognised and punished as having a special degree of gravity.

The next and last point to which I will ask your attention, is the unsatisfactory state of the law with regard to affiliation cases. In the first place, although a summons may be applied for, no practical proceedings can be taken till the child is born, and if the man in the meantime has left the country, nothing can be done at all. Now, if you take the case of a girl under sixteen who is about to give birth to an illegitimate child, you are first met by the "three months' limit," which gives a very short period of time within which it is possible to institute legal proceedings, and then if this period has elapsed, the law gives the man the additional privilege of about six months' run, during which he may go abroad or absent himself by removing to a distant part of the country, so that to find him may be a difficult and costly undertaking. The French law under the Code Napoleon, is worse than ours: it forbids categorically all enquiry into the paternity of illegitimate children. Our law is not as cynically and openly wicked as this, but it puts all manner of difficulties in the way of establishing the paternity. A case came before the Preventive Committee of the National Vigilance Association in which a rather well-known artist, then living in Glasgow, had taken one of his models as his mistress. Their connection lasted some time and was well known by

several of his and her friends. When she told him that she was going to have a child, he said she was to come to London and enter some hospital or infirmary. She came; only of course to discover that, six months before the birth of the child, no institution of the kind would take her in. She wrote to him in Glasgow to tell him this, and that she, an ignorant Scotch girl, was alone in London, penniless. He replied "Then go to the devil." To escape her importunity he went abroad and left her in London—as far as he knew—to starve or go on the streets. Fortunately there was another alternative: she applied for help to the National Vigilance Association; no affiliation proceedings could be instituted because the man had left the country, but the man's letters incriminated him so deeply that the Committee were able to extract 3s. a week from him. The activity of the man's conscience on the subject was manifested in the following year's Academy, when he exhibited a picture called "Deserted." It represented a desolate attic room with a solitary woman in it, in an attitude of despair. The conduct that was ruin to her, was to him useful from the professional point of view, in stimulating his rather sluggish imagination. We are apt to treat these questions too much as women's questions. The injustice of the law to the wronged woman is far more deeply injurious to the man than to the woman. Who, knowing all, would not be that deserted mother who had loved the father of her child and who had also strong mother's love for her baby, rather than the man who never knew what real love was either for his child or the mother of his child, who exploited her miseries, made a picture of them and hung it up in a public exhibition for sale? There is degradation if you like. Men suffer from these bad laws more than women.

This was a case, no doubt, out of the common run. I will now ask you to look at an ordinary affiliation case. Guardians of the poor, benevolent persons, and charitable societies are nearly always very reluctant to institute proceedings for

an affiliation order. The process is difficult, it is not very costly, but it costs something, and when all the difficulties had been overcome and the expense met, and an order of the Court obtained that the man is to contribute, say 3s. a week till the child is thirteen years old, the result very frequently is—absolutely nothing! He may possibly pay for a week or two, but after that the order of the Court is a dead letter: no means are taken to ensure its being carried out. It is true that payments may be enforced by warrant or distress upon his goods, but his plan is to disappear, and no security is taken against this. In other cases when the accused person is under temptation to disregard an order of the Court, he is obliged to find bail. No machinery of this kind to secure the actual carrying out of the order of the Court exists in affiliation cases. If a man against whom an affiliation order had been granted to pay 3s. a week till the infant was thirteen, were obliged to give bail himself and to find also two sureties in £100 each for the actual carrying out of the order, it would only be the employment of a precaution with which our law courts are perfectly familiar in other cases. In case the bail were forfeited, the 3s. a week would be paid out of the sum provided by the estreated bail. The necessity of giving bail and the possible difficulty in finding two sureties to give bail, would, I believe, prove a wholesome check upon the number of illegitimate births. Another evil in connection with these cases is said to be an increasing one. I refer to the crime of perjury on the part of fathers of illegitimate children. Mr. Ferguson, Chairman of Quarter Sessions in Cumberland, referred to this subject in charging the Grand Jury in October, 1892, and said that in a long and painful experience of twenty years he could recollect many cases of perjury by the putative father, and he also recollected one or two on the part of the woman. "This class of crime," he said, "seemed to be on the increase, and it was committed with more and more audacity every day." The foreman of

the jury, on behalf of his fellow jurors, corroborated what the Chairman had said about the prevalence of perjury in these cases, and hoped that publicity would be given to his remarks, so that the question might be taken up by the Public Prosecutor. A few prosecutions for perjury would have a very wholesome effect.

To conclude and sum up; we ought to keep constantly in view the necessity of the following amendments of the law, and its more vigorous administration:—

1. The abolition of the three months' limit within which, in the case of girls between thirteen and sixteen, a prosecution can be instituted.
2. The abolition of the "reasonable cause to suppose" a girl to be sixteen as an excuse for ruining her.
3. To provide legal punishment for incest, and, as a corollary to this, to visit with special severity all abuse of the authority which the law vests with the father, guardian, or employer.
4. In affiliation cases the provision of machinery, through the giving and finding of bail, so that the order of Court should not be—as it now so frequently is—a dead letter.
5. A more vigorous effort to check perjury, by prosecution.

As I said before, I do not now see in the present state of the electorate where the motive power to secure these changes in the law and its administration is to come from. Women's Suffrage would make the outlook immeasurably clearer. But we must work with what weapons we have and not fold our hands and do nothing because the most effective and most constitutional weapon is denied to us. If all the amendments of the law that we aim at are carried out, I do not flatter myself that we shall have succeeded in making either ourselves or our neighbours good and happy. Something more than just laws will be needed for that. But I think we shall have succeeded in reducing not a little the misery and heart-break of some of them.

Women's Suffrage.

Reprinted from the *Manchester Guardian* of 12th April, 1890.

SIR,—Absence from home and the heavy pressure of other work have till now hindered me from asking leave to reply in your columns to Mr. Samuel Smith's letter against women's suffrage. I shall be grateful if you will now, late though it may be, allow me space to do so, the more so as Mr. Smith's letter is being carefully and extensively circulated by our opponents.

Mr. Smith first argues that the claim for manhood suffrage having already been preferred, we shall not, if once any women are franchised, be able to resist the claim for adult suffrage, including men and women of full age and not legally disqualified. Therefore he refuses to recognise the citizenship of any woman at all, and declines to say A lest by-and-by he should be led on to say B or perhaps, in the long run, to admit the moral claim of women for full civil and political equality with men. Because during the twenty-five years or thereabouts of the tedious struggle for the political existence of women Parliament has hitherto resisted their claim, and refused (twice through the direct personal intervention of Mr. Gladstone) to assent to the modest proposals for the franchisement of "duly qualified" women, Mr. Smith would intensify and perpetuate this injustice by admitting to full political rights every adult male person, however ignorant, brutal, or degraded, whilst continuing the political outlawry of every woman, no matter what her intellectual and moral qualifications and fitness, and how great her services to the nation and to the race. Mr. Smith, a professedly sound Liberal, ought to be able to recognise—indeed, in every other connection he would recognise—the validity of the plea that the wider the basis of representation the greater the injustice to any excluded class. Probably, too, in every other connection he would admit to the full the significance of the broad human truth—"legislation without representation is tyranny." For some reason or other, however, Mr. Smith is of opinion that the principles on which he would admit the claims of the masculine half of humanity to political justice fail in their application to the claims and needs of the feminine half. Let us examine his reasons. "Women are so ignorant." Well, we frankly admit and deeply feel our ignorance. It is because we are ignorant that we ought to know, to be, to do much that is now denied to us that we ought to have for our political emancipation, and for that education which it will bring in its train—education which would enrich our own lives, develop our faculties and capacities hitherto denied growth and

exercise, and enable us to do our full share of service to humanity. But we are not quite so hopelessly ignorant as Mr. Smith would have us appear. Even on "such domestic questions as lease enfranchisement, proportional representation, Free Trade, Fair Trade, monometallism versus bimetallicism," I think I could find nearly as many women as men competent to discuss each any of these questions with Mr. Smith himself, and well able to give sound reasons for the faith that is in them. Mr. Smith's further suggestion that the "future government of India, or a confederation of Australasia" may be "settled by the votes of several millions of women who could hardly point out those places on the map" is rather wild. It is a little too late in the day to travesty an ancient sarcasm of Mr. Cobden's (apparently in the first instance to gentlemen of the House of Commons) who plead the alleged want of geographical knowledge as a ground for refusing women the protection of the Parliamentary franchise. For good or for evil, the tide of emigration from these islands has compelled almost every woman to learn by heart some store of geographical facts and information. To every village, to almost every homestead, letters come from afar; sometimes the loved ones return, more often other loved ones go out to join them, and distant lands are no longer "places on the map," but living realities in which are bound up hopes and fears, joys and sorrows. Affected has bridged the Atlantic, tunneled the Pacific, and the far has been brought near in a fashion unknown to the world before. And these days of international sympathies and incessant moving and fro our political Rip Van Winkle wakes and rubs his eyes, looks around, but sees only the world of forty years ago. That Mr. Smith can believe in the existence of the crass ignorance which attributes to women is proof enough that his acquaintance among them may have been "peculiar" but cannot have been "extensive."

Mr. Smith further assumes when he talks of "such questions being settled by the votes of several millions of women" a political condition, that of the *plébiscite* or *referendum*—the giving of a direct vote on any doubtful question,—not yet existent in this country, but likely to be so till a far higher and later stage of political development has been reached, a stage in which we may well expect that will remain few of these vexed questions to need such direct reference. It is not by the direct vote of men that these questions are now settled, and the contrary assumption is a mere rhetorical flourish.

For what, after all, is the Parliamentary franchise? It is a little, yet imports so much. It is simply the right of saying, from time to time, which person out of a very limited number to choose from we think, on the whole, the fittest to be trusted with the management for us of that part of our affairs—legislation and government—which we cannot conveniently manage individually for ourselves. And for such a decision to be wisely made, knowledge of recondite questions is necessary, but simply the possession of that keen perception and correct judgment of character which no one denies to women, but which, on the contrary, it is admitted they continually manifest in a high degree. Parliament, moreover is not always engaged in the determination

of questions of financial and commercial policy, but occupies itself more and more with matters which concern women equally with men, or touch them even more keenly than men. Has a woman no interest or concern, *e.g.*, in legislation affecting her status in marriage, her relations to her own children, the conditions of divorce? Is she not affected by the multiplication of laws touching her at every point of her domestic life? Can she afford to be indifferent to industrial or educational legislation which may easily place her at a disadvantage as compared with men? It is idle, because it is not true, to allege that "there is no fear of women nowadays not receiving their due." Those of us who have given the best years of our lives to the task of influencing legislative action in the direction of justice to women, and to the passing of some of these measures as to which Mr. Smith boasts, and justly enough, that he has "been in favour" of them, know, as Mr. Smith cannot know, how inexpressibly hard and difficult has been our task, how delayed our success, by the fact that being an "unrepresented" class we could only plead as suppliants, and never claim as equals the barest justice.

"Full little knowest thou that hast not tried
What hell it is in suing long to bide;
To lose good days that might be better spent;
To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares;
To eat thy heart through comfortless despairs."

Mr. Smith would, sir, take many letters, longer than any you can give me time for, to outline in brief the defects of even the remedial measures which have already been passed—defects due largely, not entirely, to the fact that the masculine mind, dominated by its inherited and cultivated sex bias, cannot of itself and by itself give consideration and weight to the feminine point of view. To multiply all the cases of retrogressive and injurious legislation and of even recent times from which women have suffered and suffer would need almost as many more, whilst the legal hardships and wrongs inherited from the past and needing to be set right are more numerous than Mr. Smith dreams of. For all these reasons we demand the protection and the power of the Parliamentary franchise, a protection and a power which Mr. Smith, in his ignorance, would fain deny us on the plea of our ignorance.

Mr. Smith condescends to the use of one argument which he must, I think, on reflection himself admit to be an unworthy one. "Have these things been considered," he says, "the consequences that would follow from disfranchising the multitudes of fallen women in our large towns, or the effect on young men of visiting their abodes to canvass them?" "A fallen woman" must in every case presuppose a "fallen man." Mr. Smith propose to introduce a morality test in the case of electors, or to disfranchise them all on the ground of the gross, flagrant, the notorious profligacy of some of their number or the vile vices of others? If not, why is such a test to be suggested in the case of women, or to be made the excuse for refusing them the legal right and power to deal with causes instead of with the consequences, and to put an end, as only such power can enable

them to put an end, to that economic dependence of women which is the source of all this terrible flood of immorality? Mr. Smith calmly contemplate as a possible contingent continuance in perpetuity of the conditions of ignorance and morality which he pictures, the degradation of half the race therein, and the consequent waste, the infinite waste, of the treasures of humanity? I do not believe him to be headstrong enough or foolish enough for this. I would submit, moreover the true safeguard against the danger which he dreads is found in the abolition of canvassing, with all its attendant demoralisation, and not in the continued disfranchisement of the nation.

But, Mr. Smith continues, women "reason more through heart than through their head," and "politics would become mental." Is there no room for sentiment in politics, no need the exercise of that sympathy which develops the sense of justice, no real want of the freer play of the humane emotions? If politics continue for ever a mere game of party strife, and never to the true dignity of the applied science of social relations? If people of sentiment and of enthusiasm are the most practical people of all, for their sentiment is the spur of energy, and their enthusiasm quickens the "dry light" of reason, and carries intellectual conviction onward into practical issues. Nor can the student of history and biography have failed to note the fact that the worst errors and crimes even of men otherwise great have been caused not by the excess but by the lack of passion, sentiment, and enthusiasm. Sublime selfishness is not the safest guide of human action.

Finally, Mr. Smith urges woman "to be content," and to "covet what God never intended her to have." When, and how did Mr. Smith receive this special light, this personal revelation? More modest persons might condescend patiently to seek the designs of the Creator in the capacities and desires of the creature. But our philosophic guide needs to make no investigation. He is serenely sure, "In no country since the world began have women enjoyed the political franchise," and "God never intended" women to have it, we must be content to remain political pariahs for ever. Now, in the first place, the assertion is not true, even as regards this England of our own. Women in the past in this country enjoyed and exercised political rights, and what we now claim is *restitution* of those past rights, with such modifications as may adapt them to latter-day uses. But if it is absolutely and universally true, it would be of no real use against our claim. Every argument of this kind that can be advanced against the emancipation of women was used within this present century against the emancipation of the slave. Yet the spirit of justice and freedom triumphed, and shall continue to triumph till slavery of sex has followed that of caste, colour, and race, and woman no longer the "chattel" of man, has taken her just place as a "helpmeet," companion, friend—no rivalry between them but of noble thought and noble deed.—I am, &c.,

E. C. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY

Congleton, April 10.

1s. per 100 (post free), from
MRS. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY, Congleton.

The Temperance Question

AND

Women's Suffrage.

"I believe that until women have votes for Members of Parliament, we shall never get the Temperance Question properly settled."

THIS was the declaration a good many years ago of the late Mrs. Margaret Bright Lucas, the President of the British Women's Temperance Association, and it is the opinion to-day of an ever-increasing number of women workers in the Temperance cause.

Does it not seem to be growing more true every year? The workers increase, the agitation grows, money is freely subscribed, distinguished politicians attend meetings and proclaim their adherence to local option, the temperance party among the electors becomes more earnest, and yet not a single measure of reform has been passed for England. The utmost that has been accomplished is to prevent Parliament compensating publicans, and practically endowing public houses.

A new motive force is wanting to urge forward our legislators.

That force must be the power of the women's vote.

The male electors spread their energy over so many objects that temperance reform receives but little of it.

The number of men who belong to the temperance parties, and who put temperance before every other reform, is comparatively limited, and therefore this reform, one of the most vital for the social well-being of the people, is constantly pushed on one side.

But the temperance women of Great Britain are organised. They have realised the awful magnitude of the evil. It is the women and the children who suffer most at the hands of the drunken men, and whose homes are ruined. In many cases too, women are themselves victims of the curse. It is women who above all desire to see that curse removed, and the fatal temptation banished from our midst.

It is women who must settle the Drink Question.

Women are united, they are in earnest, they are ready for the fight with the great enemy of the Nation. But they have their hands tied behind their backs, so that they cannot use the only weapon which will ever strike down the foe. That weapon is the pencil which marks the ballot paper in the Polling Booth!

Women may talk, they may organise, they may give their money and they may sign petitions; but they may not do the only thing which is of any real use.

Women may not vote.

ne vote has more effect in Parliament than a thousand signatures to petitions.

The votes of the British Women's Temperance Association would revolutionise the opinions of the House of Commons, and would carry a great measure of temperance reform within twelve months. But the words of Mrs. Lucas are true, until women have votes the temperance question will never be properly settled.

Let the temperance women of the country unite to obtain the franchise as the quickest way to gain their end.

They have tried every other way, try the franchise next. The Publican who recently said that what he feared most was the women, was a shrewd man. But if he feared the women without votes, he would fear them far more enfranchised.

The Leaders of the Temperance Cause are all in favour of Women's Suffrage

Lady Henry Somerset is a Vice-President of the Central National Society for Women's Suffrage. The late Mrs. Lucas was and Sir Wilfrid Lawson is now a member of the Executive Committee of that Society; and almost every prominent worker for Temperance is more or less publicly identified with the demand for Women's Suffrage.

Let the Temperance Societies, as such, throw their whole weight into the demand which is now spreading throughout the country with ever-increasing force that women shall be enfranchised on the same conditions as men, and **victory will soon be gained for the united cause of Women and Temperance.**

The Central National Society for Women's Suffrage has for its object to obtain the Parliamentary Franchise for Women on the same conditions as it is or may be granted to men. It desires to affiliate other Societies, such as Temperance Associations which are in sympathy with its principles. The annual subscription for an affiliated Society is only 5s., and the privileges offered are—

A visit annually from a Lecturer of the Staff; a copy of the Organ of the Society, and the right to send **Delegates** to the Annual Council Meeting.

Affiliated Societies will be supplied with Literature for circulation, and with information respecting the Suffrage movement.

All further information and a supply of literature on the subject may be obtained from the Secretary,

MISS GERTRUDE STEWART,
29, PARLIAMENT STREET, LONDON, S.W.

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/- per 100, post free.

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LIST OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.

Specimen pamphlets sent post free on application to
The Secretary,

CENTRAL OFFICE, 29, PARLIAMENT STREET,
LONDON, S.W.

- The Debate on the Women's Suffrage Bill, 1892. Price 6d.
Single speeches from the above. 2s. 6d. per hundred.
Opinion of leading statesmen.
1. Liberal Leaders. 1s. 6d. per hundred.
2. Conservative Leaders. " "
The Letter *which ought to have been written* by Mr. Gladstone. 1d.
Law in relation to Women, by a Lawyer. 2d.
The Temperance Question and Women's Suffrage. 1s. per hundred.
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Report of Great W.S. Meeting, Princes Hall, February 25th, 1892. 1d. each.
"The Political Enfranchisement of Women," Justin McCarthy. 1s. per dozen, 6s. per hundred.
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Affiliation Form.

Please lay this before your Association and urge them to Affiliate.

**Central National Society for Women's
Suffrage.**

FOUNDED 1872.

THE object of the Society is to obtain the Parliamentary Franchise for Women on the same conditions as it is, or may be granted to men.

The Society seeks to achieve this object—

1. By acting as a centre for the collection and diffusion of information with regard to the progress of the movement in all parts of the country.
2. By holding Public Meetings in support of the repeal of the Electoral Disabilities of women.
3. By the publication of Pamphlets, Leaflets, and other Literature bearing upon the question.

AFFILIATED SOCIETIES.

One of the objects of the Central National Society is to affiliate Political, and other Societies, in sympathy with its principles.

CONDITIONS OF AFFILIATION.

An Annual Subscription of 5s. and approval by the Executive Committee.

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A visit annually from a Lecturer of the Staff; a copy of the Organ of the Society, and the right to send **Delegates** to the Annual Council Meeting.

Affiliated Societies will be supplied with Literature for circulation, and with information respecting the Suffrage movement.

To be detached, filled in, and forwarded to the Secretary, Central Office, 29, Parliament Street, Westminster.

[P.T.O.]

Central National Society for Women's Suffrage.

The Committee of the
being in favour of extending the Parliamentary Franchise to Women
and wishing to support this movement, desires to Affiliate with the Central
National Society for Women's Suffrage.

(Signed) _____ Chairman

Date _____

When signed please forward to

THE SECRETARY,
CENTRAL OFFICE, PARLIAMENT STREET,
LONDON, S.W.

Form for use of Subscribers.

Central National Society for Women's Suffrage.

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3. By the publication of Pamphlets, Leaflets, and other Literature bearing upon the question.

I approve of the objects of this Society and wish to add my name to the List of Members, I enclose a

Subscription of £.....
or
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Central National Society for Women's Suffrage.

Central Office, 29, Parliament Street, Westminster,

Secretary, Miss Cicely Philipps.

All who are interested in obtaining the Parliamentary Franchise for women are invited to communicate with the Secretary at the Central Office, who will supply Leaflets for circulation and information respecting the Women's Suffrage movement.

*Subscriptions of any amount
constitute Membership.*

TWENTIETH

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Central National Society

FOR

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,

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