

# The Common Cause.

The Organ of the Women's Movement for Reform.

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ONE PENNY.

## The News of the Week.

### The Campaign in Support of the Bill.

To us at present there is one piece of work of overwhelming importance. It is to show, in conjunction with all the other Women's Suffrage Societies, that we welcome the effort made by the Conciliation Committee towards compromise, and that we heartily desire the safe passage of the Representation of the People Bill. In our other columns will be found details of the various ways in which the National Union is pressing for facilities. It is a matter of common knowledge that the only real obstacle is the existence of a very small number of enemies to our cause within the Government; we except Mr Asquith, because he has already, by his pronouncement to the Liberal Members two years ago, given evidence of his willingness to leave this question to the free vote of the House; with this exception our enemies are not men of serious national importance, and it is unthinkable that a Liberal Cabinet should allow them to stand in the way of the settlement of a question which has become a menace to public order and public business. To allow this would be to admit that as long as certain reactionary individuals live, justice to women must be delayed. This is, we say, unthinkable, and the course for us to press upon the Government is that they should agree to give a fair field and no favour to women, and let the reactionaries "get on or get out."

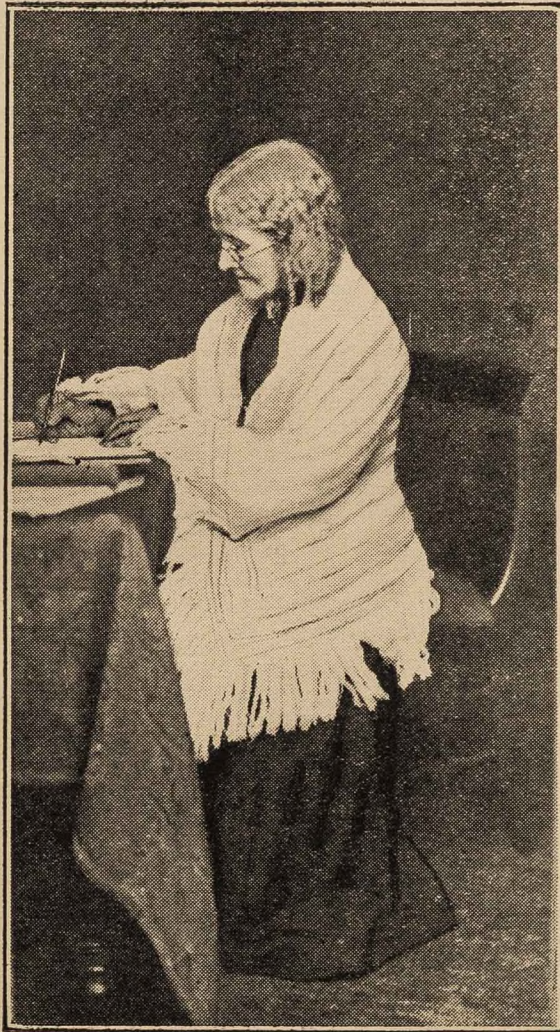


Photo., Schmidt, Manchester.  
MRS. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY.

### Oxford Delegacy for Women Students.

We are glad to note the defeat of the preposterous amendment made by the Rector of Exeter and the Warden of Keble, that women should only be represented on an "Advisory Committee" instead of directly on the Delegacy which is to have control of women students at Oxford. Professor Geldart, in opposing the

amendment, said that the proposal of the statute that women should be actual members of the Delegacy seemed to him one that was of enormous importance to the successful and fair working of the statute, which had been accepted by Congregation by a very large majority. Under the statute one of the functions of the Delegacy was that all new societies for the teaching of

women were only to be recognised on the recommendation of the Delegacy by vote of Convocation. It was only reasonable that women, themselves engaged in education, should have some direct voice in a question of that sort. Again, the Delegacy had to confirm the regulations, subject to Convocation, as to the examination which should admit women to University examinations. That was a question which went vitally into the whole matter as to what was the proper curriculum for women's education. Then the Delegacy was not only going to keep a register, but was going to have the power to remove names from that register, and that surely was a function which could hardly be entrusted to be exercised by a body consisting of men alone. This Delegacy differed from all, certainly from the great majority of other delegacies in the University, in that not a penny that was going to be spent by the Delegacy would come out of the Common Fund of the University. The whole of the funds to be provided by the Delegacy would be provided by women and women's organisations. The Principal of Brasenose said it seemed to be almost assumed that the statute was brought forward at the instance of the women,

but the truth was that it was brought forward by the Hebdomadal Council on its own account.

### Women Voters in Norway.

On the 14th of May the Norwegian Storting granted the municipal suffrage to all adult women by seventy votes to ten, despite the opposition of the Conservative Government. The new Act adds 250,000 women voters



resign." When was a Cabinet absolutely united? Are there not other questions upon which there has had to be give and take? Why on this question alone is there to be a sheepish unanimity? When Mr. Asquith promised not to oppose a Women's Suffrage amendment to a Reform Bill, he admitted the right that the House of Commons had to be left free to vote according to its conscience in this matter; we only ask that he should give the same right now, for this smaller measure, which has the support of all true democrats. We cannot believe that the opposition can come from him, although doubtless he will—and quite rightly—hold himself free to vote personally according to his convictions.

Mr. Asquith must see that at this juncture it is the part of a Prime Minister to take the sense of the House of Commons. The large majority which is favourable to our cause in the Cabinet will surely see that it is their part to stand by the cause of the people as against a few reactionaries. Man for man, we are certain that, if it came to resigning, the Government could get on very well without its Anti-Suffragist members, and they should be made to know it. Surely they cannot be so unimaginative as not to see how hollow will ring the cry of "The People," should they persist in governing women without their consent. Surely they will want to disarm this large body of selfless and determined reformers by removing this grievance, this weapon which will, if it be allowed to remain, be used against them with such deadly effect. We would slightly alter the rhymers' verse:—

"When wilt Thou save the People?  
O God of mercy, when?  
The People, Lord, the People,  
Women as well as men!"

### The Apostle of Freedom.

Letters of John Stuart Mill.

Of all the men who during the past century have fought for the women's cause, John Stuart Mill stands pre-eminent; hence the publication of these letters at a time when the woman's movement seems nearing its crisis is of special interest.

These letters, which are edited with a suggestive preface by Mr. Hugh Elliot, and a note by Miss Mary Taylor, show some of the grounds on which Mill became a champion of the woman's cause. They present, perhaps, a more vivid picture of the writer's development than does even the autobiography.

In particular, they show a notable change in Mill's relations to his fellows, of which he himself was probably unconscious. In the earlier letters there is often a mixture of dogmatism and contempt: but as time goes on this decreases, especially after his wife's death, and is replaced by a deeper sympathy and a wider tolerance than he showed in youth. It is as if his overwhelming sorrow had dispelled all superficial characteristics, leaving only the essential man.

The changes in opinion are as noteworthy as the changes in character, especially in relation to the great question of liberty. The earliest letters (about 1830) appear to have been written when Mill was still under the influence of his strong reaction against the narrower side of those utilitarian principles in which he had been bred. He was under the sway of Wordsworth, and for the moment tending towards Conservatism, as represented by the Lake poets. Their Conservatism he defines as "a reverence for government in the abstract; it means that they are duly sensible that it is good for man to be ruled; to submit both his body and mind to the guidance of a higher intelligence and virtue. It is, therefore, the direct antithesis of Liberalism, which is for making every man his own guide and sovereign master, and letting him think for himself, and do exactly as he judges best for himself, giving other men leave to persuade him if they can by evidence, but forbidding him to give way to authority, and still less allowing them to constrain him more than the existence and tolerable necessity of every man's person and property renders

indispensably necessary. It is difficult to conceive a more thorough ignorance of man's nature, and of what is necessary for his happiness . . . than this system implies." It is interesting to contrast this curious statement made in 1831 with the declaration in "Liberty" twenty-five years later that "the individual is not accountable to society for his actions as far as they concern no person but himself," or the view expressed in a letter in 1852: "It appears to me that the great end of social improvement should be to fit them (*i.e.*, men) by cultivation for a state of society combining the greatest personal freedom with the just distribution of the fruits of labour."

Concerning Socialism, Mill's opinion also altered. In 1850 he anticipated that at some future day society might make "the production and distribution of wealth a public concern," though the world would not come to this without great changes. But as time went on his belief and hope seemed to rest more on voluntary co-operation. No one thoroughly desirous of the State control of industry would have written thus (1865):—"Nothing that I can imagine, except co-operation, would entirely take away the antagonism (*i.e.*, between employer and employed). But in order to do so, it is not necessary that co-operation should be universal. If it was only very frequent, a labourer who remained in the employment of an individual, and who received from him as much . . . as he would earn under co-operation, would see that he had no reason to complain. . . . Not to mention that co-operation in the form of participation of the labourers in the profits would be perfectly compatible with individual ownership. . . ."

Despite these and other variations in opinion, however, Mill's views may be traced to two main sources—his passion for truth and his belief that the things which were of supreme importance in life are those which are spiritual, not those which are material.

It is unnecessary to insist on the first point. The declaration in these letters, "If there is one thing to which we all ought to give our allegiance, irrespective of consequences, it is truth," is of the very essence of Mill's teaching.

The second article of his faith appears no less constantly. In 1868 he wrote that "what we now want is a union among all those men and women who are deeply impressed with the essence of religion, so far as religion affects this world." That human beings should grow better he considers to be a necessary condition of all reforms. "If the experience of co-operation," he wrote, "teaches the working-classes the value of honesty and intelligence to themselves, it will work as great a moral revolution in society as it will in that case a physical; but it will never do the last without the first."

"What the poor, as well as the rich, require," he once wrote, "is not to be indoctrinated, is not to be taught other people's opinions, but to be induced and enabled to think for themselves." No one ever believed more fervently than this agnostic utilitarian economist that

"It takes a soul  
To move a body."

Hence, of course, sprang his zeal for education. He advocated a national system of education in the thirties, and lived to see it established. At the same time he was conscious of the difficulty of making such a system satisfactory. "It is much easier to improve education in quantity than in quality," he wrote in 1869; a dictum confirmed by forty years' experience.

But though love of truth and belief in the "things of the spirit" account for most of Mill's opinions, yet they leave unexplained his attitude towards women. Other men have shared these attributes and yet boggled at women's claims. Gladstone is a notable instance. But Mill had, as regards women, a special power of insight. He realised—what no power on earth can drive home to many men—that women are fundamentally human. As early as 1833 he wrote to Carlyle: "Is there really any distinction between the highest masculine and the highest feminine character? . . . The women of all I have known, who possessed the highest measure of what are considered feminine qualities, have combined with them more of the highest masculine qualities than I

have ever seen in any but one or two men, and those one or two men were also in many respects almost women. I suspect it is the second-rate people of the two sexes who are unlike."

Such an assertion in 1831 required a greater degree of insight and freedom from prejudice than can easily be realised now. At that date the "double standard" was applied not merely to legal enactments and to sexual morality, but to every department of life. "Delicacy" was peculiarly feminine, but sincerity was a virtue hardly to be expected in a woman. "Severe studies," classics or mathematics, were essentially "manly." In brief, it was considered that women were not exactly human, but constituted what Charles Reade was pleased to call "the sex." The habit lasted long. In 1869 Mill notes that woman suffrage was opposed on the ground that "women are not fit for this, that, or the other mental achievement." This habit of generalising about women as a class apart is still the chief obstacle to their progress, as the debates on Woman Suffrage prove.

This perception, then, of the common humanity of the sexes is the key to Mill's attitude towards women. His wife's influence no doubt deepened his enthusiasm for their cause, and decidedly his greatest activity on this point occurs during the last thirty years of his life.

One of the earliest allusions to Woman Suffrage in these two volumes occurs in 1853, when he declares for granting the franchise to women who fulfil the same conditions as men. "They have as much interest in good laws as men have, and would vote at least as well." When the Reform Bill for 1867 was in agitation he thus expresses his ideal of Parliamentary Reform: "When any portion . . . of the working classes chooses a reading and writing (or rather, writing and ciphering) qualification, *adult*, instead of manhood, suffrage and Hare's system—*i.e.*, proportional representation, I will gladly give to such a noble scheme all the help I possibly can. On *adult* suffrage I can make no compromise." *Adult* suffrage alone, however, he did not support. "Women's Suffrage," he wrote to Sir Charles Dilke in 1870, "has enemies enough without adding to their number all the enemies of universal suffrage."

During his brief sojourn in Parliament he did his best for the cause. In 1868, after his defeat at Westminster, he wrote to the Edinburgh Woman Suffrage Society: "Of all my recollections connected with the House of Commons, that of my having had the honour of being the first to make the claim of women to the Parliamentary Franchise is the most gratifying, as I am inclined to believe it . . . the most important public service which circumstances have put it in my power to render."

The following year Mill published "The Subjection of Women," which was for long the text-book of the women's movement. His letters show the interest it created, and show, too, how he connected the subject with every matter of public interest. The conditions of divorce, for instance, could not be properly decided "till women have an equal voice in determining them, nor until there has been an experience of the marriage relation as it would exist among equals." To this equality of marriage Mill looked for the suppression of vice. "It has yet to be seen what marriage will do with equality of rights on both sides."

Scattered through the book are many sayings of value to women and to reformers generally. "We owe it to our fellow-creatures and to posterity to struggle for every opinion of which we are fully persuaded," is one of his exhortations to Suffragists. He utters a sound warning against the dangers attending a new movement in the statement that "the desire to produce *éclat* . . . and effects that should tell at once rather than to prepare silently for the future is what we have to fear from inexperienced politicians." On compromise he is emphatic, though without special reference to women. "Compromise, though inevitable in practice, should be left to the enemy to propose. Reformers should assert principles and only accept compromises."

As for his hopes for the results of women's enfranchisement, they were tinged with all his usual idealism—a greater care for peace, a greater regard for beauty, the elevation of the character of women themselves, the crea-

tion in them of a concern for an interest common to all. Such were the results he looked for; and if his hopes were high, that should surely encourage women to fulfil them.

But it is noteworthy that what he hoped for was increased development—not particular reforms, spiritual rather than material gain; and this is true of all his aims. True, he did sometimes desire material good, such as "the greater diffusion of property"; but neither special reforms nor industrial advantage were his main objects. No laws, he believed, could ensure justice. "If men were to abolish every unjust law to-day," he wrote, "there is nothing to prevent their making new ones to-morrow." Therefore, he measured all things by their effect on the growth of human beings; and it was this principle, coupled with his recognition of the humanity of women, which made him the apostle of their freedom.

A. B. WALLIS-CHAPMAN.

### Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell.

The death took place at Hastings on Wednesday, June 1st, of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, the pioneer of the medical movement among women and the first woman to have her name placed on the medical register. Elizabeth Blackwell was born at Bristol in 1821. When she was eleven her parents emigrated to the United States. The father died when Elizabeth (the third child) was seventeen, leaving a widow and a large family of children quite unprovided for. Elizabeth and her two elder sisters opened a school as a means of supporting their mother and ensuring an education for the younger children. When some of the brothers were old enough for business the sisters gave up the school. Elizabeth wanted to find an occupation which should be an absorbing interest in life to her, and one in which she felt she could do valuable work. She was deeply interested in moral and social questions, but such subjects as medicine and physiology, at first, rather repelled than attracted her. It was almost by accident that she followed a medical career. A friend who was suffering from a very painful illness said to her: "You have health and leisure; why not study medicine? If I could have been treated by a lady my worst sufferings would have been spared me." She could not forget the words, and soon began to regard it as a duty to take up the study of medicine. All the doctors she consulted tried to dissuade her, telling her what immense difficulties she would have to overcome. But, once having made up her mind that it was the right course, Miss Blackwell determined that no difficulty should prove too great for her to overcome, and she never once wavered in her purpose.

After being refused entrance to numerous medical schools, in 1847 she was admitted to the medical school of the Geneva University, New York. Even then the professors refused to take the responsibility until the students had been consulted. The students passed a resolution which did them great credit, and one which might be a lesson to many even at this day. The resolution was as follows: "That one of the radical principles of a Republican Government is the universal education of both sexes; that to every branch of scientific education the door should be open equally to all; that the application of Elizabeth Blackwell to become a member of our class meets our entire approbation; and in extending our unanimous invitation we pledge ourselves that no conduct of ours shall cause her to regret her attendance at this institution." The students never had cause to regret their decision, and Elizabeth Blackwell soon gained the respect of students and professors alike. After two years she gained her diploma and received her degree before a large crowd. "Punch" honoured her by some congratulatory verses.

She found it very difficult to obtain hospital practice. After overcoming more difficulties she entered the College of Midwives in Paris. While in Paris she, unfortunately, lost the sight of one eye, and so was obliged to give up surgery as her special study. From Paris she went to London and, by the help of Mr. (afterwards Sir James) Paget, she gained some experience at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. In London Miss Blackwell met Barbara Leigh













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