

SPEECH
OF
JACOB BRIGHT, ESQ., M.P.
ON THE
ELECTORAL DISABILITIES OF
WOMEN

DELIVERED IN EDINBURGH

JANUARY 17, 1870

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SPEECH

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ELECTORAL DISABILITIES OF

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DELIVERED IN PARLIAMENT

ON THE 11th OF MARCH 1854

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SPEECH.

MR. JACOB BRIGHT, M.P. (who was received with loud cheers), moved the following resolution:—‘That the ownership or occupation of lands or houses, being the basis of representation in this country, it is unjust in principle to make sex a ground of disqualification, therefore excluding a large number of intelligent persons, well qualified to exercise the electoral franchise.’ After a few introductory remarks, he said—We are met to-night to discuss the subject of the electoral disabilities of women. Now, I am met with one difficulty which, so far as I know, does not present itself to us in regard to any other great political question. Coming upon this platform, we who advocate this cause find ourselves with nothing to answer. Our opponents do not present us with argumentative opposition. We have opponents, no doubt, but they are either unable or unwilling to reason. It is said, you are aware, that it is characteristic of women to act upon feeling and not upon reason. It seems to me that the opponents of women’s franchise find themselves generally in this peculiar intellectual attitude. Now, why should women be subject to electoral disabilities? Nobody in England has been able to answer that question. Can anybody in Scotland answer it? Scotland continues to furnish great reasoners upon almost every conceivable question. Is there anybody, I say, in this meeting or out of it who can tell me why women should be deprived of all Parliamentary representation—why, for example, the women of Edinburgh should have no direct and constitutional means of influencing the members for Edinburgh when legislation is in progress which may vitally affect their interests?

Nobody will deny that women are injured by bad or benefited by good laws, precisely as men are. They have as deep an interest as men in the wise progress of our legislation—nay, I would undertake to show, if it were necessary, that they have a deeper interest than men, because they are the weaker portion of society, and the weak are more interested than the strong in impartial and just laws. Some three years ago a great Act of Parliament was passed—the last Reform Act. It was called the Household Suffrage Act. I do not know how it got that name, for the name does not characterise the measure. It was not a Household Suffrage Act—it was a Male Household Suffrage Act. A very considerable proportion of the houses of the whole kingdom were passed over by that Act—something like one in six, I suppose, speaking generally. On an election day the doors of these houses are closed—they are passed over because a woman happens to be at the head of the household instead of a man. Nobody comes forth to the polling booth to register a vote in the interest and for the protection of the family. In regard to the inmates of these houses any law may be passed, however injurious, however dangerous to personal security; and it must not be supposed that we are past the time when laws pernicious to certain classes of society may be enacted. We have had recent legislation which, in my opinion, throws down the safeguards of the personal liberty of women in such a manner that if any Government, however powerful, had dared to interfere in the same way with the personal liberty of men, that Government would have been instantaneously destroyed. Now, as has already been shown, women, although denied the privileges, are not shielded from the burdens of citizenship. The whole weight of taxation falls equally upon both sexes. We have a tax called the inhabited house duty. I have no fault to find with the name, for it does actually characterise the tax; it is not an inhabited male house duty. It does not pass over any house; it comes equally on all, and the tax-gatherer directly or indirectly enters the house of every widow and every spinster in Edinburgh, and I think our chairman, with his great political information, would

agree when I say there are hundreds of poor women in Edinburgh paying in proportion to their incomes a greater amount of taxation than is paid by the greatest houses in the land. (Cheers.) I have heard it said that all the burdens of citizenship do not fall upon women. I have heard it asked whether women would like to be compelled, for example, to defend their country. Well, nobody is compelled to defend this country. Both men and women are on an equal footing in that respect. The defence of this country is a voluntary matter; but if women themselves do not go out to battle they give lives dearer than their own to the perils of battle, and I am not sure whether it is not a harder thing to sit at home in the anguish of suspense than to be engaged in the actual strife. But do women take no nearer part than this? When we come to have the horrors of a great war we require with every camp an hospital. You know what took place in the Crimea; you know whom Florence Nightingale led there; you have read what occurred in America, where thousands and tens of thousands of noble-minded women went to attend upon mutilated men; and I am not sure that it does not require greater heroism and more sustained courage to assist the wounded and the dying, without any kind of excitement, than it does to front the perils of the battle-field, where there are so many circumstances to sustain the courage even of those who may have none at all. I know of no reason for the electoral disabilities of women. I know some reasons which, if there are to be electoral disabilities, would lead me to begin elsewhere than with women. Women are less criminal than men; they are more temperate than men—the distinction is not small, it is broad and conspicuous; women are less vicious in their habits than men; they are more thrifty, more provident; they give more to the family and take less to themselves. (Cheers and hisses.) These are not the moral qualities which the statesman can afford to disdain when he is forming constituencies from which shall be created the House of Commons for the government of the British Empire. Up to this time men have had almost the exclusive government of the world. I believe those who know most about the world will least boast of

the results that have been achieved. Our forefathers lived in the midst of gigantic evils—ignorance, intemperance, pauperism, with all their attendant vices and crimes. I am afraid that even in our own times these great evils have not been seriously diminished. There are those who believe—I know they are called enthusiasts, but enthusiasm does more to clear than to obscure the moral and intellectual faculties of men—there are those who believe that women have yet a contribution of some value to bring to the small stock of wisdom that has hitherto governed the world; and until we have tried whether that be true or not there is no man here who will dare to assail such a proposition. Well, then, I ask again why should women be subject to electoral disabilities? Why, there is one very clear reason which makes it a much greater hardship for them to be shut out from representation than for men to be shut out from representation. Look at the character of men; whether from their greater combativeness or from their greater physical strength, or from their habit of being much more out of doors, men are enabled to meet, and do meet, in large masses in the great halls of our towns, or in Hyde Park, or elsewhere when necessary. They meet and show that, even if they have no representation, they are enabled to check legislation which they consider adverse to their interests, and to compel the passing of laws which they consider necessary to them. I say that men without the franchise are not defenceless, but women without the franchise have very little influence indeed to make their thoughts known. We are asked sometimes whether women are not virtually represented. Undoubtedly, women are virtually represented, just as the great mass of our countrymen who lived in houses below £10 rental were virtually represented before the passing of the last Reform Act, just as the poor agricultural labourer of England is virtually represented at this moment by the squire and the parson. I have never gone to the dictionary to inquire the meaning of virtual representation, but when I find everywhere that the class which is only virtually represented is subject to great legal and social disabilities, I take it for granted that virtual representation means gross misrep-

resentation. (Cheers.) Now, women being virtually represented means that they have some inherent incapacity for performing the smallest political duty. A woman is capable of doing many things. She is capable of selecting a husband—(laughter)—who is to be her partner through life, and a very serious business it is to select a partner for life; but when two or more eminent citizens come forward in the city of Edinburgh and state their views upon public questions, she is not capable of judging so much of character as would enable her to vote for one of these men. Even if she should make a mistake it would not be very serious, because she could easily correct it at a time not very far distant. I say, women are allowed and are able to do many things, but they have an inherent incapacity for performing this simple political duty. Now, let the State fix such an incapacity upon them, and it is very easy indeed for the community to come to the conclusion that they are generally incapable with regard to important matters, and I find that they are treated according to that rule. Take the question of education—while Edinburgh has recently done a noble thing with regard to the higher education of women—(cheers and a hiss)—at this hour our Universities generally shut their doors to women. The grammar schools of England are to a large extent monopolised by boys, and instances can be shown where in primary instruction the poor girls of our streets have not the same chance as the poor boys. Again, take the question of property—property is for men in the main, and not for women. Why should a class that is so incapable be put in possession of great amount of property? Accordingly, property is generally left very disproportionately to boys and girls. Then, with regard to the professions and occupations that yield a livelihood, it is a very hard path for any woman who has to earn her livelihood in this country, where trades unions, from the bottom of society to the top—in connection with many trades and in connection with nearly all the professions—shut their doors upon women. It is not remarkable, when the State begins by fixing the stigma of inferiority upon them, that the example of

the State should be followed in every department of life. Now, what has virtual representation done for the married women of the United Kingdom? What is the legal position of married women? The great majority of women who are happily married know nothing of the legal position of married women. A great many women know what it is. I happened to be a member of the Committee of the House of Commons on the Married Women's Property Bill, and I received many letters which gave me an insight into this subject. There is much suffering in this respect. There is no parallel in Christendom, so far as I know, to the legal position of the married women of this country. If I wanted a parallel—the nearest I could find—I would go to the Southern States of America, amongst the negro population before the presidency of Abraham Lincoln. The negro was not his own, but there were some things his master could not do in regard to him. Well, there are some things which cannot be done to the wives of the people of this kingdom, as you will be aware from the interesting trial in which Mr. Kelly, the Liverpool clergyman, was concerned. The negro can own nothing; he has nothing. Whatever he has is his master's. The married women here are in the same position. I do not speak of the few who have property secured by settlement; I speak of the great mass who have no such security. In the Southern States of America the negro has no control over his children. The married women of this country, when their children have attained six or seven years of age—I think it is—have no kind of power to prevent their children being removed if their husbands choose to remove them. And look at the position of married women with respect to property acquired by the family. A young couple marry; the wife performs her duties in the house, and the husband attends to business. The establishment is one of mutual help, and it seems me that whatever success attends a family the wife should have some right to participate in it. But we find that if the husband dies he may 'cut her off with a shilling.' And, farther, he may not only leave her with a small pittance, but if it should

happen that she has made the property instead of his making it—and that does happen sometimes—he may will all that away; and in those pamphlets circulated by the society for carrying that Married Women's Property Bill the case is given of a man whose wife had made a competence for the advantage of herself and husband, and when he died his will left the whole of the property to a mistress he had been secretly keeping. (Shame.) Now, I have spoken of the legal position of married women. I know that in the main their actual position is vastly superior, for we are not a wholly uncivilised people. In that respect we are a great deal better than our laws, but a great many are subject to the harshness of these laws. Well, suppose that we had real instead of virtual representation—suppose that all women householders had a vote. I have not been long a member of Parliament, but I have been long enough to know something of the habits and character of members of Parliament. Members of Parliament, where they can honestly obtain votes at an election, are very glad to obtain them. (Laughter.) When they can honestly and honourably make themselves popular they have no objection to do that. And where they can do a service to those who have helped them in their election they generally have no objection to do that service. And if women had votes, if the sixth part of the whole constituency were women, you may rely on it there would not be a question which affects them that would not be attended to most scrupulously by members of Parliament. (Cheers.) You would have in every town and county a band of women—it may be better informed than the rest of their sex—doing all in their power to guide public opinion on great public questions. (Cheers.) Women would become much better instructed on public questions, and if you raise women you raise the whole of society. (Cheers.) Now, there is one agreeable feature about this question. It seems to me that it can lead to no kind of ill-feeling. The agreeable feature is that this proposal, so far as it has been urged, has been met in a remarkably just spirit by the generality of men in the United Kingdom. Whenever it has been put before constituencies, or submitted to

the House of Commons, it has had a degree of success which nobody a while ago could have believed possible. When that distinguished writer, Mr. Mill—(loud cheers and slight hisses)—when Mr. Mill—(renewed cheers and hisses)—when Mr. Mill introduced this question—and that is the only time up to the present moment that it has been introduced—when he introduced it into the House of Commons he carried with him some seventy or eighty members of Parliament into the lobby—in fact, I think he had one-third of all who were present, voting in favour of his proposition; but if you look at the character of those men who voted with him, at their public position, at the constituencies they represent, you may well be surprised at the amount of feeling exhibited on this subject. Again, in the next session of Parliament—to refer to a matter mentioned in the report—when the proposition was made to admit the women of England and Wales to the municipal franchise, it was unanimously passed by both Houses of Parliament. (Cheers.) Now that was an important step. It admitted women to the municipal vote of over 200 towns in England and Wales—of course including the very largest towns in the country. It admitted women to the polling-booth—it did not wait till they had voting papers or the ballot, but sent them to the polling-booth precisely as you go now; and it did more, it sent them to the polling-booth not once in four or five years, but once every year. In fact, the passing of that Municipal Act has broken down nearly every argument that could be urged on the other side in the House of Commons. (Cheers.) But some men tell us that women should be engaged at home—that it is better for them not to come out too much—(cheers and laughter)—I mean in public affairs. (Cheers and laughter.) I find that a portion of this meeting is of that opinion. (Renewed cheers.) Well, I am not going to quarrel with it. But I shall just remind you of one curious fact—I don't know so well how it stands in Scotland, but I know that south of the Border it is very often the case—that when men have any great political question on hand, any great moral question, or any question of any kind in which they are

much interested, they get every woman to back them whom they can possibly persuade; they bring them out of their houses freely, and ask them to give all the influence and assistance in their power. I remember at the time of the Anti-Corn Law League agitation there were bazaars of prodigious size in Manchester and at Covent Garden, London. They did not say then that women should be confined to their houses. (Cheers.) They got them to work, and then they got them to come and sell, and turn merchants in public places. But I am not going to quarrel with the feeling that women should be very domesticated, and that it is very well to have them very much at home. (Hear, hear.) It is not necessary for my argument that I should ask them much from their houses. (Hear and cheers.) It seems to me that the representative system such as we have, and such as is generally found, is specially made and prepared for people much at home. Why, people at one time of day used to meet at the market places and do their legislation. They are now too busy and there are too many of them to do that. Can you imagine anything better devised for a woman at home than the means we have at present for her exercising political influence once every four or five years? You provide her with the information necessary for her political conduct; you send into her house every morning and every week the silent messenger—the penny newspaper—which gives her all the necessary information. The whole contrivance is admirably adapted for people who stick at home; and we may admit to the very full all that our friends above—who seem not entirely to be in harmony with us—we may admit to the full their desire to exclude women from the public gaze. In conclusion, allow me to say that being a stranger here I certainly, some little time ago, had no expectation of being asked to plead this cause in the City of Edinburgh. But if I were asked to present any great question of justice affecting a large portion of my fellow-subjects in any place whatever, I do not think I could choose a more fitting place than the ancient capital of the Scottish Kingdom. (Cheers.) Speaking as an English politician, I will tell you with all sincerity that we in

England are grateful to Scotland for the powerful aid she always gives in the settlement of great national questions; and looking at this meeting, knowing the influence of this platform, seeing how many of your members of Parliament are present to-night, I may confidently predict that when this question comes up for discussion in the House of Commons Scotland will give no doubtful vote in your favour. (Loud cheers.)

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REPORT

OF A

MEETING OF THE LONDON NATIONAL SOCIETY

FOR

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,

Held at the Hanover Square Rooms, on Saturday, March 26th, 1870.

The chair was taken by Mrs. P. A. TAYLOR at 4 o'clock.

The room was densely crowded, and among those present were Lord Houghton, Lady Amberley, Lady Anstruther, Mrs. Jacob Bright, Mons. Louis Blanc, Sir D. Wedderburn, M.P., Professor Fawcett, M.P., Mr. John Morley, Mr. Eastwick, M.P., Mr. McLaren, M.P., and Mrs. McLaren, Mr. Charley, M.P., Capt. Maxse, Mr. P. A. Taylor, M.P., Miss Cobbe, Lady Eleanor Brodie, Mr. W. H. Ashurst, Mr. Bernard Cracroft, Mrs. Stansfeld, Miss C. A. Biggs, Lady Crompton, Countess Beauchamp, Lady Belper, Major and Mrs. Bell, Mrs. Crawshay, Professor S. Amos, Miss Jewsbury, Herr Karl Blind, Syed Amcer Ali, Mr. Jas. Heywood, Mr. F. T. Palgrave, Miss Motley, Mr. and Mrs. Russell-Martineau, Mrs. Lucas, Mr. M. D. Conway, Miss E. Garrett, Lady Lyell, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, Mrs. Brewer, A. J. E. Russell, Esq., M.P., Miss Betham Edwards, Mr. and Mrs. Pennington, Mr. and Mrs. F. Malleson, Mr. and Mrs. Boyd Kinnear, Mrs. Frank Hill, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Arnold, Mr. A. Arnold, Mr. Macdonnell, Mrs. Donkin, Mr. W. F. Rae, Miss Sturge, Mr. J. B. Elliott, Mr. C. Frewen, Mr. W. J. Thornton, Professor Cassal, Professor H. Morley, Hon. Dudley Campbell, Mr. C. E. Maurice, Miss Durrant, Mr. W. Shaen, Dr. Symes Thompson. + the Speakers.

Mrs. Taylor.—Gentlemen and Ladies, I feel deeply the honour and privilege of presiding over this meeting, but I must say I do not

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feel the right person in the right place. At the meeting we held last July, our audience consisted only of the members and friends of our Society, and my task was comparatively an easy one, as I felt I had the sympathy of all present with me, and that any shortcoming on my part would be kindly excused. Looking at this assembly, I cannot hope that this will be the case now; I cannot flatter myself that all present hold right views upon women's suffrage. It was matter of regret with many that we had not occupied a far larger hall last year, that we might have had numbers of our opponents present to listen to, and probably be converted by, the eloquent speeches then delivered. But we women are, perhaps, over-cautious; we dread failure, and the result of failure, ridicule; and we felt that, had our meeting been a failure, our cause would have been injured. But the success of that meeting, and the progress our cause has made since, emboldened us this time to take a room capable of holding more than thrice the number of the one we occupied last year; and I think, looking at this assembly, our boldness is justified. One evidence of progress is the continual addition of members to our Society; and we may infer that, as our ranks increase, the ranks of our opponents decrease; but as their numbers diminish, their fertility in arguments against women's franchise apparently increases. One of the latest is, the danger of this new excitement of politics to women. Our opponents have suddenly become very much alive to the evils of such excitement to us women, and express great anxiety upon the subject; but it seems rather a one-sided anxiety. In one of the morning journals of about six weeks since was an article discussing this point, in which it was said—

'What are likely to be the physical consequences of opening a new source of excitement to women? It is idle to say that the excitements of politics are more wholesome or healthy than the excitements of social or fashionable life. It is not altogether impossible that Mr. Mill, in aiming at the intellectual elevation of the human race, advocates that which would lead to its steady physical degeneration.'

Now I question the perfect accuracy of this statement in regard to this new source of excitement to women. If women had led such secluded lives as never to have heard the word 'politics,' and would be obliged to have recourse to a dictionary to learn the meaning of an election, our opponents might have, with some apparent justice, brought forward this plea; but it is not true that this is a new excitement to women with respect to political questions. The wives, relatives, friends of the candidates, and many others have often

taken a very great personal interest in elections, and not the less exciting because personal; and I have never heard of any injurious results. Women, when they have votes, will, I trust, feel a deep interest in the election of the candidate in their estimation best fitted to be their representative, and the excitement is not likely to be greater because less personal.

I agree with the words of the writer, that it is idle to *say* that the excitements of politics are more healthy than the excitements of social and fashionable life, because it is idle to compare the wholesome excitement which arises from the study and investigation of social and political questions, which affect women equally with men, with the enervating excitements and dissipations of a fashionable season.

The study of politics—that is, of the history of the present—requires some concentration of thought, and is far more likely to strengthen and elevate the mind and widen the sympathies than reading the sensational novels which are a disgrace to the nineteenth century, serving only to pander to a morbid appetite for excitement, and to fill up the vacant hours of the fashionable world. Some of our enlightened opponents have warmly advocated politics being made a branch of education in girls' schools and colleges, maintaining that it is as essential for women as for men to understand the laws of their country, and as desirable for them to take interest in the social and political questions of the day; but having acquired this knowledge, and in its acquisition learned to appreciate the benefits of just legislation, and the privilege of voting for the best legislation, our opponents, with a refinement of cruelty, say, 'Rest satisfied with the knowledge you have acquired; discuss politics in your own homes, but do not seek for any practical application of them.' I do not say it is a parallel case, but I think artists would feel aggrieved, and perhaps rebel, when, having mastered all the difficulties and technicalities of their art, and acquired great skill as painters, they were told, 'Rest satisfied with the knowledge and skill you have acquired, talk about art in your own homes, but do not seek for any practical application.' Some of our Conservative friends have expressed great apprehension at the late extension of the suffrage, fearing that the working-classes are opposed to us; but I think there is no ground for such alarm. There have already been presented the following petitions from the metropolitan boroughs—viz., Finsbury (2,584), Chelsea (2,832), Marylebone (2,363), Tower Hamlets (1,777), Hackney (4,779), Southwark (4,487), Westminster (2,125), Lambeth (2,428). We have now ready for presentation others from these boroughs signed by upwards of 17,000 persons; and

of all these, more than half are signed by the working-classes. Another of the arguments most frequently urged against us is the unfitness of women for the suffrage. Women are, it seems, fitted to pay taxes, fitted to pay all the penalties of being householders, but not fit for any of its privileges. Our opponents say the franchise would unfit us for our domestic duties. Now, in answer to this argument I will read a few words from a letter written by the Rev. Frederick Maurice to the Editor of the *Spectator*, on March 1st:—'I would contend as earnestly as anyone for the domestic duties of a woman. I question whether you do not cripple her in the performance of these duties, and lower her conception of their grandeur, when you teach her not to regard herself as a citizen. The sanctity of the home is the safeguard of the nation: if you decree a separation between the home and the nation, if you affirm that one-half of the nation is to be shut up in the home and excluded from any participation in large interests, take care that the ornaments of the home do not become mere ornaments, pictures to be gazed at and worshipped, not living powers to purify and hallow. I should like to see our legislature proving by their acts that this is not their conception of a woman's function in the world; all the compliments which they pay her are very hollow and contemptible if it is.'

A few years ago, before the abolition of slavery in America, the upholders of negro slavery were loud in their vociferations that the negro was unfit for freedom. Slavery was abolished, and the negro proved himself fit for freedom. Let the electoral disabilities of women be removed, and women will at once prove themselves fit for the franchise.

Mr. John Stuart Mill.—Since the first General Meeting of this Society in July of last year, we have had ample reason to be satisfied with the progress that has been made by our cause. That progress has manifested itself not only by the increased number of our friends, but, still more, by the altered tone of our opponents. During the year which has just elapsed, much has been written in various publications against the equality of the sexes, but it is remarkable how few of the writers have expressed any great disapprobation of that which is the direct object of this Society, the admission of women to the suffrage. Many of them have even said in express terms that to thus much of concession they, perhaps, might not object. A vote at elections is now, with many of them, a small thing, which they can afford to concede; if women wish for it, they may as well have it as not; but what shocks and scandalises them is, that a claim should be made for women to equality of rights in civil life, and

especially in marriage. This is of good augury, and I begin to hope that I may live to see the whole discussion transferred to this point. Those of us who claim for women complete equality of rights have always said that this is a totally different question from the suffrage. The suffrage is a thing apart; no woman, by claiming it, is in the smallest degree committed to the larger demand; if women were, by an inherent and inevitable necessity, subject to the authority of men, they would need the protection of the suffrage all the more. Every plea, either of justice or policy, which speaks for granting the suffrage to any man, applies equally to women.

But there is a side of the question on which I should like to say something: the particular manner in which the addition of women to the electoral body is likely to affect the character of Parliament, and to modify the mode in which public affairs are carried on. I think that the most marked effect, in the immediate future, would be to infuse into the legislature a stronger determination to grapple with the great practical evils of society. Women electors, I think, will be more difficult to persuade than men that those evils must be accepted—cannot be cured, cannot even be much mitigated—and that we may, with an untroubled conscience, avert our eyes from them, with an occasional grumble at what they cost us in rates, taxes, and charities. Women, I think, will find it hard to believe that legislation and administration are powerless to make any impression on these frightful evils, and that the acme of statesmanlike wisdom is to let them alone. I should consequently expect, from the political influence of women, a considerable increase of activity in dealing with the causes of these evils. I know there are many men who regard any increased activity in that direction with alarm, thinking that it means inconsiderate benevolence, injudicious legal regulation, and general increase of meddling. But there is wise as well as unwise meddling; well-directed as well as ill-directed benevolence; and there is a tendency in the present day to confound the two. It is my conviction that, if the State employed all the means it possesses of raising the standard of morality, and even, in some respects, of physical well-being, in the community, it would find that it has much more in its power than it is now the fashion to believe; and that Governments in these days are quite as blameable in neglecting the right means of promoting those objects, as in days yet recent they were in pursuing the wrong. The time has passed away when Governments, speaking generally, were actively tyrannical; their favourite sins in the present time are indolence and indifference. Whatever scruples they have about doing ill, they have, in general, none at all about leaving ill alone, but allow mountains of mischief

to be piled up from age to age, without any serious attempt to check the accumulation. There is something in the nature of government by men alone, which encourages this easy self-satisfaction. Men are more mentally indolent than women, and are far too ready to believe that they have done everything, or that there is nothing to be done. Their consciences and feelings need rousing, and the stronger active impulses of women are wanted to do it. If I am now asked whether, in my opinion, those active impulses can be depended on for prompting the most judicious line of conduct—whether women will discriminate well between good and bad modes of combating evils, and will not be apt to mistake the most direct mode for the most efficacious; I freely confess that the political education of women must be greatly improved, before as much as this can be affirmed with any confidence. But this would only be a real objection, if we were going to disfranchise the men, and turn over the whole power to women. All we want is, that the two should be obliged to take counsel together. We want the ship of the State to have both sail and ballast, and not, as is too often the case now when the navigation is troublesome, all ballast and no sail. There is little danger that the over-zeal of women will not be quite sufficiently tempered by the over-caution of men. In these days we do not fail, in matters of government, for want of a curb, but of a spur; and women, even with the present defects of their education, are well qualified for that office. As their education improves, they will do more; they will not only be a stimulus to others, but will themselves be capable of doing their full share of the work. Women, on the average, have more contriving minds than men; in things they are really interested in, they are readier in finding means for the attainment of an end; especially in undertakings the success of which greatly depends on the details of the execution. Now this is emphatically the case with attempts to correct the great physical and moral evils of society. These are works of detail. Men form great projects, sound in principle perhaps, and rational in their general conception, but which, when applied to practice, break down, from unforeseen failure of efficiency in the execution. Many more of these projects would succeed if women had a share in planning them.

These, I think, are the most marked effects on the general course of government and legislation, which would flow from the admission of women to a share in the functions of citizenship. To this we must add, that the wrongs and grievances which specially affect women would no longer be considered too unimportant to be worth any serious attempt to put an end to them. To take one example among many: if women had votes, there would be a much sterner

repression of those outrages on women, which make the necessity working women are under of going out alone a serious danger to them; outrages which have only reached their present height through the inexcusable leniency with which they are treated by the courts of justice. If women had had votes, we should not have had the 'Contagious Diseases Acts;' under which the wives and daughters of the poor are exposed to insufferable indignities on the suspicion of a police-officer; and must be so, if the Acts are to be so enforced as to have any chance of being effectual for their object. If those Acts are repealed—if they are not extended to the whole country—it will be owing to the public spirit and courage of those ladies, some of them of distinguished eminence, who have associated themselves to obtain the repeal of the Acts; a courage and public spirit which can only be duly appreciated by those who have noticed the impudent and shameless character of some of the attacks which have been made on them in print by anonymous writers. To those worthier and more honourable opponents, who think these ladies mistaken, and the course they have adopted an unfavourable indication of the use they are likely to make of increased political influence, I would say—Suppose the Acts to be as beneficent as I hold them to be pernicious; suppose that the ladies who disapprove of them are not actuated by any reasonable view of their nature and consequences, but by an excess or a misapplication of the particular moral sentiment which men have inculcated on them as their especial and principal virtue. What then? Is it no evil that the laws of a country should be repugnant to the moral feelings of confessedly the most moral half of the population? If the repugnance is grounded on mistake, ought not time to have been given, and explanation and discussion used, to rectify the mistake; instead of leaving them to find out, years afterwards, that laws had been passed, almost in secret, revolting to their strongest feelings? That women's suffrage would put a check upon such proceedings as this; that it would compel legislators to take into account the moral feelings of those in whom such feelings are the strongest, and to carry those moral feelings with them, instead of contemptuously setting them aside—must be counted among the benefits that would result from the grant of the suffrage.

There are men—not a few—liberal and enlightened on general topics, whose own feelings would incline them to be just to women, but who dread the immediate effect of admitting them to the suffrage, because they think it would greatly increase the power of the clergy. I have never denied that if the suffrage were given them to-day or to-morrow, something like this might possibly, for a time, be the

result. And, differing as I do in opinion and feeling on many important topics from the great majority of the clergy, I am not a likely person to undervalue this objection. But it is to me obvious that if the clergy have now too great an ascendancy over the minds of many women, especially in the middle class, it is because the other influences by which the human intelligence is acted on, and opinions formed, have not been allowed to reach them. They have had no encouragement to read the books, or take part in the conversations, which would have shown them that any of the opinions they hear from the clergy are disputed, and disputable. Even if there were no direct discouragement, they have not been so brought up as to take interest in such readings or conversations: while they have been trained in the belief that it is women's part to accept the opinions they find prevalent, and that the thoughtful consideration of great subjects, and the formation of well-considered opinions by hearing both sides, is none of their business. How then is it possible that they should not fall under the influence of those who address them through the only feelings and principles they have been taught to cultivate? And consider another thing. What is it that makes clergymen in general, even where professional prejudices do not directly interfere, such unsafe advisers in politics and the affairs of life? It is because they are too much in the position of women; they are treated too much as women are: under a show of deference, they are shut out from the free and equal discussion of great practical questions, and are taught to think themselves concerned with only one aspect of any subject—the moral and religious aspect, in the narrow sense in which they use those terms; for, in a larger sense, all questions in which there is a right and a wrong are moral and religious. Is not this very like the condition of women? To those who dread the influence of the clergy on women's minds, I would say this: If the clergy have more of such influence than belongs to their character and to the degree of their cultivation, let us be just, and admit that they have fairly earned it. The clergy are the only persons who, as a class, have taken any pains with women's minds; the only persons who have appealed directly to their own principles and convictions; who have addressed them as if they had themselves a moral responsibility—as if their souls and consciences were their own. The clergy are the only men who have seemed to think it of any consequence what women think or feel, on any subject outside the domestic sphere. Those who show this respect to women, deserve to have influence with them: and will continue to have more than enough, until other men employ the same means of acquiring such influence which they have done. If the fathers,

brothers, and husbands of these women took equal pains with their minds—if they invited them to interest themselves in the subjects in which the fathers, brothers, and husbands are interested, as the clergy do in those which interest *them*; and if they were taught, by the responsibility of a vote, that the formation of an intelligent opinion on public questions is as much their right and duty as it is the right and duty of men—they would soon find themselves more competent and better judges of those subjects than the clergy are; and there would be no danger whatever of their surrendering their own judgment into the hands of their clerical instructors. Whatever is excessive or hurtful in the clerical influence over them would be weakened, exactly in proportion as they took part in the affairs of life; and only that which is salutary would remain. Instead, then, of regarding the clerical influence as a hindrance to giving women votes, I look upon the vote as the most effectual means of emancipating them from the too exclusive influence of the clergy. But if this danger were far greater than it is, it would be an unworthy thing, on account of such an apprehension, to refuse to one half of the species that necessary means of self-protection, so highly prized by the other half. Every portion of mankind has its own special liabilities to error; and he who would refuse the suffrage to others because he is afraid of their making mistakes, would find good reasons for disfranchising everybody but himself. Safety does not lie in excluding some, but in admitting all, that contrary errors and excesses may neutralise one another. And of all who ever claimed the suffrage, or for whom it was ever claimed, there are none in whose case there is so little reason for apprehending any evil consequences whatever from their obtaining it—none for whose continued exclusion the excuses are so insignificant, so fanciful, as in the case of women.

Professor Cairnes.—Mrs. Taylor, Ladies and Gentlemen, after the speech we have just heard, the task of seconding this resolution becomes, fortunately for me, a light one. It is the peculiarity of the agitation in which we are engaged, that although formally a political agitation, yet its principal aims, at least as I apprehend them, or at all events the most important objects to be expected from it, are not political, but rather moral and social. I do not at all mean to deny that important legislative results may follow from the extension of the franchise to women—very far from it; but I think that we should not be doing justice to our cause if we allowed the arguments upon this question in any large degree to turn upon that class of considerations, because I believe that the really weighty considerations in this matter—what really determines thoughtful

people whether they will support this movement or oppose it—is not the expectation of political results, whether beneficial or the reverse, but such anticipations as they form of the probable effect of extending the suffrage to women upon the character of woman herself, and through that character upon the various departments of life which she so largely influences. The resolution that has just been read to you declares that it is the tendency of this policy to promote among women a more cogent sense of public duty, and of their responsibilities in reference to the higher moral interests of the community. And this, it seems to me, is just one of those truths which may be said to shine by its own light, for I take it there is no ethical principle clearer than this, that power and responsibility go together, and that it is quite impossible to awaken the sense of responsibility unless in so far as you produce the consciousness of power. In short, the field of morality is necessarily limited by the field of liberty, and the sense of the moral obligation consequently does not arise except where there is the consciousness of freedom. I am quite aware that these sentences which I have been uttering will be regarded by many as the expression of the veriest moral platitudes; and I admit that they are moral platitudes; but, if I may be allowed to say so, I am scarcely responsible for this, because it is of the very nature of this discussion. The rights we claim for women are rights which are directly connected with the most fundamental principles of morals; they spring immediately from the primary axioms of morality; and consequently it is impossible to defend those rights, or to advocate them in argument, without a constant appeal to the simplest and most elementary moral notions. I shall perhaps be told that these plausible generalities are nevertheless not borne out by facts; and I shall be reminded perhaps of the number of women who, although excluded from the franchise, have given the most unequivocal evidence that their interest in political affairs is wide and deep—who have shown that they are competent to enter into the discussion of the most important and difficult political and moral problems. Certainly, standing upon this platform, and in presence of the ladies I see around me, it is not open to me to dispute that statement, and I certainly do not wish to dispute it. But I contend that the fact, as fact it is, so far from militating against the principle I am maintaining, on the contrary affords the most decisive evidence in its favour, for when we come to consider who the women are who have shown this lively interest in political affairs, we find that they are precisely the same women who have found out for themselves the means of exerting influence in political affairs—women who to a very large

extent are independent of the suffrage owing to exceptional talents and qualifications, which enable them to make their opinions felt independently of the power of voting; and I say that this fact, far from militating against the cause I am supporting, on the contrary affords a weighty argument in favour of extending the suffrage to women, in order to awaken in the many, by analogous means, the same strong sense of public duty, and the same honourable desire to promote the well-being of the community, which has already been manifested to such good purpose by the gifted few.

I am not going to be guilty of the presumption of pursuing this theme at any length—I only wonder at my own audacity in venturing upon it thus far after the discourse we have just listened to. But before sitting down, there is another aspect of the truth contained in the resolution to which I will, with your permission, advert for a few moments. I remarked just now, as characteristic of this movement, that its most important objects were rather of an indirect than of a direct character—that is to say, they were connected with its reflex action upon the character of women, and through women upon society in general. Now I am the more anxious to insist upon this point, because it appears to me that some of the most plausible arguments that are advanced against us owe their plausibility entirely to overlooking this circumstance. I lately saw in the public papers a criticism of this movement which took the following form. It was stated, and correctly stated, that already a very large field of activity was open to women, which, nevertheless, they did not occupy; for example, there was nothing to prevent them from entering into commercial or industrial life to any extent they pleased; literature was open to them, and it was admitted that in literature at least they had done something; journalism was open to them, and now medicine was open to them; but it was said, with few and rare exceptions, no advantage was taken of these opportunities; why, it was asked, instead of talking, do not they descend into the arena and act? Their not doing so is a conclusive proof, so these reasoners urge, that they feel they are not suited for these occupations. And then we were reminded of all that might be done by even one woman who, 'taking her life in her hand'—that was the expression used—should proceed to work out for herself the problem of self-help by the means that are open to her. Now, in reply to this argument, I think I may say in the first place, that if this cause has not already triumphed, it has not been for want of women who have been ready 'to take their lives in their hands,' and not merely to descend into arenas that were open to receive them, but to force their way into arenas that were closed

against them—women who were ready to lead, and are now leading, what, however, I must not call the 'forlorn hope' of this cause. I say that if this cause has not triumphed, it has not been for want of women of that stamp. But then, it is said, they are so few in number. Well, certainly they are not very numerous; it must be admitted that the whole female sex is not composed of heroines; if they were, there would probably be little need for this agitation; but they are not, and we are quite aware there is much that women might do if they had only the pluck to do it, which they do not do. But we ask, what is it that holds them back? In the expression that I quoted just now, I think we may find the answer to that question. The criticism spoke of women 'taking their lives in their hands.' Now, for what purpose are they obliged to take their lives in their hands? Why, to earn an honest livelihood. Why? We do not regard it as a great act of heroism if a man starts as a merchant or a doctor; why is it that in the case of women we form a different judgment? Of course the answer is very obvious; it is not law, at least in the cases to which I have referred, but public opinion that holds them back, that public opinion which pronounces it to be unwomanly to engage in any occupation outside a certain narrow conventional range. Now we desire to remove this obstacle from woman's path—we wish to break down this public opinion, and to erect another and a better public opinion, under which not merely a few heroines here and there, but women of ordinary abilities and average character, may not be deterred, through fear of 'Mrs. Grundy' or anybody else, from employing their faculties in whatever way, on whatever field, she finds most useful to the public, and most profitable and satisfactory to herself. That, it seems to me, is a sufficient justification for our being here to-day; for we believe that the most effectual means of accomplishing this end is to extend political rights to women; for once let it be generally recognised that women have public as well as private duties, that they owe something to the commonwealth as well as to themselves and their families, that life is open to them, to make the best of it, as it is to men—let this once be fully recognised, and it becomes quite inevitable that a complete and fundamental change will take place in their whole education and training. We shall thus produce the conditions under which alone it is possible that the experiment of women's capacity for commercial and professional life can be fairly tried. What the result of that experiment will be, I do not see that it is very necessary for us now to enquire. It is sufficient that the experiment should be made. We desire that it may be made; and we think that it cannot be fairly and

effectively made until the movement which this meeting has met to promote shall have issued in triumph.

Mrs. Grote.—Mrs. Taylor, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an act that savours more of temerity than of courage when a person of advanced age and infirm health appears to offer a few observations; but the cause is worthy of an effort. I have always supported the movement to advance which we are now assembled here, but even to support the movement I don't know that I should have found it in myself to have made this struggle but that I have come here in discharge of a duty, a duty imposed upon me by an obligation conferred on us, one and all, by the untiring, zealous, and effective management of this movement on the part of our respected committee. It is to express that sentiment, and the feeling of respect and gratitude towards those ladies, that I have ventured to present myself to you to-day; at the same time, that I may congratulate you on the progress which we have made towards the object we have in view. I may call it a hopeful position that we occupy on the present occasion; but we should never, I am obliged to confess, have arrived at the stage we have now reached had it not been for the gallant assistance of members of the other sex. The stronger sex have come to our help, and they have given us such support that really I begin to think we see daylight. We have navigated—our committee, I ought to say, rather, and our general managers, have navigated, and by their untiring zeal and excellent and well-directed efforts have conducted the ship into the channel; and now the pilots must take her in charge, the parliamentary pilots who must conduct us into port.

I never was engaged in any cause in which my feelings were more completely seconded by my reason than in this. I have always felt that the arguments against women's franchise have been so feeble and limited, and so ineffective, that the wonder is that they were ever put forth; but we have had a counsel, I must observe—an advocate, not a Q.C., although our advocate wears a silk gown—who has pleaded our cause, not before the Court of Nisi Prius or the Common Pleas, but before the court of common sense, in the pages of the *Westminster Review*; and in that pleading the arguments derived from the constitutional theory have been developed with a clearness, a force, and a completeness which appears to me to leave nothing unsaid. As far as that argument goes—and I confess it is an immensely powerful one with me—the constitutional argument, it is sufficient for our purpose, since it has never been overthrown: the onus lies on those who would gainsay it, and who pretend it is not applicable. I say our thanks are due to our excellent advocate in

the silk gown, and although I do not dare to allude more particularly to her, I am sure what I say meets with a response from you all.

There is a branch of the argument, nevertheless, which I think has not been touched upon even in those excellent pleadings to which I allude; but that is no wonder, because the occasion has arisen since. It has arisen in consequence of the late Reform Bill. By that Reform Bill you have invested with a large measure of representative power the classes who do not possess property, or at least in very small proportions, but who live by their labour; that is to say, you have augmented the weight of the representation of numbers: then is it not fair that at least the property side should be in possession of all its legitimate power? Why, when you have augmented one side of the representation, are you not to give the full measure of its power to the other? I think that is an additional reason for giving the franchise to women; that is, to women who occupy the position of citizens, bearing the burdens to which their position is subject, contributing to the support of the State, and having the liabilities which attach to property.

It has been thought that this point of view may savour of a Conservative tendency; that is to say, a partiality towards throwing greater importance into the balance of the Constitution depending upon property; but I should say that if that is so, it might possibly attract to our side persons who differ from us in politics, and if it does, I am sure we shall welcome them as auxiliaries, for, after all, equity and common sense belong to no party. The possession of the municipal franchise I consider to have been a very great help to the acquisition of the larger privilege. I may mention, in reference to that, an incident that came within my own knowledge. In a borough town in one of the southern counties, the election for the municipal officers lately took place. Meeting a friend on the road, a staunch Liberal who always voted steadily on that side, he said to me, 'The elections for our borough are all gone on the Conservative side.' 'Indeed!' I said. 'Yes, and carried through the votes of the women.' I replied, 'Indeed I am surprised,' and he said, 'I am afraid I must add the women voted right—they voted for the fittest candidates'; and so I say with regard to the franchise—if our fellow-countrywomen are invested with it, I entertain no doubt they will use it uprightly, whichever way they vote: that is not our concern; what we want is a free vote, and a free conscience before all. Having with that little anecdote managed to point my moral, I will now close my tale.

Sir Robert Anstruther, Bart., M.P.—Madam, in rising to support

the resolution, I am sure I shall best consult the feelings of this meeting by first taking the opportunity of expressing our thanks to the distinguished lady who has preceded me for the able and eloquent address to which we have all listened with so much interest, and our earnest hope that she may not in the slightest degree suffer from the great effort she has made to-day. In turning to the subject of my resolution, which I may be allowed to read again—'That this meeting is of opinion that the extension of the franchise to women will tend to promote among them a more cogent sense of their special duties as citizens, and of their general responsibilities as concerned with the advancement of the highest moral interests of the whole community'—I am like a gleaner in a field reaped with all the improvements of modern machinery, and there are but few ears left for me to gather; but I may be, perhaps, permitted to say a few words on the gain to be looked for from this movement—first, to women themselves, and secondly, to the whole community. First, to a woman herself, in developing her sense of responsibility, enlarging the scope of her interests, giving increased stimulus for the improvement of her powers. It is true that of late years there have been more openings for the energies of women, and they have been allowed to take more share in social questions; but still, how many women are there with kind hearts, good natural abilities, leisure, and often money and influence, whose lives are occupied with a small round of so-called social duties and trivial interests! What a gain to such a one to be brought into contact with the real pressing needs around her—to be made to feel that she must accept her share of the responsibility for the crying evils that are rife in this Christian England. I admit that it is a fair subject for argument whether the conferring of the franchise is the best method of giving to women an increased interest in social improvement, but I think all will acknowledge that if it be so, the gain would be great, and we who approve this resolution feel that the franchise would be at least an important step in the right direction. Some may assert that in charitable work amongst the poor there is a sufficient opening for the employment of a woman's leisure; but it is those engaged in real charitable work—not merely money-giving, which only perpetuates the evil it strives to relieve—but in real well-considered schemes for helping the poor to help themselves, who would feel the benefit of being able to bring influence to bear upon those who have the power of remedying so much that stands in need of reform. This leads me naturally to consider the gain to the community from bringing women into the electoral roll. May we not reasonably suppose that the evils connected with the admin-

istration of the Poor-Law system, the crime, the ignorance, the immorality which prevail may be mitigated when the thousands of good women in England feel that they have a direct share in the responsibility of allowing them to continue without any attempt at legislative interference? Now, what I for one hope for from the present movement is, to see women's influence brought to bear upon the administration of the Poor Law, to see them superintend the sanitary condition of the dwellings of the poor, and occupied in the authorised visitation of prisons and reformatories, and in works of a kindred nature, for the performance of which I believe they are pre-eminently qualified; and more especially I look for a good influence in the cause of education. Time will not permit, Madam, that I should enter at any length into the many ways in which this might be exerted, whether by a seat on the School Board, by taking part in the official inspection of schools, or by other means; but above all, I humbly venture to think it might do good service to the country in softening those sectarian animosities and jealousies which at the present moment, fanned alike from all sides by Churchmen, Dissenters, and Secularists, bid fair to bring about the lamentable result of the exclusion from our primary schools of that Book from which have sprung the true liberty and greatness of our country, and the place of which, even as a refining and elevating influence, apart from higher considerations, cannot be supplied. Madam, upon such a subject as this the voice of the women of England is fairly entitled to be heard. And when that voice shall be heard, as it will be ere long, I venture to express my confident opinion that it will pronounce in favour of educating our children in those broad principles of Christian teaching and morals upon which all Christian denominations are founded, and which form the common ground upon which all Christians may meet and work together without the sacrifice of a single principle. These, Madam, are a few of the reasons which induce me to support this resolution, and why I hope before long to give the more substantial support of a vote in Parliament in favour of the Bill about to be brought in this session.

The resolution was then put to the meeting by Mrs. Taylor, and carried unanimously.

Mrs. Fawcett.—The resolution which I have been asked to move is, 'That this meeting regards with much satisfaction the introduction into the House of Commons of a Bill for removing the electoral disabilities of women.' I think that nearly every one interested in the extension of the suffrage to women feels that it is time that the question should again be brought before Parliament and the

country in a practical form. The objection we constantly meet with is, that women's suffrage is repugnant to the feelings—people do not seem to think it necessary to state what feelings, and whether these feelings are based upon reason and justice, or the reverse; all they say is, it is repugnant to their feelings. Now, I think the best way to meet such opposition as this is, by a full and frequent discussion of the claims of women to the suffrage, and the constant reiteration of the bases of reason and equity upon which that claim rests. And there is nothing so likely to awaken discussion and to provoke conversation on the subject, both public and private, as the introduction of a Bill into the House of Commons. There are some sanguine persons who tell us that this Bill is to be carried this year, and that soon the subject will be settled once for all. Whether this happy prediction is to be fulfilled or not, I think nothing but good can come from the introduction of the Bill into the House of Commons. There are some who look upon women's suffrage as merely a whim, and believe that it has no practical bearing upon politics. Such persons will be more respectful to it when they see it embodied in a Bill actually brought to the vote in the House. Then, again, there have been discussions and meetings in different parts of the country, in which women have taken part, thus showing their interest in their own political enfranchisement, and tending to dissipate the prejudice which is still so strong against women taking any part in public affairs. During the discussion upon the Bill, it will be perhaps brought out that the rights of men and the rights of women rest upon exactly the same basis; and if this is the case, we can scarcely fail to obtain the adhesion to our cause of all working-men and those who took their part during the agitation which preceded the Reform Bill of 1867. We can scarcely hope to overcome the great mountain of prejudice against women's suffrage at once; so, if this Bill is lost, we shall be nothing discouraged by it. I hope the first practical effect of its being lost will be a notice that it will be re-introduced on the first day of the next session. Some persons say that women ought not to be enfranchised, because most of them are Conservatives. I daresay the very same persons who use this argument are ardent admirers of the representative character of the Government of this country. But do not representative institutions require that all differences of opinion should have their due and proportionate weight in the Legislature? If most women are Conservatives, then the Conservative party in the House of Commons is disproportionately weak to its strength in the country; and in this case the representative character of our institutions is violated. But then, it is said, what a misfortune it will be—it will

be a public calamity—if the party of reaction is strengthened! To which it may be replied, I think, that nothing is so likely to strengthen the party of reaction as a non-adaptation between the character of a people and the rule under which they live. Therefore, I think, on all hands this argument ought to be repudiated. Conservatives, of course, cannot accept it; and Liberals are bound by their admiration for representative institutions to oppose it. These and many other arguments against women's suffrage will no doubt receive all the attention they deserve in the House of Commons and elsewhere. I will therefore conclude by moving the resolution.

Lord Amberley.—Ladies and Gentlemen, the resolution which has just been moved in the clear and interesting speech which we have heard from Mrs. Fawcett calls upon this meeting to express the satisfaction it feels at the introduction of a Bill into the House of Commons to remove the electoral disabilities of women. It will, I think, be consistent with the spirit of this resolution if I tell you very shortly what are the principal reasons which induce me to look with satisfaction on the introduction of the Bill, and which would make me welcome with still greater happiness its passing into the law of the land.

In the first place, it appears to me that, in a country governed by institutions like our own, we ought to welcome, as a thing good and desirable in itself, the wish for political equality on the part of any class of persons of her Majesty's subjects. We have been taught to look on the possession of a vote as a very valuable and excellent thing, and it appears to me, when a number of women come forward to tell you they would be glad to possess votes, and to take their share in the government of this country, we ought to welcome that as an advance in their political education and intelligence. We are told it is unnecessary to give them votes, because they have quite influence enough already, and they would gain nothing by admission to the franchise. It appears that many thousands of them do not think they have influence enough already, and it seems to me that they themselves must be the best judges of that question. But I might appeal with confidence on this subject to any member of Parliament, and I might ask him to judge by his own experience whether it is a fact that his female constituents have by any means the same influence on his conduct as his male constituents. I am sure he will be obliged to answer, They have not. They don't, for instance, act on his election committee, they don't come to meetings and put questions to the candidates upon the answers to which their votes depend, they don't write letters on

political questions asking his attention to this and that matter, to support one bill and oppose another. If women were admitted to the suffrage they would inevitably take greater interest and part in the discussion of political questions; and I am inclined to think that that is peculiarly important at a time when it is obvious that social questions are becoming every day more important, and more and more engaging the attention of the Legislature; for it is just upon social questions, questions of criminal law, questions of work-house reform, and of the various evils which press upon society, that women are most competent to give us their advice and opinion. But there is another reason why I should desire the admission of women to the franchise, and why I should believe their influence would be insufficient without the possession of that right. I don't think the law will ever do justice between men and women unless both are placed on a footing of political equality.

It has been pointed out over and over again that in many ways there is extreme unfairness and injustice in the present state of the law as between man and woman, and that injustice arises from the fact that women have not been recognised as the political equals of men, and that therefore various advantages have been conferred on men to which women have not been admitted. Take the single case of a married woman's property; that will be sufficient to illustrate the very different way in which women have been treated, from not being able to make their own interests felt and heard in the way in which men make theirs felt and heard.

But there are objections made—and they are the gravest of all—to this proposal upon the ground that it will exercise a deteriorating influence on the character of women. Persons don't so much prove it as imagine it, and think it without being able to prove it; but from some undefined feeling or other they cannot bear to grant the suffrage to women because of the dreadful effect they think it will exercise on their character; they seem to look forward to a time when all women will be going about the country lecturing and delivering speeches, and men are afraid that, instead of occupying themselves in reading the latest novels which are to be found at the circulating library, they will be studying such pernicious and corrupting books as 'Mill on Logic,' and Grote's 'History of Greece.' That is, no doubt, a very terrible prospect, and must be peculiarly alarming to young men who have just passed through an education at our public schools or universities, and must therefore be supposed to be quite incapable of understanding these subjects. For my part I have no fear of these dreadful results, whatever may be done towards the education and enfranchisement of women. I am afraid I can't say

that there will ever come a time when there will be no frivolous women; indeed, I can't expect a time to come in which there will not be a sufficient supply for all the purposes of social life, because, considering that every branch of public life is open to men, and they are precluded from no political distinctions, I still know that such things are sometimes to be found as frivolous men.

But it is said they will be drawn away from their domestic duties, and their time will be employed in political agitation and political affairs. I cannot attempt, in the compass of a few words, to answer that objection completely; but if there is any one ground upon which more than another I should support the proposal to enfranchise women, it would be because of the influence I believe their enfranchisement would exercise on domestic life. It appears to me that experience is entirely on our side upon that part of the matter. We shall find, if we look at the past and compare other countries with our own, that the more extensively and entirely women are educated with a view to marriage and domestic life, the less well do they perform even those duties for which they are intended; and that is perfectly consistent with the analogy of all other cases. You don't expect to make any one fit for a special profession by educating them entirely with a view to that profession, but you think he will do better in his own business if he has a wide and general education. So it is in the case of marriage. I cannot doubt that women will be better wives and mothers if they have other interests besides those at home, and that they will be better able to educate their children if they themselves are interested in the political questions of the day. I am sure, for instance, if any one will take the trouble to compare the Continent with our own country, they will not be able to say that women on the Continent of Europe, who are brought up in a more narrow way and particularly with a view to marriage, are in any way better wives and mothers than those in our own country, who live more freely and have much wider interests. But then I must remark, that our opponents are very inconsistent on this part of the matter; while they are so afraid of women being drawn away from their domestic duties by political life, they are by no means afraid of their being drawn away by other things; a woman may give her time to all kinds of other things interfering immensely with domestic life and duties; she may spend her day in the manner that has been so admirably described by Sir Robert Anstruther; she may give up any amount of time she likes to her beauty, to her dress, to the most selfish amusements, to any kind of occupation of the most trifling character, and society will not have a word to say against her; but if she gives the same time to attending meetings for the promotion

of causes in which she is deeply interested, and if she is desirous to vote in support of the candidate whose success she believes to be important to the country, then she is thought to be unfeminine and undomestic, and society has no words too strong in which to condemn her. It certainly seems to me that is a grave inconsistency; but I don't ask any woman to give up any legitimate amusement and to turn to other occupations. I don't ask those women who think in that way to change their opinion and their conduct; let them go on as they have done if they are contented with their present position and occupation; all I do ask, and I think it is a modest request, is that they shall not interfere—by their ridicule, by their coldness, and by their hostility—to prevent other women, who are less contented than they are, from helping in every way they can the advancement of their own sex, and, if possible, the progress of the community at large.

Miss Helen Taylor.—That women, or at least large classes of them, have some reasonable ground for complaint, very few people will be found to dispute. But while there is this general consent that the position of women is not all it ought to be, directly we come to details we find a great variety of opinion about where it is that the shoe pinches. Some people think that if married women could only have the full control over their own property (when they have any), women in general would have little left to desire. Others see that though a woman had all her own property, and even her earnings, to herself, she still might object to being kicked with her husband's heavy-nailed boots, or beaten with the leg of the table till it breaks over her head, or to many other of the little amenities of domestic life which are going on every day and hour from one end to the other of the country. Then there are some who think it mean and ungenerous of men to shrink from fair and open competition with women in the professions, and to take advantage of their own political power to shut the door of every profitable profession in the faces of young women who have got to earn a living. Others would apply these unflattering epithets to the way in which the educational (and sometimes even the charitable) endowments, which were meant in old times for men and women, for boys and girls, have been taken possession of for the sole help and support of the weaker—no, I mean of the stronger sex.

I do not know, Ladies, which of these grievances seem to you most urgently to need reform. For my part, when I reflect on them, when I consider which reform is most urgently wanted to remedy crying evils of the most practical sort, which is most pressingly needed, it seems to me we need them all. And we need something

more. We need something which shall prevent fresh abuses, like those which have deprived us of our fair share of educational facilities; something which shall prevent fresh laws, like those which forbid us to compete in professions and for appointments; something that shall remind men that we are by their side in the affairs of life, with the same needs and the same desires that they have, that we are human, like themselves, and desire freedom and happiness just as they do. How can women be truly called men's companions while they are only companions in one part of life, and are shut out from the largest part of practical affairs? It is true there are some who say that women are too gentle and pure to be mixed up with the vulgar realities of politics, and that men respect them a great deal more while they hold aloof from the hard prose of life, and live in an atmosphere of sweetness and poetry. But this is a very fanciful ideal of women's life. There must be hard prose in human life, whichever way we turn. As if the common details of domestic life, with all its small economies and struggle of interests, and the prosaic realities of the education of children; as if society, with its rivalries and vanities, and all the jealousies between woman and woman, could not call forth quite as vulgar and unpoetical emotions (in those who will yield to them) as politics can do; and did not require, in upright and pure-minded women, quite as much exercise of self-control, of conscience, and of singleness of purpose in order to keep untainted their own nobility of mind and heart! But what these small troubles and limited experiences can never do is to enlarge the mind, and give breadth and solidity to the whole nature. Women have little judicial calmness, for they know scarcely anything of law or the administration of justice. They have few far-reaching sympathies, for they are told to confine their interests to their own homes; they have small balance of judgment, for they seldom know more than one side of a question; and so one might go on through the list of their defects, and the causes of those defects.

Nor is it possible, however respectfully the political disabilities of women may be expressed, that those disabilities can do other than cause them to be looked on with less respect. For with whom do we share those disqualifications? With criminals, with idiots, with lunatics, and, lastly, with minors—young people whose minds have not arrived at maturity. Now if some few men of a reflective or a sentimental turn of mind tell us, in the kindest and most considerate language, that it is the very superiority of women that shuts them out from the suffrage, that it is their gentleness and purity that unfit them for public affairs, the great mass will never think so. Brothers, sons, employers, servants, associates in trade or business, with that

rough common sense which belongs to the ordinary mind, will always feel that if women are classed, for political purposes, along with the childish, the wicked, and the mentally incapable, it must be because there is some resemblance between them. And they will respect them accordingly. And if what is said by so many good and thoughtful men were true, if women really are kinder and gentler, purer and more ideal than men, have we so much of these things in politics that we can afford to cast them aside with contempt? Are kindness and gentleness, singleness of mind and purity of heart, such drugs in political life, that we must needs shut them out of the arena for fear of being overdone with them? Does not that great mass of poverty, of corruption, and of ignorance which goes festering on, century after century, in the depths of society, come just from the coldness, the hardness, the selfishness of men? The horrors of war, for instance, the licentiousness of society, the universal standard of self-interest in all things, these we may admit are pre-eminently masculine. A little infusion of feminine gentleness would do no harm in those things, and might prevent some of that incessant action and reaction, that perpetual oscillation between extremes—such as despotism and anarchy, licence and severity—which is so marked in history; which betrays so plainly the want of balance in our system of society; and which is so exactly what we might naturally expect as the result of excluding one half of human nature from all direct action on public affairs.

Nor is women's suffrage wanted only for the sake of its influence on society as a whole, or of its effect on the character of women. It is wanted also to enable women to insist on the carrying out of those reforms which all the world acknowledges to be desirable, but which are perpetually set aside while more pressing things—which constituents demand—are being done. I have been told that when, three years ago, it was first proposed in the House of Commons to admit women to the franchise, many members, who disclaimed all sympathy with any such idea, yet expressed the strongest indignation at particular injustices to which women are subjected. Well, and what have these chivalrous gentlemen done? Where are the grievances they have redressed? One might have supposed that, when once their eyes were opened to the wrongs under which helpless women suffer, no time would have been lost in redressing them. All the world acknowledges, for example, that the British husband of the lower class is given to brutally ill-treating his wife. Have any of the members who think that women ought by no means to have the suffrage, but ought to be properly protected by the lawgivers, have any of these lawgivers brought in

a bill for flogging men who ill-treat women? Not one. It is very well worthy of note that no bill for the advantage of women has been brought in, except by men who vote for giving them the suffrage. For indeed, however men may talk, seldom when it comes to action will any of them trouble themselves to help women who are not glad to give them the means of helping themselves.

But I fancy I hear some ladies say, After all, are we not protected? Could we help ourselves any better than we are helped? Could we, by our own unaided strength, win for ourselves half the comforts and the luxuries we enjoy now, thanks to men's kindness and generosity? It is *we* who are treated as though we were the superiors; we to whom fall all the honours and the privileges of society. To women the first place is given, the sheltered corner; if there is anything hard to be done, the man must do it; if there is not room enough for all, the boys must walk, the girls must have the seat in the carriage. Well, ladies, and what is the lesson *we* have to learn from all this? It is that good men, whom we all respect, are, in these things, both just and generous. They scorn to take advantage of other's weakness or their own strength; they will not enjoy what they have not earned; they love rather to give than to take; and they recognise at once a duty and a pleasure in compensating to the weak for the disadvantages of nature and of fortune. Yes! here indeed is a lesson for women who are fortunate in life; whose influence is powerful either in their own homes or in society. That protection, that kind and generous encouragement our fathers and brothers give to us, we are bound to give back again to poor and weak and unprotected women. It suffices for us to know that the suffrage is a power—and all history and politics show that it is—for us to be bound to desire it, and to use it, for the sake of the weak, whether we wish to get anything for ourselves by it or not. A legitimate power is a sacred trust in the eyes of an upright man or woman; and to say 'I do not want it,' is to be like the servant in the parable, who buried the talent he was too indolent to use. It may be perfectly true that a woman who is respected and loved by all who surround her wields a power far surpassing that of the suffrage. But the same thing is true of good and great men; would you therefore disfranchise them? It is as true of women as of men, that what is wanted in politics is the suffrage of the great mass of society, rather than of exceptional genius, which can always make its influence felt. It is that this great mass may be able, by means of the suffrage, to make known its sufferings and its wants, that influential women are bound to strive.

One thing more I have to say. Who can feel for the sufferings

and the degradation of women as we can? Not the noblest and most generous of men can feel, as a woman must, for the misery of an ill-used wife, the horror of a woman's lowest degradation, the anguish of a mother deprived of her children, the helplessness of a poor and solitary girl in the state of society in which we live. Our sympathy in these things must be deeper, more intense, than the best man can feel. Therefore it is that we are bound to claim the suffrage that it may help us to force statesmen and lawgivers to come, quickly, to the rescue of these, the weakest, the most neglected of mankind.

The Hon. Auberon Herbert, M.P.—Ladies and Gentlemen, I think you will agree with me when I say that we men, after some of the speeches we have heard here, must look to our laurels if we do not intend to fall into the second rank. I think I shall express the feelings of many men who are present here, besides my own, when I say that it seems to me perfectly impossible to refuse this claim of women's suffrage when once it has been seriously asked for by a large number of women in this country; and when I go on to say that we welcome the claim because we look on it as a symbol that henceforwards a certain line that has existed between the education and the intellectual thought of men and women is to cease, and that we men are to invite all women into partnership with us as regards those subjects of the deepest intellectual interest, those subjects from which we derive all the best and the highest of our pleasures, and which make life worth living for. But I know it will be said, and indeed many of the speakers have referred to this, that in making this change there will be a certain loss of sweetness in our English homes; I entirely agree with those speakers who deny that that will be the case. In the first place I must say that whilst I think it is possible for us to see thousands of happy marriages, yet I must venture to say that I think it is a very difficult thing indeed to find a marriage anywhere in this country of which one may say, without hesitation, that husband and wife are perfectly companionable one to the other. What always strikes me is this, that a husband keeps all his greatest sources of interest outside of his home; there is a certain line drawn at the threshold of his home: outside of his home is all that appeals to the higher and deepest part of his intellectual nature; but he is in the habit of reserving, as it seems to me, too often for his home the most idle, the most trivial, I think I might even say the most sleepy part of his nature. Well, against that division I protest for one. I will take it for one moment from an entirely selfish point of view, and it shall be this: what man is there present here to-day who has not felt that the influence of woman on his life has been very great? what man is

there who has not felt that his life and that his character, such as it is, has been very much moulded and shaped by woman's influence? And is there a man here who does not feel that those influences would have been upon him a greater power for good if those women with whom he has had relation had received the same education which he had received, and received the same development of their intellect that he, perhaps, has received, and, in fact, had greater intellectual sympathy with him? I believe, and believe most sincerely—and I am not ashamed to make the confession—that men are not good enough, that men are not strong enough, to be able to do without all the good influences which might be exerted on their lives by women; each requires the help of the other, and what we have to do is, as it seems to me, to try so to organise society that men should act upon women, and women act upon men, in character, in thought, and in feeling, so that we may join in one common effort constantly to be reaching towards higher and better ideals.

I shall only look at the question from one point more, and that is, the great quantity of misdirected effort which there seems to me to be in this country. Nowhere more can you find that misdirected effort than you do in society. Who is there who is not aware of the enormous quantity of labour, of time, of expense, of pains, of effort, that is all consumed, all wasted in that great machinery which we call society; and who is there who is not sensible of this, that if once we could direct these great social forces in another direction, if once we could turn those particular qualities which belong to women, that faithful power of service, that devotion, that energy, towards nobler and greater objects than those which society holds out to them, who is there here who is not aware that we should at once make a most tremendous stride towards that future in which it will not be possible to find savagery and barbarism existing in the very midst of our civilisation; that future in which luxury and the restlessness of pleasure-seeking will not stand any longer face to face with helpless ignorance and helpless poverty? Once turn those great social forces to the side of what is good, and the future, the happy future to which we look forward, will be, in my opinion, brought immeasurably nearer to us. I have simply, Madam, to say in conclusion, that to my mind there is no gap whatsoever between the feelings of men and women—no gap made by nature—there is only the gap which we have made by our own perverseness, and the quicker we bridge it over the better and the happier for all of us.

The Resolution was put and carried.

Mr. Jacob Bright, M.P.—Mrs. Taylor, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been asked to move the following resolution: 'That the great extension of the suffrage, so long as women are excluded from it, is a positive injury to them, since it is rapidly making them the only excluded class.' I do not think that any portion of this meeting will dissent from that resolution. So long as only a very few persons possessed the franchise, and so long as those few were, in a certain sense, isolated classes, it did not appear very noticeable that women should be wholly excluded; but now, when that arrangement is entirely altered, when in our boroughs, at least, every man can possess the franchise, the thing looks very different. A portion of the population of our boroughs, no inconsiderable portion I am afraid, has gone latterly by the name of 'the residuum.' That residuum, as you know, is wholly uninstructed, its habits and general condition are so unfortunate, that whenever we reflect upon it, we are almost ashamed to claim for this country the character of a civilised country; when that residuum is, as it is now, in possession of the franchise, it does seem somewhat remarkable that no woman, whatever her position, whatever her character, is allowed to influence the return of a single member of Parliament by her vote. As I have been asked, with my friend Sir Charles Dilke, to pilot the Bill for removing the political disabilities of women through the House of Commons, perhaps I may make a remark or two as to the present position of the question. It is now just about three years ago since Mr. Mill introduced this question into the House of Commons. I need not dwell upon the ability with which he introduced it, nor upon the very great advantage which the question had in being so introduced by him. I believe it derived great advantage from it; but I believe the remarkable support which it received in the House of Commons was owing very much more to the evident justice of the case, and to the impossibility of finding an answer to anything that was said. Some seventy or eighty members of Parliament followed Mr. Mill into the lobby, I believe something like one-third of the members who were present in the House. They went into that lobby because they had recently been discussing the question of Reform everywhere throughout the country, and much in Parliament; and they felt, as they could not but feel, that every argument which had been used in favour of extending the franchise to men generally applied equally to the case of women, and, therefore, for them to have gone into the opposite lobby from that into which they did go would have been certainly at a very great sacrifice of feeling and consistency. After Mr. Mill did that great service to this question in the House of Commons, associations were everywhere formed in the country. There may be those here who are not fully alive to the

character and influence of some of those associations; you have not only this Association in London, you have one of great influence in Manchester; you have associations in Edinburgh, in Dublin, in Birmingham, in Bristol, in Bath, in Carlisle, in Leeds, and I do not know how many places besides. I had a letter yesterday from a lady in Dublin to whom this question, so far as Ireland is concerned, owes a great deal—I mean a well-known lady there, Miss Robertson—and she tells me a fact that I was not before aware of, that Dublin sent, next to London and Manchester, more signatures to Parliament during the last session than any other place in the United Kingdom. Now, what is the character of the support which this proposed measure receives? It is well known to this committee that many of the most scholarly and distinguished men in our various Universities are on our side upon this question. It is equally true that the working-classes in our great manufacturing towns support this question. I have seen it introduced in many such meetings, and never saw any opposition to it. One little incident perhaps may be worth telling. During the last municipal election in some town in Yorkshire, I forget now which, the working-men were so much interested in women having votes, and so well satisfied that they should have been promoted to this right, that they met together, subscribed a sum of money, and gave a handsome testimonial to the first woman who came up to the poll. That shows the great sympathy which exists on the part of working-men in regard to this question.

And now, what is our parliamentary position? I think I may say with Mr. Mill, since he introduced this measure there with such flattering success, that our parliamentary position is much stronger. We have good supporters in the House of Lords, and on both sides of the House of Lords. We have members of the Cabinet who are in favour of this Bill. We have law-officers of the Crown who will give us their support; and there is not a single part of the House of Commons, Tory or Liberal, nor a single part of each side of the House of Commons, in which we have not influential supporters. What does all this prove? It proves, undoubtedly, that the claim which women are making is a very strong claim; and it proves that the grounds upon which it rests are so simple that it can be understood both by the instructed and by the uninstructed.

I have been asked the question sometimes, in the House of Commons, whether this Bill will be carried. Why, nobody in England who pays any attention to public matters doubts that it will be carried. Of course it will be carried. Then we are sometimes asked, 'When?' Well, it would no doubt require a prophet

to tell when. A member of the House of Commons told me, the other day, that he believed it would be carried this session, and without a division; but another member, who stood by his side, said: 'No, it will not be carried this session, but it will be carried soon.' I do not want to be over-sanguine upon this matter; I have no confidence about its being carried this session; but I entirely agree that it will be carried soon—and for this reason, that it is a just and necessary Bill. Surely it is just that no class should be asked to obey laws in a free country in the making of which laws it has no influence whatever; and it is equally just that no class should be expected to pay largely towards the national funds when it has no control whatever over those funds. But, as has been amply shown by able speakers who have preceded me, and especially by those admirable speeches to which we have listened from the ladies on this platform, this is not merely a question of abstract justice; it is a question of urgent necessity for the women of this kingdom at least. I don't know whether they are subjected elsewhere to great legal disabilities; but, so far as my knowledge goes, I would say that no class in this world ever entirely got rid of legal disabilities unless they came into the possession of political power.

A great deal will depend, of course, upon the attitude which the Government may take upon this question. The Government may pass, I won't say any Bill that it likes, but any Bill that is at all reasonable the Government has the power to pass; and the Government has almost unlimited power in preventing the passing of a Bill. I say almost unlimited power, because happily there are some limits even to the power of such a Government as that which we now possess. In the last Session of Parliament there was a notable instance of it. The Government fought hard against a particular Bill, but it was beaten, and had to accept the Bill. The Bill was one of a benevolent character. I don't mean at all to say there were not two sides to the question; and although the Government was beaten, it may have been right. But I am not prepared to see the Government oppose this Bill. Why on earth should the Government have been willing to pass the Municipal Franchise Bill of last session, giving votes to women in 200 or 300 towns of this kingdom, including the very largest cities of the land—I say, why should the Government have been willing to give that right, sending women to the polling booth without the protection of the ballot; not every four or five years, but every year; why should they be willing to allow women to be mixed up in all this public strife, and to have this additional privilege, if they mean to turn round now

and say, 'No, you shall not have the parliamentary vote?' The thing would be unbearable, because every argument that applied to the giving women the municipal vote, applies to the giving them the parliamentary vote; with this marked addition, that a great many arguments of great weight could be used in favour of women having the parliamentary vote, which do not exist at all with regard to the municipal vote. I say then it would be unlikely, very unlikely, that the Government should oppose this Bill.

I daresay there are in this room both men and women of all shades of politics. I think the Conservatives here must have derived some support from what has been said with regard to the probable Conservative character of this measure. I offer no opinion upon that subject, but I should regret very much if a great Liberal Government should fix this peculiar stigma upon women, and say, 'You are capable of entering into mercantile affairs; you have sufficient intelligence and capacity to manage local matters; but when it comes to Imperial concerns you are altogether out of court, and you have no qualification whatever to take part in them.' I say a Liberal Government ought not to put itself into an attitude like that. Every class in the country should be raised, so far as the Government has power to raise it, and it should hesitate long before it takes any course that leads to the disrespect of any particular class.

In conclusion, allow me just to say one word; that whether this measure be obtained sooner or later, the duty of all who are interested in it is very plain. Every man and woman here who desires to remove the electoral disabilities of women should work hard for their removal, just as though we were entering upon a struggle of many years. There should be no possible place where you have any influence upon a member of Parliament but you should write him a note asking him to give a favourable attention to the Bill; and your committees throughout the empire should continue their labours just as though every possible obstacle beset our path.

Sir Charles Dilke, M.P.—Mrs. Taylor, Ladies and Gentlemen, I cannot help feeling, with my friend Mr. Bright, that our position to-day is rather that of listeners than of speakers. We have come here in performance of a duty, and, as a portion of our task of bringing this question forward this year, to hear whether we can gather new arguments and stronger arguments in support of the conclusion at which we have arrived; and whether, on the other hand, we can hear any echoes of arguments used against us outside and in the press. At the same time, I must ask leave for a moment to point out to the meeting that the Bill which is to be introduced is hardly

wide enough to justify some of the arguments which are used against it and some of the arguments by which it has been supported. The Bill is not one for giving a vote to every woman, but merely a Bill for giving votes to women who fulfil those conditions which are at present required of men; and that is so simple a matter, as it seems to me, that it is almost impossible to argue it before a meeting where there are no opponents present, or to anticipate the objections that may be urged; because it is impossible to judge, until the measure is brought forward in the House of Commons, what those arguments can possibly be. There is, I know, certainly one newspaper, and possibly more, which have by anticipation begun to argue against the Bill, but the only statements which they have made are that the women do not want the suffrage, and I think to that statement such a meeting as this is a sufficient answer. Were we asking now for all that we might ask for: were we asking that votes should be given to all women who desire it, or to all women without exception, then there might be wider arguments, although I don't think they would be very cogent, which would be brought forward against that proposition. It might be said here, as it has been said in America, that the duty of defending the country must go with the suffrage—as they say there, the musket and the ballot-box must go together—and that no one ought to have a vote who is not capable of taking arms to defend his country. Such arguments, however, are entirely inapplicable to the particular measure before us this year.

The resolution I find myself called upon to second is one which, if we were to criticise it very minutely, would perhaps prove to be hardly accurate. It states that the great extension of the suffrage, so long as women are excluded from it, is a positive injury to them, since it is making them the only excluded class. With regard to the last words in the resolution, I would say that women have always been the only excluded class: they have always been the only persons who have been excluded from the franchise without any other test whatever being applied: they have always been the only persons excluded in such a way that by no step they could possibly take, and by no change of circumstances which could possibly occur, could they be in a position to exercise the franchise from which they were shut out. I will not detain the meeting at this late hour, and after the ability with which the whole cause has been argued by the ladies, who have spoken and more appropriately than men could speak at a ladies' meeting upon this question; but I would like to say, with reference to what has fallen from my friend Mr. Jacob Bright, that I am one of those who believe that this Bill will be carried this year, and probably without a division. I believe those

who last year allowed the municipal clause to pass without a division will find, when they come to look into the question and consider it with care, that there is no kind of argument which could be adduced then which could not be adduced now. I would at the same time say that, whatever may be the result of debate or of division, I can assure Mr. Mill that, owing to the boldness of the effort which he made, and the courage with which he took this question up; owing also to the ability with which he has been supported by the ladies who have spoken to-day, and others, and also, I might add in common fairness, to the improved character of the constituencies and of the present House of Commons, there is not the slightest probability, or even possibility, when the subject comes to be debated next month, that the motion of my friend Mr. Jacob Bright will be met in the same degrading and disreputable manner in which his motion was met when he brought it forward for the first time.

Miss Hare.—I should not have ventured to come forward on the present occasion had I not been told that it was very desirable that as many women as possible should speak on such an occasion as the present, in order to satisfy a doubt which seems to remain in the minds of many whether women want the franchise or not. There is one point which has not been spoken of specially at this meeting upon which I would say a few words. It has been thought by many persons that any share in active life would be likely to destroy those feelings of refinement and purity which are naturally so specially valued in women. It seems to me that that is to begin at the wrong end of the subject, and that the argument, if it is worth anything at all, is an argument against any extension of the suffrage whatever. If there is so much evil, if there is so much moral and physical violence, and so much corruption and agitation in the act of voting, that it is demoralising to women to give them a share in it, it must also surely be demoralising to men, and a real evil must be done to any man who gets a vote given to him. Yet nobody really thinks that. Everybody knows that what a man is in the performance of every other duty, that he is in voting; the unworthy and the corrupt vote unworthily and corruptly, the highminded and the conscientious vote conscientiously and purely. And so it will be with women. Instead of destroying their natural dispositions, it will only bring them to bear on their votes; with this great difference, that after a time the conscientious among them will find it their duty to consider political subjects, in order that they may be able to vote fairly and rightly. To deprive women of their just share in the franchise is only to add another blot to the present system of representation; and the real remedy must be found in enabling

men and women alike to share in the advantages of a more perfect and just system, which shall raise the act of voting to its true moral and intellectual rank amongst the duties of life.

Professor Hunter.—Mrs. Taylor, Ladies and Gentlemen, it has been justly observed that the question of women's suffrage may be argued independently of the larger and more important demands that we have heard of this evening. Many persons may consistently accept this smaller instalment of woman's rights without committing themselves to anything more. Now, one of the arguments with which such persons are frightened is, that if women once get votes, they will never be satisfied until they get into Parliament. The experience that can be gathered from the Scottish churches does not confirm that opinion. In all the important dissenting churches women vote in the election of ministers and office-bearers. Now, this privilege has never made them aspire to office. They have been content to elect representatives to the ecclesiastical parliament without ever asking to be present except as spectators. Nor have they sought to enter the pulpit, although I can conceive few functions they could so well discharge, since even the bitterest satirists of women have never denied them the gift of eloquence. Nor has their voting interfered in the very least degree with family life, or in any way disturbed the usual social relations. But what it has done, I cannot help believing, is that it has created an immense interest in the welfare of the church, and greatly increased the zeal of the women in collecting funds for church purposes. The ecclesiastical bias of women is made the ground of an objection to entrusting them with the franchise. This has been handled in a manner I could not approach, by the great master of philosophical and political exposition who has preceded me; but, I ask, what is the teaching of history on this point? Have men always been free from the same reproach? Not so very far back, there was a time when the interest of men was engrossed by two subjects—Religion and War—a time when all intellect went to the cloister and all energy to the battlefield; when the whole duty of man might have been compendiously described as to save one's own soul and kill one's neighbour. What has produced the change? The growth of industrial enterprise has limited the dimensions of war and subordinated the warlike spirit, and the advance of science has tempered the heat of religious strife. Let the same beneficial influences that have been necessary to improve men be brought to bear upon women, and then we shall see a healthy distribution of their powers over the whole field of human knowledge. It is a striking coincidence that the arguments which are adduced in this country against giving women votes, are precisely

those adduced in India against teaching women to read and write. The progressive party in India are told that to teach women to read and write is a monstrous proposition; that it is unnatural and contrary to the constitution of society; that it would disturb all the domestic relations, and aim a deadly blow at that masculine superiority which is the only bond of domestic peace; that it would unsettle women's minds, and, puffing them up with useless knowledge, would make them despise their proper work; and last, but not least, that women do not want education. Now, this last is an argument that ought never to alarm any friend of women's suffrage. Before the Reform Act, we were told on all hands that the working-classes did not want the franchise. But when the day of trouble came, and when the railings of Hyde Park were pulled down, that argument gave way, and the suffrage was given to the working-classes. It is because at present women do not demand the suffrage that this Society exists; and its aim might not inappropriately be described as teaching women to want the suffrage, and teaching men to have the justice to allow the claim.

The resolution was put and carried.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Bart., M.P.—Ladies and Gentlemen, I have one very pleasant duty to perform before you go away. I beg leave to propose, what I am sure you will carry very heartily, a vote of thanks to the lady who has filled the chair to-day. The enthusiastic manner in which you have received the vote which I propose absolves me from saying anything more. I will therefore simply move the vote of thanks.

The vote was carried by acclamation.

ESSAY

ON

WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

Forming the substance of a Speech delivered by MR. J. E. HOWARD, on the 14th November, 1870, at the Town Hall, Chatham, in support of a Resolution for obtaining Women, with the necessary property qualification, the Electoral Franchise.

MR. WILLIAM KNIGHTON, LL.D., IN THE CHAIR.

MR. CHAIRMAN, LADIES, and GENTLEMEN,

It is rather embarrassing to second the Resolution just put to you by Mr. Moncure Conway after he has enforced it with all the eloquence peculiar to the nation from which he comes. But if I feel that he has almost exhausted the subject in most respects, I still hope I may be able to make it interesting to you in a few other particulars. I have but one regret connected with this meeting, and that is the absence of some of your sex, ladies, to speak for their own cause. I can assure you that when I attended the last meeting on this subject in London (and it was addressed by the first speakers, Mr. Mill among the number), some of the best speeches made there were delivered by ladies. This proves, beyond doubt, that when women partake of all the advantages of education equally with men, they become quite their equals in respect to ability.

The Rev. Chas. Kingsley has observed, in treating of this Woman's Suffrage Movement, that every new question has to run

through three stages: the first, when its absolute novelty provokes ridicule and laughter; the second, when the novelty wears off, and the scoffers begin to recognise that there is something to be said for the eccentricity; the third and last, when discussion has so overborne all opposition, that the new movement triumphs by reason of its intrinsic merits.

Now I think we may congratulate ourselves, seeing how nearly the object of this agitation was attained in the last session of Parliament, that we have clearly entered the final stage of our movement. But as there are still so many minds to whom the conception of equal political rights for women seems a sort of vulgar irruption of the democratic spirit threatening to invade the very sanctuary of the household, I shall premise, before I enter on the subject at length, that it seems to many persons Conservatives have more to gain from the immediate success of our cause than Liberals seem to hope for. But there is a remarkable disinclination on the part of certain members on both sides of the House to look at the question at all. Liberals, who are rather of the massive and steady-going type, see in this movement an immediate danger to the balance of parties, owing to the known Conservative instincts of the female sex. The thorough but wary Conservative, on the other hand, knows that he is treading on dangerous ground, feels instinctively that though he may have something to hope from the present generation of women, another generation partaking of the full benefits of the public education of the country, and bred in a freer, healthier atmosphere, would be less likely to adhere to the good old ways. But I am sure I shall address at once the intelligence of all my hearers, be they Liberals or Conservatives, if I say that all such false reasoning as to the party advantages to be derived from the movement are unworthy of any truly honest mind.

It is one of the greatest misfortunes that in the history of opinion the most important part should be still assigned to the side-currents, as it were.

So long, therefore, as questions of principle are determined by considerations of expediency, the current of opinion must still depend for its strength and direction upon those tributaries

of sectional interests which should lose themselves in the main stream of the public welfare.

Why is it that in judging whether a proposition should receive our adhesion or no, we will not confine our attention to the proposition itself and decide on its abstract merits, rather than see first how our assent would bear on some other cherished object, and then decide, not according to the right or wrong of the question at issue, but according to its conformity or otherwise with our general leanings?

I cannot but think that the explanation of this curious but not creditable fact is to be found in two reasons: the one being that the minds of most people work under the unconscious dominion of feeling, and the natural result is a hopeless confusion of thought as to the process by which certain conclusions have been attained; the other reason, and I fear one existing but too often, is, that we prefer judging any pure question of right or wrong rather with reference to our selfish interests than as a matter of strict principle to be decided on the highest grounds. Depend upon it, true generosity is a counterpart of honesty, and is, according to the old motto, the best policy. I mean by true generosity the setting aside of mere prejudices in judging great public questions bearing on the general welfare.

I propose, therefore, to investigate this subject of woman's suffrage, not by the light of any false division between the realms of reason and feeling—for I conceive them both to be but one domain—in which feeling has a glorious function to fulfil, but under three heads, which I shall term the abstract, the philosophical, and the moral.

Now, in the abstract, what reason is there that women should not have a voice in choosing those who make the laws that govern their lives, liberties, and property?

Is she too ignorant, or too simple, to look after her own interests? Well! granting either assumption, will not giving her a vote induce her to take an interest in politics, and become both less ignorant and more able to protect herself?

I know that the educating influence of the franchise was considered a very strong argument for giving it to the ignorant masses excluded from voting before the last Reform Bill.

If a healthy interest in politics educates men, why not women?

"But," say some, "they are quite satisfied to remain as they have been; why all this agitation?" That used to be said by some persons; but it is to be hoped the numerously-signed petitions presented to Parliament have finally disposed of that objection. It may be true, that a sufficient number of women have not yet made their voices heard in complaint, to be considered a fair representation of the women of the United Kingdom; but this proves nothing against the injustice of denying a vote to those tens of thousands who do wish for it. If the mere fact of every woman not asking for the suffrage were a sufficient argument for refusing it to those who do make the demand, I think the last Reform Bill should have been rejected on the ground that quite a fifth of those who were entitled to the electoral franchise, even before the recent measure conferred household suffrage, were so indifferent to the exercise of their political rights that they never voted at all. This objection that the franchise for women is quite unnecessary from their own indifference to it, reminds one of the invitation to children to express their wishes, premising as an encouragement that those who ask won't get, and that those who don't ask don't want. "But," exclaims another objector, "I grant you that, as a question of abstract right, women might claim the franchise if we could view it as an abstract question; but it has so many important bearings besides. We shall find women losing their refinement and delicacy by mixing with the coarseness of political life. We shall be having every tranquil household at once rent asunder by divisions of opinion between the male and female members on political questions."

Now, it seems to me that these fears are really idle, and so far from complimentary to women, that they actually attribute the feminine virtues of refinement and amiability, not to the innate properties of woman's nature, but to the artificial seclusion in which she is kept.

I would ask those who dread such results, Do women suffer in this way by undertaking those public offices in which they are already engaged? Does not, on the contrary, every duty, whether

self-imposed from motives of benevolence or undertaken with a view to the support of their families, which takes a woman out of the narrow sphere of her own home and brings her in contact with the great interests of the world, expand her mind and enlarge her sympathies? If she be a true woman, she will infect with her womanly qualities of purity and tenderness whatever sphere she enters, and not be tainted by any atmosphere in which she may move. Do women get callous in witnessing the suffering of hospitals? Do they get unsexed by diving into the depths of misery and destitution to alleviate the ills they see around them? We do not believe such things; we believe in the curative powers of woman when she is properly reared and developed, and we do not hesitate to believe, in spite of all the past deficiencies of her training as a member of a vast community, that when she is once imbued with the true notion of herself as an independent and responsible element of the body politic, she will carry her beneficent influence into all the coarseness of politics rather than be tainted by such coarseness herself. There is one last point, and a very important one, to consider in the discussion of this question as an abstract one of right and wrong. There are tens of thousands of women, and the number is daily increasing, who have no male members to look up to for protection and support. Are all these to be debarred from participation in public life because those members of their sex who have comfortable homes, owning allegiance to some lord, choose to sink their whole existence in subservience to his wishes? Such a proposition would be so flagrant in its injustice that I am sure no one would assent to it for an instant.

And yet people talk of giving the franchise to woman precisely as if it were to introduce a compulsory interest in politics at once into every household in England.

But when one sincerely desirous of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion on any moot point fails to derive sufficient light from an abstract view of the question, there is another aspect in which a flood of new light falls at once upon the problem, and that aspect is the "*philosophical*." Now I am not going to frighten you by any learned disquisition of this question by calling this branch of the investigation the "*philosophical*."

I am merely going to show, by a reference to past history, that this movement for woman suffrage is no mere whim of one thinker, or an accident peculiar to this generation, but that the movement is the necessary culmination of a course which the world's history has taken for many centuries.

And before I pass to the historical connection, let me say just a few words in explanation of the vast impetus which this movement has received from its advocacy by England's greatest thinker of the present day—I mean Mr. John Stuart Mill.

Now although no one can be under deeper intellectual obligations to this philosopher than myself, I venture to assert that posterity will recognise his services to the world, not so much in his contributions to the world of thought, as for the high moral courage with which he has fought through years of obloquy to his present position of acknowledged intellectual ascendancy.

Future historians will remember Mr. Mill, not as the founder of a new philosophy—not as the layer of new bases of reasoning and the propounder of new formulæ of logic—but as the man who founded and gave practical effect to this most noble and fertilising moral movement. Mr. Mill has done far more than enlarge the field of mind—he has *raised the tone of public opinion!*

The simplest understanding will realise that the present has some connection with the past, and if we can be brought to see how the present movement has actually grown out of past tendencies, we shall do much to convince even the most bigoted opponent of the proposed measure.

There is nothing so wholesome for mental obstinacy as the proof that blind resistance is futile, that the sooner we reconcile ourselves to the inevitable the better for our own peace of mind, and the opinion that posterity will have of our wisdom. Well, then, if you will accompany me in a rapid survey of history, even from the Roman period, you will find that the stream of time has ever and undeviatingly flowed in the direction of human liberty and the expansion of the units of civilisation. It may be strange to many of you to hear, for the first time, that, notwithstanding the greatness of the Roman Empire and its earlier Republics

(which we are so often asked to admire), society in those days was founded upon what we should consider an essentially barbarous basis; that is to say, the father of a household, the "*paterfamilias*," was not only the ruler of his children up to the age of twenty-five, but he actually had civil power and control over all the male stock of the family from which he sprang. He governed not only his own children, but his grandchildren, and also his brother's family, if the male head of the family should have died.

Before a son could recover his individuality and freedom he had to be emancipated in due form, which in earlier times used to be effected by selling him to a stranger three times successively, and a ceremony of emancipation was gone through after the sale on each occasion. In later times, when the Roman Empire was growing too large to hold together in its primitive municipal strictness, these severities were relaxed as regards males, but women continued in utter subjection. Originally they used to pass from the paternal roof into the power of the husband, and so little notion was there then of individuality of character, or the sacred ties of family feeling, that the wife was positively engrafted upon the new family into which she married. She lost her connection entirely with her father's stock. In the later Roman period women found it more conducive to their happiness not to pass into the husband's power; so they contracted a more convenient form of marriage, by which they retained their own family ties. They were never, however, in the eye of the law, independent citizens, entitled to civil rights; their children were never their own in any sense—such as we now understand the rights of maternity—they were, in fact, in a state of comparative slavery. Such was domestic society in ancient times. The gradual growth of the Pontifical power, and the new notion of the sacredness of the marriage tie, introduced certain improvements in the condition of woman as a recognised element in the State; but her civil rights were greatly checked in their development by the feudal system. In the Middle Ages, of course, every baron had his armed retainers, who were bound to render service in the field in return for the landed estates which they received from their lords under the

name of "fiefs." If a knight died, leaving a young widow and son, of course the lord of the manor could not look to a woman for knight service in the field, so he got her married, reserving the privilege of choosing her husband, and making some money both out of this and the wardship of the children.

But if throughout the Middle Ages the civil rights of woman were crushed in their growth by the violence of the times, there was a sure and certain amelioration going on in her social position.

Throughout the ages of chivalry she was the ideal which the gay cavalier carried everywhere in his heart, and for whose sake he ventured his life in heroic deeds. She gradually became the sharer of his adventures, and a course of several generations of this life paved the way for what we shall term the earliest phase of modern European life. The distinctive feature of this period, coming down to almost recent times—say the close of the last century—was the dominion of woman over the affairs of Europe in the form of "*dynastic alliances*." Every reader of history knows how great an influence was exercised by woman in the destinies of those once great empires of Charlemagne, and Spain, and France, and Austria. We all remember how Europe was remodelled over and over again to suit the interests and prejudices of a few reigning families, under the names of the Wars of the Austrian and Spanish Successions. Who will venture to assert, also, that the indirect influence of woman was wanting to form that great religious schism called the Reformation? If the promoters of the new creeds—Luther and Calvin—seemed almost hostile to woman in their vehemence against the old abuses, we must remember that their hostility was largely due to the vile advantage that had been taken of woman's credulity to perpetuate the evils of priestcraft and corruption.

We next see woman emerge in all her glory during the years that were preparing for the inauguration of that seething present period which commenced with those violent birth-throes, the French Revolution!

Who that has read the memoirs, the political writings, the wide *salon* influence of those women whose breath and thoughts

quicken the French Revolution into being, can doubt the share in the new era which we owe to woman's expanding political sympathies? Here the woman of "*dynastic alliances*" is suddenly transformed into the beautiful type of civic virtue, animating men to forget their petty cares and household interests, in the great tide that was to overwhelm the evils of despotism, monarchy, and aristocracy. We know how that great tide deluged Europe with blood, and seemed to subside, leaving nothing but evil as the result of the inundation.

The philosophy, however, that looks only to the surface of things does not deserve the name even of a theory, and we may be sure that though the very violence of that movement led to its immediate failure, when the torrent overflowed Europe it left a certain deposit which we shall recognise again as the germ of a new and more immediately fruitful creation. All progress is more or less a series of attempts, now successful, again not so, till we reach higher ground with difficulty and after various failures. Even when the sublime exists merely in thought, the permanence of the conception supports subsequent strivers who see where their forerunners failed.

In order, therefore, to prevent ourselves from being deceived by the surface of things, and to avoid wholly misconceiving the purpose of history, judged by the apparent failures of the great national movements which have distinguished the world, we must recur to the principles of human improvement which were thrown up by those fierce eruptions, and which were for a time obscured by all that fiery lava under which they lay buried; but we can now explore the debris left by those vast convulsions in the world's history, and diligent research reveals that if particular nations suffer by their violent attempts to solve different problems of life and humanity, the world in general gains by the lessons left behind. The French Revolution, thus viewed, has not been the monstrous abortion it suits some vain theorists to describe it as, but it implanted throughout the populations of Europe, especially the more advanced ones, those notions of human right and dignity with which the notion of woman's title to equality of political rights is inseparably associated. And it is remarkable that one of the greatest minds of this

period, Condorcet, who was too great to be carried away by the passion of the moment, expressly advocated woman's right to the suffrage as one of the cardinal principles to be embodied in the new charter of human liberties. The time was not, however, ripe for such a conception to germinate, and its further development was postponed till the year 1850, when the first attempt was made in America to give to the subject practical effect by means of the formation of a society in Ohio and Massachusetts, which met, passed resolutions, and carried the discussion into the outer world of politics and literature. Since then the discussion has never ceased, but has acquired fresh strength and vigour by the adhesion of the brightest and purest minds distinguished in every sphere. All opposition has been so far conquered that the enemy is literally cornered, and must surrender—let us add appropriately—at discretion. What I mean by this figure of speech is, that the Houses of Parliament having conceded to woman the municipal franchise, they are positively without standing ground as to any further opposition to the present demand of woman for the electoral franchise. You cannot grant subjects the right to regulate municipal affairs by an elective voice, and refuse the same privilege to subjects in political matters. The State consists of municipalities, although the rights of each town may be overridden by the collective right, and it is in order to secure this just share of a voice in the general government that the electoral franchise is necessary to woman.

But I at least am far from putting the question on the narrow ground of individual security and right. I may be wrong, but I think that, though logically unassailable, this is the weakest side of the case; the far higher ground, in my estimation, is the "moral" phase of the question, which shall form the last branch of my investigation.

To me this aspect has always seemed the most important and instructive. The whole picture is suddenly illuminated by a new glory when we examine it under the electric light of morality. If we may err in deciding a question on its abstract merits—if even the soundest philosophy may sometimes lead us astray—if one thing you may be sure, that when we seek to see things in

the pure region of morality, fresh rays pour in upon our vision, and all that before seemed dark or hazy acquires a clear and sharp outline. Now, if instead of considering this question as the importunate and noisy agitation of a body of masculine women clamouring for a right to protect themselves against man's tyranny and injustice, we were to look at it as the demand of women to do something for their fellow-creatures which men alone have proved incapable of doing, we shall no longer see any vulgarity or selfishness in the demand; but a rare disinterestedness, and tender benevolence. If the world were as good or as happy as it might be, I should not be here to-night to try and convince you how much it loses by a one-sided government in all its greatest concerns.

Limiting our inquiry to merely national affairs, do you think this old home of yours is such a credit to civilisation, when every great city and town in it is afflicted by so many sores of pauperism, dissoluteness, and human decay? I will not trouble you with dry statistics, but I will repeat just a few facts published recently. Professor Cairnes, in his opening lecture on Political Economy, the other day, at University College, stated that every one in thirty in this island is a pauper. If that shameful proportion are actual paupers, you may imagine for yourselves what other proportion must be just above pauperism, but still struggling against comparative destitution and penury. Look at the annals of infant and adult mortality—at the overcrowding in towns—at the barrenness of villages. Are these evils inevitable? I know it is the fashion to cry out about overpopulation, and the necessity for emigration, to account for such a state of things, and to palliate its results. But, believe me, there is another, and a far truer cause, for the evils, and this cause is human selfishness! You will think this a moral sentiment. Well, I shall resort to figures once more. Quite recently, Captain Maxse, of the Royal Navy, published an essay in the *Fortnightly Review*, entitled, "Our Uncultivated Lands," giving the following as the result of his careful inquiry into the agricultural condition of the United Kingdom:—The total area amounted to 77 millions of acres, and of this vast surface there were only 23 millions of acres under crops and lying fallow;

about an equal quantity reserved for pasture; only about 4 millions of acres covered by towns and villages, and no less than the astounding figure of 27 millions of acres lying waste or unaccounted for. If these results were not attested by a map, showing the very counties in which this astonishing waste of resources is to be found, one would be tempted to doubt their accuracy. But such remains the lamentable fact, that a clear third of the whole land of the United Kingdom, which we are told is the fundamental source of national wealth, lies actually waste and unaccounted for, whilst nearly the same quantity is reserved for pasture. These figures are worth the attention of those who complain that the great evil of the United Kingdom is its over-population, and that the chief direction of future effort should lie in the way of relieving this plethora of human beings by emigration to the colonies. I am not going to descant on the comparative merits of the English and Continental systems of farming, but I merely refer to this subject incidentally, to show that in spite of the pretended advantage supposed to arise from our system of gigantic landed estates and close family succession to such property, in spite of the greater fertility and productiveness of certain tracts, which is due to the superior wealth and concentration of the English system, there still exists so immense a waste of agricultural resources as to make one shudder, when the waste is thought of in connection with the waste of human life and energies. To give you a faint idea of the number of human beings who might be supported by all this land, I will just advert to a calculation made by an eminent man more than twenty years ago, when agricultural improvements were less known than now, as to the productiveness of land when properly cultivated. The result is so marvellous that I offer to furnish the details to any person who chooses to apply to me for them on my return to London. The result of my authority's experience was no less than this:—That 13 millions of English acres, properly cultivated, might in a few years be made to produce an abundant supply of food for 30 millions of people! The mere immensity of this result induces incredulity; but if we even quarter the promised return, observe how large is the hope afforded for the future of England.

I have arrived at one important conclusion after much reflection, and that may be stated in a few words. Our civilisation in general, but English civilisation in particular, suffers from two enormous evils, which it will become women, when they get the franchise, to redress by every means in their power. The one is a physical and material evil—the overcrowding of towns, and the consequent deterioration of our race. The second evil is the moral counterpart of it, and may be termed the division of each nation into distinct classes, with separate interests and prejudices. If I may describe these evils by their effects, I should say that this swarming of human beings into towns and cities where every intellectual faculty is sharpened expressly to fit men to run a feverish race after wealth, and where reigns unchecked the fierce, inhuman law of competition, that this leads to congestion of the brain of the nation, whilst its heart in the country is threatened with absolute paralysis by a diversion from it of all the best blood of the nation. The physical evil brings its own condign punishment; the regular dwellers in crowded cities lose their vitality slowly but surely from generation to generation; but who shall tell how deep the moral evil has eaten into the true life of the nation? When the bone and sinew of a people look up to the possessors of wealth and culture, not as their true support and guides in the difficult path of human progress; but when these natural and spontaneous feelings of the human heart are turned into gall and bitterness—when the masses of the people turn eyes of envy and hatred towards their more fortunate kindred of the same generation, instead of regarding them as the custodians of the future welfare of all generations to come—to what abyss of moral degradation are we tending? Where shall it end? And this brings me back to the moral purpose which I foresee in this blending of woman with all our political concerns. Men alone have not those quick susceptibilities which show where the balm is most needed, and women cannot learn this painful lesson by mere theoretical trifling with the subject in drawing-rooms, lecture-halls, or the select avenues of literature. They must follow the example of that great Master who taught us to cure all human ills by walking out into the midst of suffering, by incurring reproof,

ay, and even ridicule, in doing great deeds of love and mercy that shock the world by their disregard of fashion, by their instinctive sublimity. Christianity never taught us to narrow our sympathies to the walls of our own homes, to concentrate all our energies on the acquisition of wealth for our own families, to be jealously guarded and preserved from generation to generation. Christianity, rightly understood, never circumscribed spiritual interests to the future well-being of the individual soul. The spirit of the great gospel of peace is the universal brotherhood of men and the love of our neighbour as ourselves. This century has seen intellectual advancement without end, a series of achievements over Nature which dazzle the mind and beget the worst vices of the human spirit; but, alas! where is the moral progress that has kept pace with this delirium of scientific conquest? Some great scourge of the human conscience afflicts the world, in the shape of a great war, or a great natural convulsion in distant countries, and the peoples of the earth palpitate with pain and pour forth their contributions to solace the suffering. I honour the sensibility, but I wonder, in a sort of anguish, why it should require some startling horror such as these abnormal phenomena to awaken the human conscience? Do we require the lurid glare of a battle-field to become conscious of human suffering? Must we remain for ever indurated by habit to the woes we see daily around us? that war which is constantly raging between the powers of Nature and human weakness and helplessness?

The gulf between the ideal of Christianity and the practice of the world is still too wide. We pretend to believe in the sanctity of human life, and we allow ignorance to ripen into crime, and then petulantly revenge our neglect on the unfortunate victims of it by exterminating the more violent criminals from the earth. We preach the law of human forgiveness and charity, and we practise, as our highest national example, the law of savage retaliation under the blind delusion that we deter others from evil. In other fields we have practically ignored the notion of the primitive corruptness of our impulses, yet in our highest legislation we adhere to the ideas of a barbarous age. Every day shows

us more clearly that everything, however vile to human sight, may have its uses in the economy of the world.

Science is daily teaching us to extract benefit from what we deemed the veriest refuse, and yet with the highest product of creative power—human life—we fail to apply the lesson! Of one thing you may be certain, my hearers, that until we learn the *utility* of human life we shall only be deceiving ourselves when we talk of knowing its *sanctity*!

Our cousins in America are setting us bright examples of triumph over those prejudices which cling so closely round the human heart—they have emancipated the negroes and have given them the same voice in the affairs of the nation which was but yesterday reserved as the special privilege of their white masters. Shall it be said that the old country, with its older institutions and lessons, failed to take this glorious example to heart, and refused to those whom we are taught to revere as the cradle of our race, the rights which are recognised in the least favoured of earth's children?

Shall it be said by historians of the future that this place, associated for ever with the life and memory of England's dearest author,* was deaf to the lesson that all his writings taught—the genial love of mankind irrespective of sex, or colour, or creed? Shall it be said that this most humanising movement to expand the narrow sphere of woman found no current ready to swell the stream of success, which infallibly awaits it, in this city of Rochester and its neighbourhood? I cannot believe in such apathy or wrongheadedness. The measure we propose is restricted to the narrowest phase of woman's rights—the right to have her property represented—and we trust that no confusion of thought, or misrepresentation, will pervert so simple an acknowledgment into a violent disruption of the existing social relations between the sexes. If the sphere of politics were as rough and violent as it used to be in the days of yore, there would still be no valid argument for refusing the right to mix in such a world to those

* Dickens' residence at Gad's-Hill lies but a few miles from Rochester and Chatham, adjoining each other.

who wished to brave the danger; but there is no such risk to run—there is no fear of woman's contamination by the vulgarity, or corruption, or self-seeking of party politics; and I repeat that the worst exaggeration of the evils of politics indulged in by those inimical to its purification, only offers fresh proof of the necessity for some gentler influence to pervade the sphere.

It may be objected that I have chosen the highest type of woman's virtues to fulfil the promise I hold out.

I have purposely chosen the highest, to show of what woman's nature is capable when not distorted by the narrowing influences of a meagre field for effort—mental or moral. I say again, extend the sphere of a true woman's cares, and you to that extent raise her in the scale of being. I say, in conclusion, that, romantic as it may seem, I believe the typical virtues of woman—truth and tenderness—may hallow even the franchise!

written last year - please return this

THE QUESTION OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AS IT STANDS AT PRESENT.

It has become a trite remark that now political and social questions are resolved with a rapidity unknown to former times, and that changes, which once took a generation to accomplish, are now effected in a very few years. But, perhaps, in nothing is the rapid growth of opinion so marked as in all questions affecting the position of women, and specially among these, the question whether they shall, if duly qualified in other respects, possess the suffrage. Three years ago, when Mr. J. S. Mill first introduced the question to the notice of the House, it was considered unpractical and utopian, although even then eighty-two votes were recorded in its favour. Since then, in the third session afterwards, the Women's Disabilities' Bill has passed through a second reading, and was only defeated by a special and unusual form of opposition by the Government. This year 161 members, nearly one-fourth of the House, voted in its favour. That this change of opinion is not confined to Parliament, is evidenced by the increase of signatures to petitions in favour of the measure. In 1866, Mr. Mill presented a petition signed by 1500 women. In 1867, the signatures presented before April 13 were 12,247, more than half by women. During the session of 1868, the number of signatures had increased to 49,780; in 1869 to 58,144, and in the session of 1870, no less than 134,539 names were sent up to Parliament.

In 1868, in view of the forthcoming general election, the National Society thought it advisable to try if women had not already the right of suffrage; a right, as is well known, formerly exercised by them, though now fallen into desuetude. At the Manchester election, in the previous November, Mrs. Lily Maxwell, whose name had been left on the register, recorded her vote, which was accepted as legal. The Act, known as Lord Romilly's, for shortening the language of Acts of Parliament, provides that "in all Acts, words importing the masculine gender should be deemed to include females, unless the contrary be expressly provided;" and, in the opinion of many eminent lawyers, this constituted a claim. Acting upon this opinion, the National Society took measures to have qualified women placed on the register. In Manchester between 5000 and 6000 women were admitted on the register; in Salford more than 1200, in Aberdeen 1000, in Birmingham 500, and so on in various other towns. Of these, the greater part were struck off by the Revising Barristers; but, in some cases, notably in Finsbury, in Ashford (Kent), and Ormskirk, they were allowed; and at the subsequent elections their votes were given without difficulty, and accepted as legal. Nevertheless, and in spite of the able arguments of Mr. Chisholm Anstey, the Court of Appeal decided against the claimants, and confirmed the statement that women are disfranchised legally.

The progress of the question was marked in 1869 by the acceptance, without a division, of Mr. Jacob Bright's Amendment to the Municipal Franchise Bill, by which the Municipal Franchise was conceded to women, and by which they thus acquired votes in more than 200 towns.

In the course of that year, likewise, crowded meetings were held in London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Birmingham, and Bristol, and several Branch Committees were formed of the National Society. In 1870, as is well known, the Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women was introduced by Mr. Jacob Bright without opposition, and passed the second reading by a majority of thirty-three. Eight days later it was forced on at one o'clock in the morning, and the Government having, by the voice of Mr. Gladstone, decided "that it would be a great mistake to carry this Bill into law," it was lost in the absence of most of its supporters of the previous week.

The foregoing sketch of events will serve, at least, to show that Women's Suffrage is no longer, as it was once asserted to be, the Utopia of a few philosophers and strong-minded women, but is the settled aim of thousands, and one that will, without doubt, work its way into the Statute-book in a few years.

It will be worth while to know how much or how little is claimed by this increasing party, for few questions of such importance have been so much misrepresented. The Disabilities' Bill is remarkable for its conciseness, and is to the effect that "women should have votes in boroughs if they are householders; if their names are on the rate-books, and if they pay their rates; and in counties if their houses are rated at 12*l.* and upwards, or they should be possessed of that description of property which now entitles men to vote." It makes no special claim on behalf of women—such as decrease of qualification or greater facilities for voting. It is needless to say, it does not include, as its opponents would have us believe, daughters living in their father's houses, sisters with their brothers, wives with their husbands. The head of a household, when rated, is to claim the vote; and when that household is headed by a woman, and not by a man, its due representation is not to suffer by the difference of sex.

It would be interesting to learn what are the numbers that would be enfranchised by the Bill. The ratio varies in each town; for instance, in Bath the proportion of women householders is as one to three. In York and Bristol one to seven, in Manchester one to six, and in Newcastle one to eight. The Census of 1861 showed that one-tenth of the farmers and graziers in Great Britain were women. Taking the whole country together, Mr. Jacob Bright estimated that the number of householders disqualified solely on account of sex was one-sixth. Of these, comparatively few would be rendered, by vice or gross ignorance, incapable of usefully employing their vote, for, as a class, women proprietors are prudent, frugal, and hard-working.

We have been struck by the inconsistency of some of the arguments used against Women's Suffrage. One frequent objection to women's voting is that it would occupy too much of their time; that mothers would neglect their children, and every one their house-work, to rush to the poll; but is it proved to be so with men? Does a man cease to be a good shoemaker, butcher, or printer, by possessing a vote, or look after the welfare of his family less thoroughly because he has some voice in making the laws which govern him? And would a woman, whether she be a widow with young children depending on her, or a single woman who has contrived to keep a house over her head by industry and frugality, be

more likely to neglect the comforts and duties of her home life for the doubtful attractions of political agitation? To give a vote once every four or five years requires the sacrifice of, it may be, a few hours, and this is all that is necessarily involved in the claim to the Suffrage.

Again, a double argument is frequently heard, that women do not want the suffrage, and that it would be no use to them. That some, at least, want it is evidenced by the number of signatures petitioning for it, and it may be fairly presumed that others who have not signed would use it. But suppose it granted that only a small percentage of women wish for it. Those who do not want a vote are in no way obliged to use it; it would be their right, but not an obligation, for we cannot enter into Mr. Bouverie's heartfelt concern, that "ladies should be subjected to all the annoyance of solicitation and worry attendant upon personal canvassing by a candidate and his committee. It might be shown that by no means all the voters, admitted by the lodger franchise, have used their privilege, but working-men would consider this no plea for depriving those who do value it of their vote, and in the same way if the Bill were passed, women, who did not care about their vote, would be in the same position as before, while others would be incalculably benefitted.

On the other hand, the argument that the franchise would be of no use to them, is hardly safe to affirm of any class. It is a first principle of political science, "that the rights and interests of every and any person are only secure from being disregarded when the person interested is himself able and habitually disposed to stand up for them;" and if this is so with men, can we affirm that women (from constitution and temperament differing far more in their needs from men, than one class of men does from another class) do not need special protection. "Human beings are only secure from evil at the hands of others, as they have the power of being self-protecting;" and this is sufficiently illustrated in the exclusion of women from educational endowments, from the professions, and in the recent attempts to exclude them from many industrial employments, and also in the miserable incompleteness of the Married Women's Property Bill as remodelled by the wisdom of the Upper House, and ratified by the Commons. Women, being weaker, need special attention, and yet to them the law gives the least of all.

But the reason which has probably most influenced the course of the Government, and certainly of many of our foremost Liberals, is the fear that women are Conservative, and that so large a number of votes would infallibly throw the balance over to the Conservative side. One-sixth additional votes in Great Britain all Conservative! Such alarming unanimity might strike the boldest Liberal statesman with awe. That while men are split up into so many parties, women should all agree to vote on the same side would be nothing short of miraculous. How far this fear is well founded may be judged by a letter from the member for one of our Welsh counties. He had, it seems, declared, at his election, his sentiments to be favourable to Women's Suffrage, but voted against in the House of Commons. In explanation, he writes:—

"In the county I represent the women are all Liberals in politics, and Nonconformists in religion—that is, the vast majority of them; and this may be said of all North Wales. On the other hand, in England, and particularly in boroughs, such as Bath, women are Conservative under

great clerical influence, which always tends to fetter freedom of thought. I reluctantly, for these reasons, voted to prevent women being made capable of doing what I consider political wrong in many places—viz., voting against the Liberal party."

Manifestly, it is unlikely that the daughters, widows, and sisters of soundly Liberal men should all embrace an opposite policy; but suppose, for argument's sake, it were so. Of what value is the Liberalism that only founds its power on ignoring the opinions of half the nation, and denying the manifestation of those opinions to a large class of independent and educated householders.

One serious objection hinted at, in the foregoing letter, has been already disposed of by Mr. Mill. To those who dread the influence of the clergy on women's minds, he said, at the meeting held in London last March:—

"If the clergy have more of such influence than belongs to their character and to the degree of their cultivation, let us be just, and admit that they have fairly earned it. The clergy are the only persons who, as a class, have taken any pains with women's minds; the only persons who have appealed directly to their own principles and convictions; who have addressed them as if they had themselves a moral responsibility—as if their souls and consciences were their own. The clergy are the only men who have seemed to think it of any consequence what women think or feel, on any subject outside the domestic sphere. Those who show this respect to women deserve to have influence with them: and will continue to have more than enough, until other men employ the same means of acquiring such influence which they have done. If the fathers, brothers, and husbands of these women took equal pains with their minds—if they invited them to interest themselves in the subjects in which the fathers, brothers, and husbands are interested, as the clergy do in those which interest *them*—and if they were taught, by the responsibility of a vote, that the formation of an intelligent opinion on public questions is as much their right and duty as it is the right and duty of men—they would soon find themselves more competent and better judges of those subjects than the clergy are; and there would be no danger whatever of their surrendering their own judgment into the hands of their clerical instructors. Whatever is excessive or hurtful in the clerical influence over them would be weakened, exactly in proportion as they took part in the affairs of life; and only that which is salutary would remain. Instead, then, of regarding the clerical influence as a hindrance to giving women votes, I look upon the vote as the most effectual means of emancipating them from the too exclusive influence of the clergy."

We have tried to state fairly some of the arguments *pro* and *con* for this movement. Whatever may be thought of their relative value, there can be no doubt that its supporters are steadily increasing in numbers and strength. Earnest-hearted women are working in many a field of industry to better the condition of the poor, to increase education, to lessen crime, to comfort sickness. They are bent for their own sakes, and that of others, on obtaining some share in making the laws under which we all have to work and live; and it needs but little power of prophecy in an onlooker to see that, before many years are over, their efforts in this direction also will be rewarded with success.

C A B

1872

THE PROGRESS OF WOMEN SUFFRAGE

DURING THE PAST YEAR.

THE supporters of a new and unpopular cause have often to fear far more than their honest opponents who fight them on their own ground, those apparent neutrals who mis-state the case and publish to the world at large a programme very different to the real one. The friends of Women Suffrage (which ought rather to be called Women Householders' Suffrage,) are less injured by the opposition of Mr. Bouverie and Mr. Scourfield than by the assertions of those who pretend to know all concerning it, and who declare that the proposed alteration of the law is to give every man's wife, daughter, and maid-servant a vote—in fact, womankind in general. It cannot be too often or too emphatically repeated that the women who claim the franchise only urge that women possessing the same property qualification that would entitle a man to vote should not be disfranchised on account of their sex. Any further claim is entirely beyond their views.

The women householders thus enfranchised would be almost entirely unmarried women and widows. If a wife here and there possessed landed or house property apart from her husband, the Women's Disabilities Bill, if it became law, would not disfranchise her, but the number of women so qualified would of necessity remain very small. Unmarried women and widows form, it is computed, about one-sixth of the householders of Great Britain; and it would be a sixth whose interests would necessarily be in behalf of order, of regard for the law, of sobriety and respectability, and who would probably be fully as intelligent, if not more so, than the class admitted by the Household Suffrage Act. The proposed Women's Disabilities Bill is, in fact, nothing more than a completion of that measure.

In 1870 the Women's Disabilities Bill passed its second reading in the House of Commons by a majority of 33 votes. In 1871 it was thrown out in the second reading by a hostile majority of 69. Under this apparent retrogression, however, lies a real advance. In 1870 the question was still considered unpractical, and as little short of a farce. Few members were present; the number who voted for it, though obtaining a majority, was only 124; nor was it till the third reading, when the Government declared itself actively hostile, that the attention of the House felt called to the subject. In 1871 the Bill, though defeated, obtained 151 votes. Of these 42 were new supporters (22 having even been opponents previously); while to balance these accessions to the number of the supporters of the Bill, Mr. Bouverie could muster no more than 220, the exact number that had followed his lead the year before. But numbers alone do not show all the advance made. In 1870 the Government was actively hostile; the

Prime Minister spoke and voted against the Bill, and the leaders of the opposition were neutral. This year Mr. Gladstone's speech was almost in favour of the principle of the Bill, and he did not vote against it; while Mr. Disraeli voted for the Bill, and two of his principal colleagues spoke in its favour. The question may, therefore, be considered decided in the House. It is a battle which may be won next year, or may take some years to decide, but the issue of it is certain.

Outside the House the supporters of the movement find equal cause for congratulation. The apathy with which the question of Women's Suffrage was formerly viewed is in a great degree dissipated—at least in the large towns, the centres of thought and action. In 1870 more than 133,000 persons signed petitions for the Bill; last session more than 186,000. During the year more than 150 public meetings have been held, many of them crowded. It would be endless to give the names of the supporters of the movement; they include every rank and every sect—men and women of the highest literary attainments or in active practical life. The influence of the School Board elections cannot be over-rated. Men have grown accustomed to see women giving a vote on questions involving the welfare of the next generation, and not only giving a vote but standing for an election. Women have discovered that a polling-booth is not necessarily the disorderly bear-garden it has been depicted to them, and that a lady can go to give her vote not only without hurt but without annoyance. How they valued this newly-acquired privilege was sufficiently shown by the numbers who availed themselves of it. Of the ten ladies who have been elected on the Boards in various towns of England and Scotland, some have been promoted to the chair, and the services of the others have been fully acknowledged. The municipal elections in which women take a part have proceeded quietly, and were as orderly as usual. It is difficult to see the logic which would allow a woman to elect her town authorities and vote on all questions of local government each year, and considers her dignity would be lowered and her purity sullied by a vote every four or five years for the candidates of the National Court of Legislation. It would be hard to see why a woman is physically and mentally unfit to give a vote at a polling-booth, when she was fully competent to go and give it in a public room for the School Board elections. As far as this country is concerned, the question of the danger and impossibility of women registering votes has been settled during the past year. It need not be forgotten, however, that those women who are too busy or too timid to give their votes need not fear being obliged to avail themselves of the privilege.

We have frequently heard urged against the adoption of Women Suffrage that it would cause continual disunion in families; and there might be some force in the objection were universal suffrage the amendment proposed, though even then it would be difficult to believe that an occasional vote could cause more disunion than the difference of opinion on religious grounds, which so often exists between members of the same family. But the measure now before the country only proposes to give each family or household a vote. It is but fully carrying out the reform begun by Household Suffrage three years ago, and as such, we think, cannot fail to recommend itself to every advocate of just representation in England.

REPORT
OF A
MEETING IN ST. JAMES' HALL,
ON
SATURDAY, MARCH 25th, 1871,
FOR THE
LONDON NATIONAL WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETY.

A NUMEROUSLY attended public meeting, convened by the London National Women's Suffrage Society, was held on Saturday, March 25th, at St James's Hall, in support of the bill reintroduced into the House of Commons for enabling women, properly qualified, to vote at Parliamentary elections. The meeting comprised a great number of ladies, and great earnestness was evinced in the object which it sought to promote, the resolutions being carried against only two or three dissentients.

Sir Robert Anstruther, M.P., took the chair at eight o'clock, and among the gentlemen prominent on the platform were Mr Jacob Bright, M.P., Mr H. Fawcett, M.P., Mr P. A. Taylor, M.P., Dr Lyon Playfair, M.P., Professor Cliffe Leslie, and Mr George Howell. Mr John Stuart Mill, the late member for Westminster, whose efforts to promote women's suffrage were referred to by more than one speaker in terms of the highest commendation, was present in the body of the hall, but did not take any part in the proceedings.

The CHAIRMAN opened the business of the meeting by announcing the receipt of letters of apology for non-attendance from Lord Houghton, Mr Stansfield, M.P., Mr Eastwick, M.P., Mr Hughes, M.P., Lord Amberley, Mr John Morley, and Mr George Odger. After expressing his conviction that the committee would have acted more wisely in selecting a lady to preside on the occasion, seeing how admirably Mrs P. A. Taylor had presided at a similar meeting held at Hanover Square Rooms last year, he proceeded to observe that it was hardly four years since the object for which they had met that night was first introduced to the House of Commons under the auspices of Mr John Stuart Mill—(great cheering)—of

whom it was not too much to say that no one could have brought it forward with so much force and ability. It was his (the chairman's) misfortune to be shut out of the division, which he had ever since regretted. Since that time, however, the subject had made much progress. At the present time more than half of what they then asked had been gained. In 1869 the hon. member for Manchester, Mr Jacob Bright—(cheers)—carried a bill for giving the municipal franchise to women, and the effect of that step was now beginning to be felt. Last year he brought in the measure for which they were now contending, and it passed its second reading, thus affirming the principle of women suffrage; while the passing of the Education Act, giving women the vote for, and a seat at, school boards, was the best proof of the futility of bugbears which had been raised as to the incapacity and undesirability of women fulfilling such civic duties. The Association did not ask for privileges, but demanded a right, for those who bore the burdens of citizenship were entitled to exercise its rights. (Cheers.) The principal objections by which they were met, namely, that it was undesirable to drag women into the turmoil and to expose them to the violence of a contested election, was now disposed of by the fact that we were going to vote by ballot in peace. (Hear, hear.) Mr Bright's bill was lost last year through the operation of the most unworthy influences. The arguments adduced in support of it were not answered—they could not be; but it was passed round from one hon. member to another in the House of Commons on the Wednesday sitting at which it stood for committee, that the passing of the bill would operate unfavourably to the Liberal party, because women were so much under clerical influence. The Home Secretary's mind was a perfect blank on the subject of the second reading; but it was thrown out on committee in the way he had stated. He doubted the fact himself. But even if the women franchise would injuriously affect the Liberal majority, that was no reason why a right should be withheld, nor did he think it would be possible long to withhold that right. He would impress upon the meeting a remarkable expression of Mr Disraeli on the subject of female suffrage. He said in a country where ladies hold manorial courts, and where they act as churchwardens, he did not see why the suffrage should be withheld from them. (Cheers.) Mr Bright might fail to get that support which he deserved from the Liberal Government, but a time might come when the support they refused might be accorded to him by the occupants of the front Opposition bench. (Cheers.) In any case he was sure he expressed the sense of the meeting in wishing the hon. gentleman success. (Hear, hear.)

Mr JACOB BRIGHT, M.P., who, as Parliamentary champion of the

cause, was warmly received, moved a resolution declaring "That the exclusion of women from representation was injurious both to the women themselves and to the whole community of which they were members." He sympathised with the Chairman in regretting that the ladies had not come forward to advocate their own cause. All the old and disproved arguments used on behalf of extension of male suffrage applied with equal force to the claims of women to the suffrage, and the concessions given by the Reform Bill had taught women to ask whether that which was of such benefit to men might not be of advantage also to them. Justice was good for both, and if legislative justice could only be obtained for men by giving them power at the polling booth, it was very simple logic on the part of women to conclude that legislative justice could only be obtained by the same process for themselves. The women who were asking for the suffrage were amongst the most gifted of their sex, and they were supported by some of the most gifted and intelligent of men. He regretted that Mr J. S. Mill was not still in the House, because he believed the measure would have received more consideration and support in that House if it had been in that gentleman's hands. Though defeated, it was pleasant for him (the hon. member) to remember that his Bill had commanded more votes than the Corn-law repealers could get until Sir Robert Peel came to their assistance. He regretted the opposition the Government had shown, but he was sure that, as that Government had given women the municipal and educational franchise, they would readily be induced to concede the whole demand when public opinion had unequivocally expressed itself. (Cheers.)

Dr LYON PLAYFAIR seconded the motion. He said he could not get hold of good solid arguments in the speeches of opponents, such as it would be a pleasure to butt at with one's head. The arguments adduced against granting political equality to women were purely traditional or sentimental, but by no means logical. He had read that day the debates of last session on the bill introduced by Mr Jacob Bright, in the hope of getting some arguments that would be worthy of attack, but they consisted of sentimental, not argumentative, objections; yet he was rewarded by stumbling on a definition of woman's functions by Mr Beresford Hope, and upon this clear definition he chiefly rests his case. He says that it is not woman's function to govern, for her true function in society—to use his own words—is to guide, to influence, to moderate, to regulate, to suffer. They were all ready to accept such a definition of her functions in society; but they failed to see that guidance, influence, moderation, and regulation of society are not admirable qualities to aid in its government. (Hear, hear.) If woman could secure such admirable qualities as

these in representatives which she may help to send to Parliament, the affairs of the kingdom would be carried on in a far better way than they are at present—(hear, hear)—that we must combat our opponents with their own weapons, and rather deal with the sentimentalism of the question than with its abstract right, and the objection to admit women's claims rests upon woman's position in society; but her present position is the product of past ideas of woman's inferiority to man. Our opponents, he said, make no attempt to discuss the question as one of right, for there can be no question that if we demand, from ratepaying and taxpaying women the burdens of citizenship, you cannot deny their abstract rights of citizenship. (Hear.) So, abandoning the question of right, it is made one of expediency in the usages of life. Women are practical enough to have to rough it in the world as well as men, but the moment you claim for them a participation in political rights, they are treated as pieces of fine porcelain, which are to be put on a high shelf to be looked at and admired, but must be by no means roughly handled. The whole history of civilization tells us that just as a woman has had an extension of justice and freedom—and these have been accorded with extreme slowness to her—so has the purity and beauty of her character augmented. People speak of the influence of women, and say it will be weakened if you give them political power. He did not deny it. Applied force is less dangerous in the working of a machine, and political power exercised under a sense of responsibility is less dangerous than power exercised in secret. Every one knows that women do now exercise political influence, but that is done in the way of intrigue and without responsibility. The moment you acknowledge it as a right, the higher moral and conscientious nature of women will exercise a favourable influence in the field of politics. One great fascination to him in the hope of seeing the suffrage given to women is, that the rancour of party politics will be subdued, and more attention will be given to those subjects of social reform in which women love to labour—the education of the ignorant, the reformation of the vicious and the criminal, the relief of the poor, the tending of the sick, the improvement of dwellings, the amelioration of public health. These are subjects dear to the heart of all English women, and would be forced on the attention of their representatives. Female suffrage would soon improve the character of female education, and obtain for women a fair share of the educational resources of the country. He supported this movement not only on the grounds of right, for they are undeniable, but also of expediency. Far from lowering the position of women as a class, it must in its effects elevate and improve them, by increasing their responsibilities, and making them take interest in the public questions which affect

the welfare of the nation—(applause)—and where women are made part of the nation by direct interests and responsibilities the gain will be immense.

Mr CLIFFE LESLIE supported the motion. Lamentable, as the Chairman justly says it is, that the only speakers at this meeting are men, the fact that this resolution is supported by men connected with each of the three kingdoms affords in itself some indication that the representation of women is now felt by numbers of men in the United Kingdom to be a man's as well as a woman's question. I cannot indeed myself, like the eminent Members of Parliament who have preceded me, claim to speak as a representative man. But at least I do not misrepresent a part of the kingdom with which I am academically connected, when I say that among the rising generation of men, the men of the future, the resolution I hold in my hand would find numerous supporters. With an older generation there is naturally more opposition to change; but the very opposition shows how the subject engages men's minds, the first step to conviction. It comes to the front in discussions at first sight not even remotely connected with it. Only a few days ago a very eminent physiologist, connected with two of the three kingdoms, and a professor in the university in which I myself hold a chair, delivered a lecture on the circulation of fluids in animals, in which he argued that women have fewer red particles than men in their blood, and therefore are not entitled to equal rights. I may venture a word or two presently on the physiological question; but although the medical faculty everywhere in the three kingdoms appears to contain the body of men most agitated at the prospect of the removal of the disabilities of women, it is only fair to say that those disabilities did not originate with the doctors, for women themselves were the original doctors. And we ought not to lose sight of the real original causes, for they afford a good indication of their fitness to govern the structure of society now.

The exclusion of women from public life and citizenship grew out of a combination of the worst points in the mediæval church, in feudalism, and in the morals and manners of men of all classes from the middle age down to a time most of us can remember. Men who at this day rest their opposition to the representation of women more or less avowedly on some presumed moral and intellectual weakness in women would most of them feel a little ashamed if they only knew how distinctly their ideas on the subject can be traced home to monks and priests of the very darkest part of the middle age. To do feudalism justice, it did not, like the churchmen of the dark ages, make little of the moral and intellectual qualities of women; but it fastened on them as non-combatants a number of disabilities,

which have continued in force, although the modern representatives of the feudal lords not only do no military service themselves, but have commuted the payments their predecessors made for exemption into a tax on the tea and sugar of all the women in the country. But we must not charge on monks or feudalists only, or on the middle age exclusively, the exclusion of women from civil and public life. The fact is that it arose mainly from and was perpetuated to our own time by the moral and intellectual infirmities not of women but of men themselves of all classes. Why, such was the violence and injustice of men for ages towards one another, that male electors frequently went reluctantly and trembling for their lives to the poll. And let any man look into our statute books and historical records if he would learn to what special dangers women for centuries were exposed, if they stirred beyond their own doors without a considerable escort. No wonder that women themselves sought to take no part in public life, and that the political rights which one order of women once possessed died out through disuse. Why, until a few years ago the habits and ideas of men in this country were so barbarous, as I must call it, that a lady could not so much as enter the coffee-room of a hotel without the imputation of boldness and the risk of something offensive. Pope, in his day, complained of the want of character in women, saying that they were "best distinguished by black, brown, and fair." But he ought to have added that the men of the time bore far less innocent distinctions, and that the characterlessness of the women was attributable to the bad character of the men. If the red particles in their blood gave the colour to the character of the latter, I can only say the practice their hedocors had of bleeding them copiously had something to say for itself. And the sooner men now give proof of a great moral improvement, and of being fit to be associated with by women, the better both for their character and for their own interests.

But it is not moral infirmity only that the exclusion of women from civil rights argues in men. The simple truth is that the classification of women together in the lump in respect of their capacities or incapacities, their aptitudes or their inaptitudes, belongs to a period of social infancy, to that primitive condition of the intellectual faculty which can only think of human beings in tribes and masses collectively, and is incapable of entertaining the idea of individuality. To lump together fifteen millions of women, as there are in this country—fifteen millions that is to say of individual human beings, differing infinitely from one another in powers and qualities—argues so imperfect a development of the logical faculty in the man who does it, that however numerous the red particles in his blood, I fear if an intellectual qualification for the suffrage were exacted, it might

go hard with him unless indulgence were shown to the intellectual infirmity of his sex. The progress of civilisation, if I may borrow two hard words from Herbert Spencer's philosophy, is from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous; and the proposition holds good alike of the capacity of men to discriminate individual differences, and of their organisation of society being such as to permit of their development. It is true that a great naturalist has lately published an opinion, without, I must say, adducing much evidence in support of it, that women vary individually less than men, a mark of inferior development. One might ask in reply what display of mental variety is there among our male agricultural labourers? Or how has it been possible for women under existing restraints to display thus the real variety of their capacities and powers?

The fact, however, is that, notwithstanding all disadvantages and obstacles, women have exhibited a great variety of powers and talents: and, what is especially to the point, political capacity of the highest kind is a quality of which many women have given proof at all stages of civilisation, and under the most different forms of government. The greatest English political philosopher of our age, Mr Mill, found in his official experience in connection with the government of India, that the best governed native states were those governed by women. Now it so happens that the greatest French political philosopher of the last age, Montesquieu, collected evidence on this very point from all quarters of the world and all stages of society. And his testimony is the weightier that he lived in a state of society little calculated to exalt his opinion of women, and that he actually was under some strong prejudices against them, and in favour of their domestic subordination. Yet his induction compelled him to conclude: "It is contrary to nature and reason that women should reign in families, but not that they should govern empires. Nations are happy in the Indies under the government of women, happy in Africa; and if we add the experience of England and Russia, we must conclude that women succeed in government alike in despotic and constitutional States." This reference to Russia by a Frenchman may remind some that among Lord Brougham's "Statesmen of the time of George III." are two women, a Russian and a Frenchwoman. The first, Catherine of Russia, was not a good woman in private life, and her moral inferiority to her sex created no small obstacles to her success as a sovereign; yet, comparing her with male rulers, Lord Brougham was forced to pronounce her one of the ablest the world had ever known. The second, Madame de Stael, was a very different character, against whom no moral reproach was brought, and who never held political office. Yet, not to speak of the lustre of her literary fame, the political influence which her abilities won for

her unsought, was such that Lord Brougham ranks her among the leading European statesmen of her time. And he mentions a fact which is not without its interest now—that when Napoleon I. was driven to contemplate, or to feign to contemplate, constitutional government, it was to Madame de Stael he turned for assistance. She refused to become the accomplice of a tyrant, but let me ask, had Madame de Stael been the sovereign of France in place of the first Napoleon, might not that great country have escaped not only the disasters which befell it in his time, but those which have befallen it in ours? Is it even too much to suggest, from a comparison of the history of France with that of our own country, that one of the causes of the political misfortunes of the former has been its Salic law?

The evidence I have referred to has a bearing, let me observe, on Mr Darwin's speculation respecting the comparative variety of individual power in men and women respectively. For either women vary like men in political capacity, or if, on the other hand, they are all much alike, they are all born statesmen and much the superiors in political capacity of the majority of men. It appears that men ought to be anxious to claim the equal transmission of qualities to both sexes, which is, after all, one of Darwin's own doctrines. May we not conclude, too, that either the Professor was astray in his physiology, or else the inferior number of red particles in their blood do not make women the political inferiors of men? To put the most moderate conclusion, may we not at least affirm that numbers of women have enough political sagacity to contribute much to the information and enlightenment of those who are to legislate for them and the classes they belong to; and that men themselves sustain a heavy political loss by their non-representation?

And the political entails a heavy economic loss, because a class which is totally powerless politically will never be able to make the most of its industrial powers, as most classes of men have experienced to their cost. I happen to know well a foreign town which has often struck me as a microcosm representing faithfully the sort of adjustment of work to capacities made by the ruling sex. Women are not so strong in the arm as men; they have less bone and muscle; we are told they have fewer red particles in their blood; but they have fingers fitted for finer work, quicker eyes, and a quicker use of their wits. Well, go to Liège—a town in which there is both heavy and fine work—if you would see a type of the industrial economy adjusted by men to this state of things. Go first to a coal mine above the town, and you may see a man standing quietly beside a cart into which young women and girls are laboriously shovelling coal. Go next down to the river, and you

may see a couple of strong men lolling in the stern of a barge, with pipes in their mouths, while heavily burdened old women are loading or unloading the barge. Go, lastly, through the streets of the town, and you will not see a man carry a weight, but you will see many small, slight women carry such weights that you can hardly believe your eyes. One day, I was walking with M. De Laveleye, talking on this very subject, when a small, elderly woman went by with a load of rifles; we went up to her, and counted fifteen heavy rifles, stock and barrel complete, on her back. Return, then, to England, and see if the political masters of women have ordered their work much more fairly or wisely there. You may see an old woman sweeping a crossing throughout the wettest day; or a middle-aged woman at work from morning to night in an agricultural gang; or a young girl doing the whole work of a house full of male lodgers, besides the family, as thorough servant. But whatever her brains and knowledge, a woman is not admitted to any of the well-paid offices of State beneath the throne; she may not enter the principal gates to both the learned professions and the world of letters—the Universities; she is so shut out from the professions that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a woman to become a qualified physician to her own sex. And the example set by the Universities, the State, the Church, the Courts of Law, the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons, is followed in not a few of the skilled trades for which women have special aptitudes. Women are practically not allowed to earn their living by watch-making in England, though thousands of women in Switzerland do make their living by making watches for the English market; and an eminent London watchmaker (Mr Bennett) has stated that if women in England were allowed to make the parts of a watch for which their superior delicacy of fingers gives them superior aptitude; and if the whole business of watchmaking were properly organised, with a right division of labour, the sale of English watches would be so much greater, that there would actually be more, instead of less, work for men in the trade.

Now, I confidently ask any economist whether the loss to the whole community from such maladjustment of women's work, from such suppression and misdirection of the industrial powers of fifteen millions of women must not be enormous? and whether the industrial subjection of women, consequent on their political subjection, must not entail a financial loss to the State beyond calculation? There is one man in particular whose attention ought to be specially alive to the matter: I mean the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who must be very hard set just now to make ends meet, with such a balance of revenue and expenditure as men's organization of women's work,

on one hand, and military work on the other, has made for him. If he would carry, as carry he might, the political, and consequently the industrial emancipation of women, he might make, in good earnest, the boast of Canning, that he had called a new world into existence to redress the balance of the old.

It is true that Mr Mill, in any event, will be the real redresser of the balance; but Mr Mill is the author of most of the best political ideas of the age, and the test of statesmanship is to follow them early instead of late.

The resolution was then carried, with only two or three dissentients.

Professor FAWCETT then moved the 2d resolution:—"That women, being held, equally with men, responsible to law, should, therefore, have equal voice in electing those who make the laws." He thought the arguments in favour of this resolution had been so ably stated, that, instead of alluding to them, it would be more practically useful to consider the obstacle which impeded the movement they all had at heart. These might be described under the general names of prejudice and party. (Hear, hear.) In so far as they rested on prejudice, it was difficult to meet them, for they rested upon an unsubstantial basis. (Hear.) It was said women did not care to exercise the vote. Now they did not wish to make women vote whether they liked it or not; they only said, those women should vote who desired to take a part in the political affairs of their country. The most formidable difficulties, however, which they had to contend against, were those arising from party considerations. (Hear, hear.) The majority against Mr Bright's bill was obtained by its being whispered from man to man in the House of Commons, that if the Bill was passed, Messrs A., B., and C. would lose their seats, because, it was said by members of the Government, that women were under clerical influence. If this was a ground for disfranchisement, then, remembering the extraordinary fondness with which the present Government during the last Session clung to the miserable rags of ecclesiastical ascendancy, the meeting would be of opinion that more than one distinguished occupant of the Treasury bench ought to lose his vote. To resist a measure on the ground that it would weaken a party in the House of Commons, he denounced as mean, cowardly, and oligarchic in the worst sense of the word. One thing they might congratulate themselves on. They had a Prime Minister who could be convinced by argument, and who did not mind changing his opinion. (Laughter.) And the right hon. gentleman's argument on this subject had been so illogical, that he would be the first to recognise its absurdity. They would remember his celebrated saying in the House of Commons, when, in passionate periods, he exclaimed, "Are you going to exclude the

working men from the suffrage? Are they not your own flesh and blood?" It would have to be asked, "Are you, the Prime Minister of the Liberal party in a householder's Parliament, going to exclude the women of England? Are not they then our own flesh and blood, and if not, why not?" (Laughter and cheers.) He concluded by adjuring the lately enfranchised working classes to help on the advancement of that era when no one in this country, unless incapacitated by mental defects, by pauperism, or by crime, should be deprived of those political rights without which justice was not guaranteed, and without which freedom was not secure. (Cheers.)

Mr GEORGE HOWELL, in seconding the resolution, said, that when the Ladies Committee paid him the compliment of asking him to speak in support of a resolution he felt it to be his bounden duty to do so. He supported the movement, not for the educated women only, but for all women. He had worked to destroy class privileges, and bring within the pale of the Constitution—the great mass of the working-classes, and he felt equally desirous that the privileges of sex should also be destroyed so far as they related to the Parliamentary Franchise. The movement with which his name had been so prominently identified—namely, that of manhood suffrage, was never meant to be exclusive, but inclusive, as had been frequently stated. The resolution spoke of the equal responsibility of woman. Her liability and responsibility to the law presupposes or ought to presuppose her mental, social, and political equality. If you impose equal duties, you should confer equal rights, for there can be no duties except those based on right. The plea so frequently put forward, that woman is not fitted to exercise political rights is simply the old Conservative argument, always used by those who have power, to prevent others being admitted to equal privileges with themselves. The same was said with reference to the working men during the late agitation for the extension of the franchise, and if the obstructives could have had their way, they never would have been fit, for they dreaded their fitness more than their unfitness. Nothing tended so much to fit people for the exercise of their duties as the responsibility of having to discharge them. A great many eminent Liberal M.P.'s were dreadfully afraid of the working-class electors below a certain line, lest it should be found to aid Conservatism. He (Mr Howell) never had that dread, and if it had been found to have that effect, the way persons vote was a very different thing altogether from the right of voting. To exclude woman from the right of voting because she might exercise it against any peculiar political party was nothing less than petty tyranny of the worst type. Give to woman her right to vote, and she will find the way to exercise it usefully. It will be the finest education in the world, and will tend

to lift her out of her present degraded position. Her present unfitness is the greatest argument in her favour. She is unfit by reason of her exclusion, include her, and you help to fit her for her most solemn duties.

Professor Leslie referred to women being kept out certain workshops and trades, but the reason was understood. Working men were not opposed to women getting their own living in any and every honourable way, but they did object to women being used as mere instruments by employers to cut down wages, as was too frequently the case. Let but women have their political and social rights, and be enabled thereby to protect themselves against the selfish greed of employers, and no skilled trade would be closed against them. Let not the educated only, but the toilers in the workshop, the field, and the mine be fully enfranchised, and their position will be improved, and their present helplessness modified. He heartily seconded the resolution.

Mr P. A. TAYLOR, M.P., in proposing the third resolution, said—It is no mere platform conventionalism but a very serious reality, when I say that I never felt more perplexed than in the endeavour to find something to say, in fulfilment of my promise to address a few words to you this evening, on this much-discussed question. And the perplexity does not arise from the number and force of the arguments brought against us, but precisely because they are few and weak, and for the most part, carry their own refutation on the face of their statement. If any one will try to prove that two and two make four, he will find it not altogether so easy a proposition to establish, as might be imagined. If our opponents would descend into the arena of argument, and declare that two and two are five, they would find with what facility we should overthrow them. But instead of arguments we are met, for the most part, with a satirical saying, or a pert platitude. In mentioning one or two of these I shall not attempt their refutation, but merely treat them as the farmer treats dead owls and bats,—nail them to the barn door by way of warning. One argument, however, does occur to me, which is frequently used against us, but which I have not credited as due to this question only—being, as it is, a time-honoured defence of all abuses that have to be amended. It is known as “the thin-end-of-the-wedge argument.” We are told now that there is no great difficulty in acceding to the request to give votes to women, but it is feared that this is only the thin end of the wedge. Where do we intend to draw the line? How far do we mean to go? Dreadful visions arise of women forming a regiment of dragoons; of the College of Surgeons being composed for the most part of women; and, horror of horrors, of their actually aspiring to become Members

of Parliament! Surely under ordinary circumstances we should be satisfied to let these questions find their own solution, feeling tolerably certain that neither men nor women would largely engage in avocations for which circumstances rendered them unfit. Except in regard to this woman's question who would ever think of using so frivolous an argument? Suppose a man shut up in a prison, what should we think of the refusal to unbind his fetters for fear lest, not being strong, he should immediately become a soldier?—having neither intelligence nor energy, he should attempt to take his position as M.D.? or more probably, perhaps, than either, that having no particular knowledge of or interest in politics he should desire to become a Member of Parliament? Now amidst all this talk of the incapacity of women for the positions they would desire to fulfil, it is impossible to resist the suspicion that it is rather their capacity than their incapacity that causes this alarm; that it is feared they would be too capable of contending with men in the avocations which men desire to monopolise; in a word, do not men fear their capacity and love their ignorance?

Miss Austen says:—“The advantages of natural folly in a beautiful girl have been already set forth by a sister author; and to her treatment of the subject I will only add, in justice to men, that though to the larger and more trifling part of the sex imbecility in females is a great enhancement of their personal charms, there is a portion of them too reasonable and too well informed themselves to desire anything more in women than ignorance.”

But this you will perhaps think is only the satirical illustration of a phase of thought long since past. I will endorse it by an authority of the present day. The *Court Circular* says of the power and mission of the sex (if I were a mimic I would read this passage with the appropriate drawl and lisp required for its expression):—“Woman, while she is content to be what she has been (and to a pretty good purpose too) for centuries, will always be able to boast of her supremacy over us; but let it be boasting and nothing more, for then it pleases her and doesn't hurt us. But let her not try conclusions in the open field of life. When woman becomes the antagonist of man, instead of his ally and friend, her mission is lost, and even her attractions will fail her when she has once offended his pride.”

I will now venture upon an illustration or two of the satirical sayings which, for the most part, are given us in place of argument. The *Saturday Review* says:—“While the mass of women remain so ignorant and idle as they now are, no imposture will be too gross to secure their attention, if it appeals to their vanity, their love of novelty, and their craving for excitement.” And again: “Go where we will, affectation of being something she is not meets us in women, like a ghost we cannot lay, or a mist we cannot sweep away.”

This may be called "the fool argument." From the same authority I will quote what may be called "the angel argument"—equally applicable, and profoundly inconsistent:—"Man was to go out and do battle with many enemies; he was to fight with many powers, to struggle for place, for existence, for natural rights, to give and take hard blows, to lose, perhaps, this good impulse, or that noble quality in the fray, the battle-field of life not being that wherein the highest virtues take root and grow. But he had always a home, where was one whose sweeter nature brought him back to his better self."

Now it strikes one this is rather hard upon women,—demands too much. Under this "angelic argument" we demand of women the highest illustration of capabilities, which under "the fool argument" we have denied that she possesses. The woman has to do all the purification for both sexes. We say to the man, "Go out into the contests of the world; sell your soul for mammon, and your country for place; and then come back to your innocent and unsuspecting better-half, who—too ignorant to comprehend your baseness—will console, encourage, and arm you for a similar fight next day." Without expending a word of argument on this, it may be worth while noting the essential immorality of the position in which it places women. It deprives her of that sense of responsibility which is the salvation, alike of man and woman, and by depriving her of which it takes from her all power of regulating her own conduct by a sense of duty, while it incapacitates her for endeavouring to raise, purify, and elevate the activities of man.

A very different authority from any I have yet quoted, (Wendell Philips) says—"God's method of education is to lay responsibility on the human soul. The doctors say there is electricity enough in the brain to cure any disease, if you could only rouse it. So there is moral power enough in every man" (and the same is equally true of every woman), "to make him a man, if you could only rouse it; and responsibility rouses it." The resolution that has been given me to propose is as follows, viz. :—

"That the recent Acts conferring the municipal franchise on women and the right of electing members to sit on school boards, ought to be supplemented by the acceptance of the bill introduced by Mr Jacob Bright; and it is therefore resolved that petitions, signed by the chairman on behalf of the meeting, in favour of this bill, be forwarded to both Houses of Parliament."

I must repeat that I have not one argument to offer in its favour to those to whom it does not appear a self-evident proposition that the recognised fitness of women to sit in the lately constituted School Boards is in itself an unanswerable argument for their power to exercise the franchise. I should not know how to frame an argument to prove that when women are fit to exercise one of the most important

functions, to organise and carry out with success the greatest legislative effort of this century, that they can hardly be unfit to exercise the magnificent privilege of voting for that supernal being, an M.P.

Mr AUBERON HERBERT in supporting the resolution said,—That they had heard that night that, in the opinion of one of the opponents of women's suffrage, it was the lot of women to suffer. If he were to make a long speech at that late hour, and after the good speeches which had been already made, he should be helping to realize that condition of women's life. He thought that the first and principal ground on which the present movement rested was that it was plainly and simply unjust to refuse to those women, who asked for it, the right of expressing their desires and protecting their interests by means of the franchise. All experience tended to show that whatever was unjust could not work well; it was impossible to trace the further consequences of any injustice sanctioned in our system; its effects were like the roots of one of those Indian plants which buried themselves in the ground, re-appearing at distant intervals. Secondly, he wished to remind them how entirely the progress and happiness of a country with a popular government depended on what he might call the reserve-fund of thought and feeling which was stored up in the minds of the people. All institutions were colourless and valueless—mere machinery—except in so far as they were expressions of the temper and spirit of the people. He was constantly struck with the careless way in which men formed their opinion on the great questions of the time. The newspaper read over the breakfast-table or in the train—snatches of conversation in the intervals of business—made up a great part of the political thought and knowledge amongst them—what he wished to do was to transplant the thought about, and discussion of these things from without to within their homes; to bring all the serious and earnest influence of English home-life to bear upon the formation of political thought; and the only way to do this was to remove the dividing line that now existed between men and women, in political matters, to make women share in the responsibility of directing public affairs, and to lead them to fit themselves by knowledge and by thought for this responsibility. He would only add, in conclusion, that as this change was brought about, those sweet and pure-minded women, to whom they owed so much, would lose not one of those charms, which men were right in watching and preserving so jealously, but in gaining greater width of view and steadiness of thought, they would strengthen and extend their influence for good.

The motion was carried by acclamation.

A vote of thanks to the Chair was proposed by Mr THOMAS HARE, and seconded by PROFESSOR HUNTER. The business of the evening was then concluded.

THE DEBATE

IN

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

ON THE

WOMEN'S DISABILITIES BILL,

ON MAY 3rd, 1871.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

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—
1871.

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of the very strongest kind to endeavor to obtain the franchise.

DEBATE ON THE WOMEN'S DISABILITIES BILL.

House of Commons, Wednesday, May 3.

On the order of the day for the second reading of this Bill,
Mr. JACOB BRIGHT observed that when the question of the
removal of the electoral disabilities of women was first brought
before the House in 1867 it was regarded with feelings of
curiosity, and probably most of those who remained to hear the
debate did so in the expectation that they would get some
amusement from it. When the Bill, of which he was about
to move the second reading, was last year submitted to the
House its opponents somewhat under-estimated the amount of
Parliamentary support it would receive. They had no idea
that in a House of between 200 and 300 it would be read a
second time by a considerable majority. Such, however, was
the fact, and when it was borne in mind, in connexion with
that fact, that there were 170 members of the present Parlia-
ment who had, at one time or another, given their sanction to
the principle of the Bill, he thought he might state that they
now approached the discussion of it with a feeling that they
had a subject before them as serious and important as any
which had ever occupied the attention of the House or country.
He had no means of knowing whether the House would read
the Bill a second time to-day; but, if he might judge of the
future by the past, he could say if they did not read it a second
time to-day they would do so at no distant period. Whatever
measures had been generally supported by the large Parlia-
mentary boroughs had found their way to the statute-book. The
great towns had recently decided in favour of household suffrage
for men; and they had now decided, not with entire unanimity,
but with a remarkable approach to it, in favour of this Bill for
giving household suffrage throughout the country without any dis-
tinction of sex. Edinburgh and Birmingham, Manchester and
Bristol, Leeds and Brighton, Oldham and Sheffield, Halifax and
Bolton had given an undivided vote in favour of the Bill. He
would not go into the general question of unequal legislation
as between men and women. He believed the House pretty
well understood the whole subject. Women asked for the

Parliamentary suffrage because they bore in common with men all the burdens of the State, and because they believed they had a constitutional right to influence the making of the laws which they had to obey. The great and oppressive inequalities in the laws as between the sexes supplied them with a practical motive of the very strongest kind to endeavour to obtain the franchise, from a knowledge of the fact that only those who could influence the legislative body had any chance of getting their grievances redressed. Two recent cases might be quoted as illustrating the state of the law between men and women. One was the case of a grandchild of Lord Mount-Cashell—a child taken away from the guardianship of its mother by its father. The case was most severely commented on by the Judge, and the Court would have liked to give a decision entirely opposed to that it gave. He did not say that the child, instead of being the property of the father, should be the property of the mother; but in a matter of this kind there should be some just decision, and if there was any choice certainly the child should go to that parent who would best do a parent's duty by it. Another case came before the Courts the other day, and the question was whether in this country a widow had any right to bring up her child in the religion she professed. The father was a Roman Catholic, the mother a Protestant, and the child was eight years of age. The father had left no instructions as to the religion in which the child should be trained; but the relatives of the dead father absolutely controlled the mother, who was obliged to have her child brought up in the Roman Catholic religion, although she herself entirely disbelieved it. Women had discovered that whenever a class of persons hitherto debarred from the franchise were admitted within the political pale, a very decided change soon occurred in the legislation affecting them. Until working men got votes the House had looked with considerable suspicion on Trades' Unions, and would gladly have suppressed them; but now they had legislated for them in a spirit of justice, and probably even of generosity. He did not believe this change was owing to the fact that working men could now meet them at the polling-booth and there assert their powers. He attributed it to a much better motive. When working men were enfranchised the House had been compelled to look at every question which affected them, and were likely, therefore, to arrive at more truthful and just decisions. If women had the franchise the House would get to know their opinions and feelings, and legislation affecting them would be more successful. Had they possessed the franchise, would the Women's Property Bill have met the fate it did? It passed that House and reached the other Chamber, where the voice of justice was not always

heard unless its demands were in harmony with the supposed interests of those who assembled there. What was done with it? The Peers destroyed the Bill and created another. During that process the Government, so far as he recollected, were inactive, and did not lend the slightest assistance to the admirable Bill sent up by that House. He did not blame the Government. They were overweighted with business, having three times more on their hands than they could possibly get through. They must choose what measures they could give attention to, and must do the work of their masters—those who made and could unmake them. To suppose they could give attention to the interests of the unenfranchised was to suppose what was impossible. That Bill came back with the principle knocked out of it—a thing of shreds and patches, very good for the lawyers, but very difficult for any one else to understand; and to this hour confiscation of property at marriage was the law for women in this country. The Government had been obliged to take up the subject of university tests, especially during the last two sessions, the object being not to enable Nonconformists to obtain an academical education, but to enable them to enjoy certain emoluments they could not otherwise reach; but how was it with women? A struggle was going on among women for a higher education. At Edinburgh University some half-dozen women of great ability, high character, and industry desired to become qualified as medical practitioners—not seeking emoluments and honours, but simply the education which such institutions were supposed to give; but nobody came down to that House for their relief; no great party was set in motion; the Government was silent while half-a-dozen women were heroically fighting their own battle against a high class trades' union in that city. (Hear, hear.) In the course of the discussion on the Bill for legalising marriage with a deceased wife's sister several hon. members referred to what was said to be the opinion women entertained of that measure. The hon. member for Boston (Mr. Collins) had read a passage from the *Women's Suffrage Journal* to show this. That journal, conducted by a woman, was as ably conducted as any journal in the kingdom—(hear, hear)—and more than any other paper represented the suffrage associations of the country. Women, however, were not satisfied with that sort of irregular representation in this House. What they said was that if their opinions were of any value, if their condition was to be studied at all, they ought to express their views by the constitutional method—through the polling-booth, precisely as men did. With a conscientious desire to lessen infanticide, the hon. member for Salford (Mr. Charley) had introduced the Infant Life Preservation Bill. If it affected anyone it affected women, and it

was natural they should consider it. These women's suffrage societies were becoming vigilance committees which watched the legislation of the House with regard to women. They agreed with the hon. member for Salford in his object, but they differed from him in regard to the means by which he proposed to attain it. They had presented a memorial to the Home Secretary against the Bill, and they had sent it to every member. Was it not of some use to hon. members to see the criticisms of women upon the Bill? And if it were, was not their demand a reasonable one, that they should be allowed to express their opinions at the polling-booth? If political disabilities ought to exist at all, it would be more fair to place them on men than on women; if either men or women should be without votes, it ought to be men; and his reason for that opinion was that men had ten times the means of influencing the Legislature of any country apart altogether from votes. They had physical strength, combative qualities, opportunities of meeting, and the almost entire control of the press, the platform, and the pulpit; they were the masters of all the great professions in this country; they had the command of the purse; and when all these things were considered it appeared to him that hon. members sitting on that side of the House, who had always been in favour of representation, could hardly enter the lobby to vote against this Bill without feelings of discomfort almost akin to shame. Among those who opposed the Bill last Session were the right hon. member for Kilmarnock (Mr. Bouverie), the noble lord the member for Haddingtonshire (Lord Elcho), and the hon. member for North Warwickshire (Mr. Newdegate), and, if he could have selected his opponents, he would have picked out these three members. From the names of his opponents he should expect that they would bring forward arguments drawn from prejudices rather than from reason; and he found that the arguments which did service a few years ago in opposition to the extension of the franchise were disintegrated. As it was said that men did not want the franchise, and men were produced who did not want it, so with respect to women now; but during this Session there had been presented to Parliament in favour of the Bill 420 petitions, to which 150,000 signatures were attached; and 150 meetings, of varying character but many of them crowded, had been held in support of it in the United Kingdom, but mainly in Scotland and England. It was said that the franchise would be a curse to women; but it might be assumed that women were the best judges of that; and there had recently been presented to the Prime Minister a memorial in support of the Bill signed by women and headed by the names of Florence Nightingale, Harriet Martineau, Miss Carpenter, and several ladies of

title. He now came to the pedestal or pinnacle argument, which was that women stood in too high a position to be subjected to the dirt and mire of politics; but everything in this world had its baser side, including religion, literature, and art, and we did not attempt to exclude women from them on that account. Those who used this pinnacle argument were members of aristocratic families, and belonged to that privileged order in which women stood on high social pinnacles; but he did not come there to advocate the claims of women who stood upon any pinnacle or pedestal whatever, he came to plead the cause of those who, less powerfully armed by nature, less favoured by law, had to do the rough work of the world in the face of obstacles more formidable than ever beset the path of men. He did not underrate the importance of adding 14 or 16 per cent to the constituency, but what he regarded as serious was the neglect of this demand for enfranchisement, because Parliament could not legislate successfully for a community with so large a portion of which it had no relation. If the Bill passed no demand for a dissolution would come from women, who would know that from that time the questions in which they were concerned would assume a different aspect, because they would have votes at the next election. The present government in its first Session enabled women to vote at municipal elections; an eminent member observed to him at the time "That vote means the other," and the public had made up their minds that it did. Last Session women were enabled to vote for members of School Boards, and to be members of them, too, as they were in several places. As women could not be elected by large communities without being known to them, and as they had been encouraged to present themselves to constituencies, it appeared to be impossible for a Government which had gone so far to justify itself in preventing women from voting once in four or five years at parliamentary elections. Last year, the Government being neutral on this question, the House passed the second reading of the Bill by a large majority, and then there came over the scene a remarkable change, which he never could understand; but there was a panic, and in a state of panic men always saw that which did not exist. There was set to work machinery which more than once he had seen employed to upset just decisions; and on that occasion this result was achieved. He cared very little about the party aspects of this Bill; but if, as was alleged, the political power of women would be Conservative, it was a question for the grave consideration of the Government whether they would make it more Conservative by promoting its closer alliance with the Conservative party. Last year the Home Secretary did not conceal, but rather attempted to avow, that if he had been left

unfettered he would have voted for it; the Solicitor-General voted for the Bill, and had spoken warmly in its favour before his constituency; the Solicitor-General for Ireland voted for it; and the Secretary of the Poor Law Board was a supporter of it; the Secretary to the Admiralty voted for Mr. Mill's resolution in favour of the enfranchisement of women. There were other members of the Government who had never availed themselves of any opportunity of voting against the Bill. The Attorney-General had not done so; the Vice-President of the Council, who had admitted women to the membership of school boards, would hardly be likely to do so; the Under Secretary at the Home Office and the Secretary to the Treasury had not voted against it; and without inferring that all these were in favour of the Bill, he must conclude that there was something favourably suspicious in the fact that they had not voted against it. The great principle of the Liberal party was that taxation and representation should go together; and with so many members of the Government favourable to the Bill and others not hostile to it, it would not be a very unlikely thing that they should on this occasion leave this an open question, and allow the House to dispose of it free from their influence. ("Hear, hear," from Mr. Gladstone.) He rejoiced that the Prime Minister would co-operate with them so far as to allow the House to dispose of the question according to its own view. Parliament had made the home the political unit, do not let it maintain disabilities in those homes bereft of the father, and where the support to be derived from the presence of men was not to be found. (Cheers.) The hon. member concluded by moving that the Bill be read a second time.

Mr. EASTWICK, in seconding the motion, said that, as he had had no opportunity of speaking in the debate on this question last year, although his name was then as now on the back of the Bill, he naturally felt desirous of stating the grounds on which he supported the Bill, and had placed his name in a somewhat prominent position with regard to it. He was the more anxious to speak because he differed in some respects from the views of the hon. member who had just spoken. However his health just then was not such as to encourage him to address the House, and he should not have done so had he not taken a real interest in the Bill, and did he not feel it to be an imperative duty to do all in his power to support it. He must begin by saying that he was surprised at the extreme and even dangerous importance which some attached to the enfranchisement, not of women, but of the comparatively few women who possessed the qualifications which entitled men to vote, and whose claims had not been voluntarily surrendered by marriage.

Our common law looked upon husband and wife as one, and we might, therefore, set aside all married women, even those who enjoyed the income of property settled on themselves without the intervention of trustees. If we did so, and also eliminated all women except unmarried householders and lodgers qualified as males were required to be, and took the remainder only, the number of female voters placed on the list, according to the best information he could obtain, would not equal one-fifth of the number of voters added by the last Reform Bill. The peril of this addition, if there were any, was still further diminished by the fact that women were not turbulent, corrupt, and revolutionary like men, and that any changes their influence might introduce would be of the mildest and most beneficial character. He was astonished, therefore, when he heard the right hon. gentleman, on whose motion the Bill was thrown out last Session, speak of it as a measure which ought not to be carried without an appeal to the country, and a dissolution of Parliament. If the passing of this Bill were to involve a dissolution, we might as well have one about the encroachments on the Thames Embankment. The enfranchisement of some myriads of women would no more affect the nation at large than those encroachments, and if they chose to call that enfranchisement an encroachment it was at all events a beneficial one, while those others were mischievous. Another futile objection which he had heard in the last year's debate was that women could not be admitted to the suffrage without conceding to them also a seat in Parliament. It was a sufficient answer to that objection that the clergy possessed the suffrage but could not sit in Parliament, and had never agitated for the privilege. A more absurd objection still was that the enfranchisement of a small minority of women would alter the character of the whole sex, who would invade the occupations, habits, and lines of thought which formed the peculiar domain of man, and sweeping like a torrent, as it were, *per fas atque nefas* obliterate the boundaries which Nature herself had set up between the sexes. Were it not for the extreme respect in which he held a candid opponent, he should catch himself inwardly exclaiming,—

The force of folly could no further go.

If we wished to know what change admission to the suffrage would make in women, we could not do better than consider what it made in men. He did not deny the advantage of enfranchisement, but he did not believe that it consisted in an immediate change of character. Was any man, he asked, the wiser, the merrier, the better, the worse (he would not say till the Ballot Bill passed, perhaps not even then, the richer, the poorer), for obtaining the right to vote? He should be curious

to hear any one explain the physiological or psychological changes which he had detected in himself after he had obtained the suffrage. Thousands were indifferent about the possession and use of their privilege as voters, and many women would be as indifferent, though more conscientious, perhaps, than many men, when they did vote. But it was unnecessary to argue that the electoral suffrage would make no change for the worse in woman's character, because there was a practical demonstration of the fact in that the municipal suffrage had been given to women, and the educational, without in the slightest degree detracting from the feminine softness of women, or disturbing their *role* in life's great drama as wives and mothers. Women meddled neither more nor less in politics than they did in the days of Margaret of Anjou, of Queen Elizabeth, or of those contests when a beautiful duchess canvassed for Charles James Fox. Some few high spirits entered the political arena then, as they might do now, but the vast majority contented themselves with elevating and depressing their eyebrows, as the Roman ladies did their thumbs, for or against the combatants; and so, he thought, things would remain. He dismissed the thought that any very portentous changes, political or social, would be effected by carrying the measure; but then the question arose, if the measure were likely to be so inoperative, why press it at all? The answer was that it completed the representation of property and of intelligence. The intelligent views of women were no more to be disregarded than those of men; and, as it was our constitutional theory that property ought to be represented, there was no reason why it should not be represented when it was in the hands of women who discharged the duties connected with it, and were, therefore, entitled to its privileges. In the next place, it was only just that women should have such a political *status* as to enable them to obtain an equal share of educational endowment and other social advantages which were at present denied them. The hon. member for Sheffield last year spoke of many women as being but "fair savages;" the reason was that the unfair savages, men, took the lion's share of education; and the same unfairness prevailed in other matters, and he agreed with Mr. Mill, when he said "all that education and civilisation are doing to efface the influences on character of the law of force, and replace them by those of justice, remains merely on the surface as long as the citadel of the enemy, (that is the unjust treatment of women) is not attacked." Lastly it appeared to him that to imply the inferiority of women by withholding from them the suffrage was detrimental to their character, whether that inferiority were or were not wholly and absolutely true; and an illustration of this was to be found in the results of the policy of the Spaniards towards the Indians in

America. He had lately read in the work of a distinguished French traveller, a passage which seemed to him to bear on this point. It was this, "The special code and ordinances sent out by the council of the Indies unintentionally, perhaps, but effectually, favoured the spread and perpetuation of the popular prejudices as to the real inferiority of the Indians, by speaking of them and providing for them as minors in all civil matters. Habituated for so long a period to contempt and pity, they have come to regard themselves as inferior beings, and their self-respect can never be restored, except through a series of efforts as prolonged as those which have humbled them have been continuous." For these reasons he supported this Bill, but he also thought there was a special reason why this country should be the first to adopt the enfranchisement of women. That reason was the immense influence which the example of England must exert upon the 200 millions of Asiatics in India, among whom, with a few brilliant exceptions, woman had been degraded to a state little better than slavery. How could we expect that Indian women would be emancipated from the imprisonment of the zenanah or be admitted to the full privileges of education, so long as we continued to proclaim the inferiority of women in this country? If for no other reason, he should support this measure as a blow dealt at the slavery of women in the East, and as a reply to the besotted demand of the Chinese Government that schools for female education should be dissolved. (Cheers.)

Mr. BOUVERIE apologised for intruding himself as an opponent of the measure, and said he abstained from giving notice of opposition almost up to the last hour in the hope that some other member would come to the front. He was unwilling to put himself forward in a matter which interested a great number of his countrymen and countrywomen, but the House would do him the justice to admit that he had always had the courage of his opinions—a merit not always conspicuous in ministers or members. He had always given his vote in favour of the extension of the franchise, and though he criticised the Bill of 1866, his suggestions were accepted by the Government. (Hear, hear.) But his hon. friend raised a question of a different kind by the Bill he had introduced, and argued as if it were a mere complement to the measure he had himself passed two years ago, contending that, in logic, the House of Commons was bound to confer the parliamentary suffrage on women, because it had entrusted them with the municipal franchise. For his own part he believed that extension was made inadvertently and almost by surprise—(hear); but however that might be, he for one would be no party to any further extension of that measure. He must remind the House that the experi-

ence we had had of the measure on which his honourable friend based his argument was not of a very satisfactory kind. One of the points he insisted upon last year in his opposition to the present measure was that mixing up women in contested elections would be to contaminate the sex. (Hear.) On that occasion he also urged upon the House that if we conferred the Parliamentary franchise on women we should not be able to protect those who were unwilling to take part in politics. They would be driven to the poll whether they liked it or not, their lives would be made a burden to them during a contested election, and there was no woman who would not be assailed, bothered, annoyed, and persecuted to give her vote. (Cheers.) Therefore, unless the great bulk of our countrywomen asked for the franchise,—which they did not,—the House ought not to impose such a *damnosa hereditas* upon them. The struggles of parties in political life stood on a very different footing from the minor affairs referred to by his hon. friend. About a month ago there was a discussion in the Manchester Town Council as to whether that body should petition in favour of this Bill, and a majority agreed to do so. He would read, however, the statements made by two gentlemen who took part in this debate. Mr. Alderman Murray said:—"With regard to the question before them, though he supported it last year, he felt bound to vote for the amendment on this occasion, and he would tell them why. At the last municipal election it was his duty to preside at one of the booths in Ardwick, and he must say that more unseemly sights took place on that occasion than he ever witnessed at any previous election, either municipal or Parliamentary. Women in a state of semi-drunkenness were hustled into publichouses by men in the same state, and he made up his mind then that before the Parliamentary franchise was extended to women they ought to have the ballot." (Hear, hear.) Well, he had always voted for the ballot, but how could the ballot prevent scenes of that kind? Again, Mr. Alderman Lamb was reported to have said that,—"He would ask whether any gentleman present would like to see his wife, daughter, or sister taking part in the disgraceful scenes which were witnessed at the last municipal election. (Hear, hear.) Staggering women, supported by staggering men—not their husbands—were seen going up to vote, both sexes boisterous and obscene in their language." He thought, therefore, that the experience of the measure which gave the municipal franchise to women did not suggest the expediency of extending the principle. But he based his opposition to the present Bill on a much wider ground. No more serious question could be raised in Parliament than this. It was so serious, indeed, that he was astonished to hear his right hon. friend

intimating that it was considered an open question for members of the Government. His hon. friend, by his proposal, raised in a practical shape a question which had been often raised before by philosophers in their closets—viz., "Why are half the human race excluded from political privileges?" No, this was not a new question, albeit it was a very portentous one; but his hon. friend, in attempting to solve that question, was in reality disturbing the whole foundations of society and obliterating the distinction of sex, and the functions of the sexes in society which have always existed in every civilised community. (Hear, hear.) The issue now raised by his hon. friend originated in a country which was fertile in strange notions and ideas, the United States of America, and which was often extolled by his hon. friend and those who acted with him as furnishing an example of everything wise and expedient in political life. Now, what had our practical kinsmen on the other side of the Atlantic done in reference to this question? Why, they had repudiated the notion of woman suffrage, and the American women themselves had also repudiated it. The New York correspondent of a daily newspaper in this country said:—"I am afraid it must be confessed that the woman suffrage movement in the United States is pretty well 'played out.' It has become unmistakably evident of late that the women of the country do not want the suffrage." The same correspondent, after quoting the letter of a lady who exposed the unbusinesslike way in which women managed their societies in America, said:—"I agree with this lady that it is not surprising that under this state of things the sensible women of the country have become disgusted with the agitators and with their agitation, and have exercised the influence which they have with their brothers and husbands to knock the whole thing on the head as soon as possible. In Illinois, the other day, 1,400 women of a single town petitioned not to be allowed to vote; in Massachusetts an amendment to the Constitution, allowing women to vote, has been rejected in the Legislature by a large majority at the request, as it appears, of the women themselves; in Minnesota a Women's Suffrage Bill, which had passed the Legislature, has been vetoed by the Governor, who says that he is satisfied the women of the State would be more annoyed than gratified by the suffrage; and in Utah, where the women have the suffrage, they refuse to go to the polls."

Mr. HUNT asked whether it was proposed there to give the vote to married as well as to single women.

Mr. BOUVERIE believed it was. His hon. friend's Bill would tend to obliterate the practical distinctions which the experience, the wisdom, and the habits of mankind in all ages had established. It had been said that the Bill was a very small affair,

and that the House need not go much further; but if we conceded electoral power to women, how could we refuse them a share in legislative, judicial, and administrative power? (Hear.) This was a state of things which this House ought seriously to contemplate if it intended to pass the Bill. His hon. friend, no doubt would be prepared to go that length, but he felt sure such a view was not entertained by a great bulk of the women of England. His hon. friend assumed to speak in the name of all the women of England, but, in fact, he spoke in the name of only a very few of them. (Cheers.) The great bulk of the women of England had an instinctive horror of this measure, for they were aware of the evil which would ultimately ensue to their sex if they entered into rough competition with men in all the pursuits of life. Women were physically weaker than men. They were protected by the habits and ideas of society generally from oppression. There was scarcely any man above 40 years old who was not identified in his happiness and interests in life with one woman or with more than one woman. (Laughter.) The happiness and interests of wife and daughters were far dearer to the head of a family than his own. (Hear.) His interests and theirs were entirely wrapped up together; and he maintained that this was the real protection of women against oppression and injury, and not the electoral power which his hon. friend proposed to confer on them. To his mind, his hon. friend struck at the very foundation of society—namely, the family. (Hear, hear.) Was the head of the family the man or the woman? Was the head of the family to be the master of the family or was he not? Was it nature's intention, and was it our Maker's intention, that when society was founded on the family the man should be at the head of the family and should rule? Strange notions were spread abroad at the present day by those whose views his hon. friend advocated in that House. The existing state of things was to come to an end. He was not speaking without book, but would quote some passages of not inordinate length to show that the persons who with great ability promoted the views advocated by his hon. friend aimed their blows at the existing state of society and at marriage in particular. (Hear.) These were socialistic views, and he was glad to say they were not entertained by the great bulk of our countrymen and countrywomen. They were, however, entertained by philosophers and fanatics in ancient times, and they had been much written about during the last half century, so that there was a large literature on the subject by many writers, and especially by French writers. He dared say his hon. friend had not studied much of the literature on this subject. He, on the contrary, had; and he knew that the logical results of what his hon. friend advocated were the

socialistic views of those who asserted that the existing foundations of society were altogether wrong, and that the laws of property and marriage ought to be entirely revised, they being at present an abuse of the rights and privileges of mankind. Marriage was represented by these writers as a state of intolerable bondage and slavery. He would quote a passage from a work by Mr. John Stuart Mill, a gentleman who was called by some a great philosopher, although in his judgment he was rather a crude sophist than a philosopher. ("Hear, hear," and laughter.) In his essay "On the Subjection of Women" Mr. Mill said:—"The wife is the actual bond-servant of her husband, no less, so far as legal obligation goes, than slaves commonly so called. She vows a life-long obedience to him at the altar, and is held to it all through her life by law." That was the complaint. In another passage Mr. Mill said:—"I am far from pretending that wives are in general no better treated than slaves; but no slave is a slave to the same lengths and in so full a sense of the word as a wife is." Again, Mr. Mill said:—"If married life were all that it might be expected to be, looking to the laws alone, society would be a hell upon earth." (Laughter.) And again:—"The law of servitude in marriage is a monstrous contradiction to all the principles of the modern world, and to all the experience through which those principles have been slowly and painfully worked out. It is the sole case, now that negro slavery has been abolished, in which a human being in the plenitude of every faculty is delivered up to the tender mercies of another human being, in the hope, forsooth, that this other will use the power solely for the good of the person subjected to it. Marriage is the only actual bondage known to our law. There remain no legal slaves except the mistress of every house." Was that a just representation of married life, and the relations between husband and wife among the great bulk of our countrymen and countrywomen? (Hear, hear.) Mr. Mill was not even original in these views. In the year 1825 this subject was handled by Mr. W. Thompson, a gentleman of the same school of opinion as Mr. Owen, the Socialist, who gradually drifted into extraordinary notions, and held that there ought to be no morality, no laws, no property, and no marriage. (Laughter.) Among Mr. Owen's chief apostles was this Mr. Thompson, who wrote a book, entitled, "An appeal of one-half the Human Race against the Pretensions of the other Half." In this work he said:—"Even under the present arrangements of society, founded as they all are on the basis of individual competition, nothing could be more easy than to put the rights of women, political and civil, on a perfect equality with those of men. It is only to abolish all prohibitory and exclusive laws statute, or

what are called "common," the remnants of the barbarous customs of our ignorant ancestors, particularly the horrible and odious inequality and indissolubility of that disgrace of civilisation the present marriage code." Again he said:—"Woman is, then, compelled in marriage by the possession of superior strength on the part of men, by the want of knowledge, skill, and wealth, by the positive cruel, partial, and cowardly enactments of law, by the terrors of superstition, by the mockery of a pretended vow of obedience, and, to crown all, and as the result of all, by the force of an unrelenting, unreasoning, unfeeling, public opinion, to be the literal unequivocal slave of the man who may be styled her husband. . . . A domestic, a civil, a political slave, in the plain, unsophisticated sense of the word, in no metaphorical sense, is every married woman." It would thus be seen not only that Mr. Mill was a sophist in regard to this matter, but that he had not the advantage of being an original sophist. (Laughter.) Such were the views on which were founded the operations of those persons outside the House who asked for an extension of the franchise to women owners of property. Another of the modern philosophers, Mr. M. D. Conway, said in a work entitled "The Earthward Pilgrimage":—"That which is now called morality directly and deliberately stunts or even ruins the faculty of man, and on principle. This will appear to those who consider its standards of nobility, commercial success, Sabbath keeping expediency; but beside the grave at Bournemouth" (the writer was here referring to the grave of Mary Woolstonecraft, one of the originators of this school). "I revert only to that point upon which our hereditary monastic morality is most stern and uncompromising—marriage. Nothing but superstition ever sacrifices human beings to institutions. The origin of the marriage superstition is pagan. . . . Like every other superstition, it is suicidal. Permitting the *minimum* of freedom in its regulation and duration, marriage finds the young already dreading it. . . . Formosa now excites sympathy, she will presently gain respect. When finally she shall deserve respect, when she also shows she can be faithful as lover and mother, the lock and bolt system will break down. Society will before long be glad enough to assimilate contracts between man and woman to contracts between partners in business." He thought he had shown to the House by these extracts that there was a school who ardently supported the member for Manchester's measure, but who aimed their shot higher than he, and made an attack upon the very foundations of society. (Hear, hear.) There was a book far more esteemed by our countrywomen, if not by our countrymen, than the writings of

Mr. Mill, and it said:—"Her desire shall be to her husband, and he shall rule over her." (Cheers.) Now they were told that all this was to come to an end, and that women were to engage in men's pursuits—to be politicians, to become members of that House, and to take part in the administration of the country. His hon. friend the member for Cork (Mr. Maguire) had just written an entertaining book, in which he contemplated what would occur 30 years hence, and described a House of Commons, most of the members of which were women, the whips being two remarkably engaging and captivating young ladies. (Much laughter.) This was a condition of affairs to which he for one strongly objected, for he maintained that the pride and glory of woman were her modesty and her purity. (Hear, hear.) Women could not be brought into contact with the rough occupations of men without defiling their modesty and purity. He did not know whether his hon. friend the member for Manchester was a classical scholar, and had read the *Sixth Satire of Juvenal* respecting the state to which society was reduced in Rome after the women there had been struggling for what they called their emancipation. He did not, of course, say that a similar state of things could be brought about in a civilised country in the present day, but still the tendency of human nature would be the same as it was in the time of Juvenal, and he believed that the great English divine of 200 years ago was right when he said that "fear and blushing were the girdles of innocence." If the weaker part of the human race were to enter into the active occupations of men they would be sure to go to the wall. Some of the greatest French writers had complained that in their country the family had almost disappeared from the lower strata of society, and were we prepared to exchange our domestic morality for that which existed in France? He would take the liberty of reading part of a letter which had been placed in his hands since he entered the House, and which was written by an accomplished and educated lady. She wrote to him as follows:—"I find that you purpose moving the rejection of the Women's Suffrage Bill when it comes on for the second reading to-morrow. As the upholders of this Bill have had their hands strengthened by the voices of a small number of very demonstrative women, it seems scarcely right that not a voice should be raised to aid you in urging the rejection of the measure. I consider myself to be in exactly the position which enables me to express opinions which may be regarded as a fair exponent of the feelings of my countrywomen on the subject. I am middle-aged, unmarried, and live in my own house, and under the new régime should be entitled to a borough and a county vote. I have a keen appreciation of politics, and am intensely

interested in everything connected with the well-being of society, but I am strongly opposed to the extension of the franchise to women, not because I think they are not wise enough to use the privileges aright, but because they have other and more genial duties. I feel myself able to give an opinion on this subject, having an immense circle of acquaintances, including no inconsiderable number of single ladies, not one of whom has ever expressed the least desire to be endowed with the boon which Jacob Bright and its other advocates would have one to suppose was the blessing above all others to be desired. As a rule, unmarried Englishwomen are perfectly satisfied with the position and privileges which the Legislature confers. The noisy few will ever be heard above the quiet many, while the latter would almost rather be burdened with the weight and responsibilities of the franchise than make an effort to protest that they do not desire it." That letter, he believed, succinctly expressed the ideas of the great bulk of our educated countrywomen. (Hear, hear.) He clung to the conviction he expressed last year, that if this so-called boon was given it would prove a curse to them, and, therefore, he entreated the House to support him in negating the motion of his hon. friend. (Cheers.) In conclusion the right hon. gentleman moved that the Bill be read a second time that day six months.

Mr. SCOURFIELD cordially supported the amendment, but would not detain the House long, as all the ground had been travelled over by his right hon. friend. He was firmly convinced that the great mass of the women of this country did not desire to have this so-called privilege conferred upon them. This measure would put in the thin end of the wedge, to use the ordinary phrase, although he never heard of anyone endeavouring to put in the thick end of the wedge. (A laugh.) The House had no right to force upon women a privilege which only a very limited number of their sex asked for. As a means of testing whether the women of England really wished for the power of voting, he would suggest—and commend the suggestion to the attention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer—that every person signing a petition in favour of the extension of the franchise to women should be instructed to accompany the signature with a photographic portrait, and that Mr. Darwin or Professor Owen, who could distinguish the sex of animals from very trifling signs, should be retained to decide from an examination of the pictures as to the sex of the person represented, for he could not help suspecting that many of the signatories were not women, but men in women's clothing. (Laughter.)

Mr. GLADSTONE: Both the mover of the second reading of the Bill and the mover of the amendment having referred to the position of the Government on this question, I desire very

briefly to explain to the House what that position really is. The Government abstain from taking any part whatever as a Government in this discussion—not upon the mere ground that their mind and time are overcharged with public business, but upon the more comprehensive and positive ground, that it is neither desirable nor advantageous that the Government should make a rule of interfering—as a Government—with every discussion at its earliest stages; and for this plain reason—that we wish in this country to have legislation founded on mature and on free consideration. That mature consideration of subjects is much impeded by considerations of party which it is hardly possible to keep out of subjects of this sort, after, by the adoption of one view or another, they have become the property of the executive government. With a view to that free consideration, it seems to me far more desirable, while we need not shrink as individuals from expressing our opinions, that we should leave to members of our own party to take an independent course on this question—not because it is an unimportant question, but because our intervention as a body is premature and inexpedient. Now sir, I am not prepared to vote with my hon. friend in favour of this Bill; and I may state the reasons which disincline me to take that course. But I must congratulate my hon. friend on the ability with which he has stated his case. The presence of the hon. member here—I might even say the tones of his voice—agreeably remind me of the absence of his distinguished relative. I will not say that it consoles me for the loss we sustain, but at least if my right hon. friend and late colleague cannot be with us, I rejoice that the name of his family is so worthily represented. (Hear, hear.) Now, sir, my main reason for declining to vote for this Bill is that, although I do not think our present law is perfect, I am unwilling to adopt, by the second reading of the Bill, the principle of a measure for its amendment until I have some better prospect as to the satisfactory nature of the particular amendment about to be proposed than I perceive at the present moment. Proceeding to state my view of the case, in the first place I would set aside altogether the question whether the adoption of such a measure as this is likely to act in any given sense upon the fortunes of one political party or another. (Hear, hear.) It would be what I may call a sin against first principles to permit ourselves to be influenced either one way or the other by any feeling we might entertain on such a point, and therefore into that part of the subject I will not, for one moment, undertake to inquire. When I look at the particular proposals of my hon. friend I am encountered by the particular reasoning on which the opposition has been based. The mover and seconder of the amendment opposed the Bill on the specific

ground that they are opposed to these revolutionary changes in the relative positions of men and women. These they do not allege to be included in this Bill, but of which they say, and I admit with some semblance of truth, that the Bill savours more or less. I entirely agree with my right hon. friend the member for Kilmarnock in his opposition to these revolutionary changes. But I must speak of Mr. Mill in terms of much greater and warmer respect than the right hon. gentleman has used. The Bill itself is somewhat remarkable in one point of view, namely, in its avoidance of any statement of reasons for the change it contemplated. My hon. friend has dispensed with the preamble altogether, as if he were unwilling to commit himself to any limited purpose. With regard to the specific objections to the measure, I was well pleased with a portion of the speech of the hon. member who seconded the amendment. He based his objection on the direct operation of the measure as it stands, and I have no assurance from my hon. friend (Mr. Jacob Bright) of any disposition to modify the measure in committee in that important respect. The hon. member placed his objection in a great degree on its demanding the personal attendance of women, and involving them in the general proceedings of elections. That appears to me to be an objection of the greatest force. It may be that when we adopt the principle of secret voting we may ensure that tranquility of elections which has been achieved in other countries. I remember to have been in Berlin on the day of a general election, and to have been totally unable from any sign or note whatever in the streets to discover the fact that the election was going on. We are told that the same tranquility prevails on the day of election in Australia; and whether that state of things arises from the simple adoption of secret voting or not, I hope we shall labour to attain tranquility in election procedure. All the pomp and glory of elections in this country, which I am old enough to recollect, has now disappeared. I must say there was in it something of a national character. (Hear, hear.) But while we have got rid of all that was attractive, we retain much that is dangerous and demoralising. Speaking generally, however, I am inclined to say that the personal attendance and intervention of women in election proceedings, even apart from any suspicion of the wider objects of many of the promoters of the present movement, would be a practical evil not only of the gravest, but even of an intolerable character. I am not quite sure that my hon. friend, in excluding married women, has adopted a perfectly consistent course. It is quite clear that married women, if they possessed the qualification, ought not to be omitted from any privilege conferred upon single women. The question with regard to the recognition of women's rights—I use

the expression very largely without intending to express any opinion upon it—is, after all, a question of degree. The ancient law recognised the rights of women in the parish; I apprehend they could both vote and act in the parish. The modern rule has extended the right to the municipality, so far as the right of voting is concerned, and I hope our municipal elections will receive some reform with regard to order and tranquility; or else we must admit that the intervention of women under circumstances like those just described by my right hon. friend is a matter of regret. With respect to school boards, I own I believe that my right hon. friend the Vice-President of the Council was right in the course he took last year, and that we have done wisely, on the whole, in giving both the franchise and the right of sitting on the school board to women. Then comes a question with regard to Parliament, and we have to ask ourselves whether we shall or shall not go farther. Now, I do go so far as to admit that my hon. friend has a presumptive case for some change in the law, although, for my part, I will go no further until I know more of the nature of the change to be effected. With reference to the nature of that change, I am sorry my hon. friend has not noticed the subject of the representation of the property of women at elections by their actual exercise of the franchise, provided it is not done by means of personal intervention and attendance. I will not give any positive opinion on that subject, but I have never heard any conclusive reason why we should not borrow a hint from the law now existing in Italy, under which a woman is allowed to exercise the franchise if she is possessed of a qualification, subject to the condition that she shall only exercise it through a deputy, some friend or relative, especially chosen for the purpose. That may be found on examination to be a good or a bad plan, but it is one worthy of discussion. I admit, at any rate, that as far as I am able to judge, there is more presumptive ground for change in the law than some of the opponents of the measure are disposed to own. I think my right hon. friend the member for Kilmarnock perhaps fell into an error on this subject, which is very common in our discussions, I mean the error of making the social rules and considerations which govern and determine the constitution of the upper class of society, the rules and considerations which should apply to the whole. (Hear, hear.) It is very easy to deal with this case as regards the upper class. I am disposed without giving a positive opinion, to say that, so far as grievance is concerned, so far as practical mischief to be removed is concerned, with regard to the higher circle, to those who are familiarly called the "upper ten thousand," there is no case at all for entertaining a measure of this kind. There is not even a presumptive case. But when

we look at the whole of society the case is different. In the first place, we are encountered by a great social fact. My right hon. friend rests upon the old law of the human race—the law under which to the woman falls the domestic portion of duty, the care of the household, and to the man the procuring of subsistence. But that great and world-wide and world-old fact is one which the return of every census shows us to be undergoing a somewhat serious modification. The number of absolutely self-dependent women is increasing from year to year, especially in the great towns of the country. My right hon. friend speaks truly, when he says that the head of the family is the person naturally charged with the interest of his unmarried daughters: but when we go downwards in society we find that, almost as a matter of necessity, at any rate as a matter of practice, it now very frequently happens, especially in this vast metropolis, that cases arise where, when the girl approaches womanhood, it becomes almost a necessity for the father, under the limited conditions of his existence and his habitation, irrespective of the lot of marriage, which is the normal or ordinary condition of woman, to say to his daughter that she must begin to think for herself, and set about providing for her subsistence. If it be true that there is a progressive increase in the number of self-dependent women, that is a very serious fact; because these women are assuming the burdens which belong to men; and I agree with the hon. member for Manchester that when they are called upon to assume those burdens, and to undertake the responsibility of providing for their own subsistence, they approach the task under greater difficulties than attach to their more powerful competitors. Now, sir, I cannot help thinking that, for some reason or other, there are various important particulars in which women obtain much less than justice under social arrangements. It is to me a matter of astonishment to observe in London the distribution of employments as between men and women. I scarcely ever see in the hands of a woman an employment that ought more naturally to be in the hands of a man—(hear, hear),—but I constantly see in the hands of a man employment which might be more beneficially and economically in the hands of a woman. I may be told that there is no direct connection between this and the parliamentary franchise, and I admit it; but at the same time I am by no means sure that these inequalities may not have an indirect connection with a state of law in which the balance is generally cast too much against women, and too much in favour of men. There is one instance which has been quoted, and I am not sure there is not something in it—I mean the case of farms. (Hear, hear.) The not unnatural disposition of landlords is to see farms in the hands of those who, sympathising—as the

English tenant is ordinarily and honourably disposed to do—with his landlord, can give effect to that sympathy by voting at the poll, and I believe to some extent in the competition for that particular employment women suffer in a very definite manner in consequence of their want of qualification to vote. I go somewhat further than this, and say that so far as I am able to form an opinion of the general tone and colour of our law in these matters, where the peculiar relation of men and women are concerned, that law does less than justice to women. (Hear, hear.) The right hon. gentleman has said truly that some enthusiasts or fanatics are set on modifying or subverting the law of marriage. I confess I am one of those who think that we struck a serious blow at the law of marriage when we passed the Divorce Act; but I have never yet been able to satisfy my mind as to the reasons why, in framing and passing that act, we chose to introduce a new and gross inequality against women and in favour of men. (Hear, hear.) The subject which I am now on the verge of is rather painful, and not necessary to enter upon in detail, but I may say that in the whole of this chapter of legislation, especially where the irregular relations of men and women and the consequences of those irregular relations are concerned, the English law does women much less than justice, and great mischief, misery, and scandal result from that state of things in many of the occurrences and events of life. (Cheers.) I may be told that it is not to be supposed that women would in any circumstances, if in a majority, exercise a preponderating influence in public concerns. They will not and they cannot. But the question whether it is possible to devise a method of enabling them to exercise a sensible influence, without undertaking personal functions and without exposing themselves to personal obligations, inconsistent with the fundamental particulars of their condition as women, is a question which, in my opinion, is very worthy of consideration. Although, therefore, I am unable to give a vote for a Bill with respect to which there is no promise of its modification, if we cannot adopt it in its present form, yet I am not sorry to think that some activity of thought in these busy days of ours is directing itself to the subject of the relations which actually prevail between men and women; and if it should be found possible to arrange a safe and well-adjusted alteration of the law as to political power, the man who shall attain that object, and who shall see his purpose carried onward to its consequences in a more just arrangement of the provisions of other laws bearing upon the condition and welfare of women, will, in my opinion, be a real benefactor to his country. (Cheers.)

Lord JOHN MANNERS said he had not hitherto voted on this

measure, because, while on the one hand unable to discover any logical reasons against it, he had on the other been restrained by that which was popularly called sentiment, but which was an element that ought not to be shut out from view in considering questions of this kind. And he was prepared to admit that if there were any proof on the present occasion that the majority or any reasonable proportion of the women who would be affected by the Bill were hostile to the measure he should be glad to allow sentiment rather than reason to prevail, and withhold his support from the Bill; but on reference to the parliamentary papers he found that up to that morning no single petition had been presented against the measure, while a considerable number had been presented in its favour. Therefore, he was bound to ask what were the practical arguments against the measure, and having listened to the speeches of the mover and seconder of the amendment, and of the Prime Minister, he was unable to perceive that there were any arguments possessing validity against the second reading of the Bill. (Hear, hear.) The right hon. gentleman the member for Kilmarnock took exception to the speech of the hon. member who moved the second reading of the Bill on the ground that it was too narrow. He (Lord J. Manners) confessed that if he were to find fault with the speech it would be in precisely the opposite direction, but the right hon. gentleman himself could not be accused of narrowing the issue, for his speech was directed to almost every subject under the sun except the Bill the House was now called upon to discuss. (Hear, hear.) He told the House with perfect truth that he had studied every branch of the subject, and produced most voluminous evidence that his statement was correct, with the single exception that he had not studied the Bill itself. He dilated upon the laws of marriage and of property, the state of affairs in America, and the writings of every philosophical writer on the question from Payne Knight to Mill, denouncing the theories of the latter; but he did not say one word to show that the female ratepayers of this country ought not to have the suffrage accorded to them. (Hear, hear.) He could not tell from the speech of the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government whether he was in favour or against the measure. (Cheers.) He thought, however, he might venture to say that, whatever might be the opinions of the right hon. gentleman now, he would before long be numbered among the supporters of the measure. (Cheers and laughter.) The principal objection which the right hon. gentleman appeared to take to this measure was that it had no preamble, but he did not know that in these days that was a serious objection. (Hear, hear.) He had himself passed a

measure, while in office, that had no preamble. Then the right hon. gentleman had objected that there was nothing in this Bill to prevent the personal attendance of the female voters at the poll; but that objection, if valid, might be equally urged against women voting at municipal elections and elections for the school boards and local boards of health. The right hon. gentleman had suggested that by going to Italy we might borrow a mode by which we could surmount this difficulty; but he would suggest that the difficulty would be removed without travelling so far by resorting to the plan already in use in respect to the elections for the universities, where voters were permitted to record their votes by deputy. But, whether it were advisable to adopt that plan or not, the subject was one pre-eminently for the decision of the House, when they got into committee. (Hear, hear.) What he contended was that if the principle of enfranchising women ratepayers was sound in relation to other elections it was equally sound in relation to the election of members of Parliament. Did his right hon. friend, the member for Kilmarnock, mean to contend that women had no interest in the subjects brought before that House? Were they not interested, for example, in the subject of education, or were they not interested and did their interests not deserve to be represented in the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill—a measure which had so long been the shuttlecock of the two Houses of Parliament? (Hear, hear.) His right hon. friend appeared to say by his argument that women might be permitted to vote for such inferior bodies as Poor Law Guardians, Boards of Education, and Municipal Councils, but that they had no right to share in the election of so august a being as a member of the House of Commons. Now, he (Lord J. Manners) was prepared at all times to vindicate, if necessary, the rights and privileges of that house, but to assert that female ratepayers were not worthy to form a part of the constituencies of members of parliament was an arrogation of personal dignity and superiority which he was by no means able to support. Under all those circumstances, he confessed he was unable to see any reason why the female ratepayers should be any longer excluded from the exercise of the franchise at parliamentary elections—(hear, hear)—and he should therefore give his support to the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. BERESFORD HOPE thought that the right hon. gentleman the member for Kilmarnock in opposing the Bill gave the House an elaborate, but a very truthful, *exposé* of the policy of women's rights, in his bill of indictment against the strong-minded phalanx, for whom he personally had a great respect and no little fear. It was only the previous morning that he had received a speech from a lady belonging to that body, in

which he was charged with comparing certain noble women to dancing dogs. He had a high respect for the virtues and the capacity of women, and he therefore looked upon a woman's tongue, sharpened by debates and journalism, as a very formidable weapon, and one that was highly dangerous to encounter. The speech of the Prime Minister was satisfactory to him in one point, for it showed that, however much his right hon. friend's opinions might have changed with respect to other parts of the marriage law, his opinions in relation to the subject of divorce were exactly what they were 14 years ago. He (Mr. Beresford Hope) also fought by his side, as well as his noble friend who had just spoken, in opposition to the Divorce Act of 1857. Recollecting those days he listened with much interest for the arguments which his noble friend should adduce. In supporting the measure of the hon. member for Manchester, he was bound to traverse the able reasoning of the right hon. gentleman the member for Kilmarnock, but he did nothing of the kind. He simply contended that because women were allowed to exercise the franchise at municipal and school board elections, they should be allowed to vote for members of that House. This was assertion and not argument until the identity of the two cases was shown, and when that was done his noble friend must in consistency range himself with the supporters of the ballot. He was astonished to hear his noble friend allege as any argument that no women had petitioned against the Bill. These words should have come from any mouth but his, for it was equally true that they had never petitioned against the Divorce Bill, although it was well known that the women of England were righteously opposed to the passing of that measure. He (Mr. Hope) honoured the women for not having done so, because that innate modesty which was the great attribute of the sex prevented them putting themselves forward on such occasions. Their not petitioning was indeed an argument against the change, for it proved that women shrank from thrusting themselves forward into the noisy turmoil of politics. No doubt women had sometimes petitioned Parliament—they had even crowded that table with petitions on a certain question which should have been the very last to attract their attention. So far from that fact being a reason for conferring this franchise upon women, as showing that they took a deep interest in the proceedings of the House, he thought that the disgusting appearance of the petitions to which he alluded greatly strengthened the arguments of those who were conscientiously opposed to the principle contended for by the advocates of the present measure. He was opposed to the Bill, because he wished to protect women from being forced forward into the hurly-burly of party politics, and

obliged to take part in all the disagreeable accompaniments of electioneering contests and their consequences. The right hon. gentleman, the First Minister of the Crown, referring to the upper ten thousand, said that they had not an appreciable shadow of grievance to complain of in this respect, whilst he observed that the class of self-dependent women was increasing very rapidly, and seemed to regard this fact as a reason for the change. The right hon. gentleman indeed stated that he would not vote for the Bill of the hon. member for Manchester, but his sibylline tones left the impression that there was such doubt lurking in his mind that in another session he would be found in the ranks of those who were in favour of women's suffrage. The fact of the class of self-dependent women increasing so much was in his mind a reason for withholding the franchise from them. There were a few women who obtained a great influence in society by their genius and their capacity for work, and he honoured them for it. They had, however, as much power already in their way as the exercise of a vote for members of that House could give them; but the great majority of the self-dependent class were persons who by many sacrifices and ceaseless industry just succeeded in realising competence sufficient with great thrift to support them in a moderate and quiet way. The extension of the franchise to such women would not only disturb the peaceful character of their lives, but might seriously endanger that competence by forcing them into the arena of political excitement where they would be exposed to the animosities, the bickerings, and the resentments which are so unhappily inherent in the rough work of electioneering. Taking then this self-dependent class as they really were and not as philosophers painted them, he thought that Parliament would do them a great wrong by exposing them to the temptations inseparable from the franchise whether those who possessed it took an active part in politics, or refused to exercise the franchise which had been conferred on them. All who were familiar with contests knew that it was often as troublesome, not to vote as to give a vote; and yet Parliament was asked to put the helpless female lodgers, seamstresses, and such persons, in this dilemma. The very nature of women called for sympathy and protection, and for the highest and most chivalrous treatment on the part of the men, but, instead of this being accorded for the future, it was now proposed to thrust them into a position which they were by their sex, by their condition in life, and by their previous training totally unqualified to grapple with. It would be said that the proposal was only to enfranchise unmarried women, but he was not a believer in such illogical finality. If this Bill were passed did his right hon. friend behind him (Mr. Russell Gurney) believe that the distinction contemplated

in it between married and unmarried women would long continue to be upheld? And, without going so far, why should not those ladies who were temporarily independent be invested with these privileges? There was, for instance, he would not mention any names, a lady who had recently been remarkable for an act of great daring, and who had subsequently escaped in consequence of admirable management, would it not be right that she should be invested with these privileges for some eight years or so? The lady in question was one whose ability had been proved and her innocence decided in the face of the world. If this Bill should pass, and the number of emancipated women were found to produce no appreciable change in the quality of the representation in the House, then he would say that they had made a great disturbance to gain something very small indeed; but, on the other hand, if it were found to cause any serious alteration in the character of the representation, then, with all due respect to all the new constituencies, he believed that the alteration would be shown in the deterioration and not in the improvement of the quality of Parliament. On this head he desired to speak plainly. It was not a question whether the male or the female intellect were the superior one. He simply said that they were different, and that the difference made man more capable of direct government and woman more fitted for private influence. There were in the world women of a manlike-mind—a Mrs. Somerville or a Miss Martineau, and there were now and then men of feminine softness; but he reasoned from the generality and not from marked exceptions. Reason predominated in the man, emotion and sympathy in the woman, and if the female vote made any noticeable difference in the character of our constituencies, the risk would be that they would have in the House an excess of the emotional and sentimental element over the logical and reasoning faculty. Though emotion and sentiment were admirable qualities in their way, he maintained distinctly that reason ought to govern emotion, and not emotion govern reason. If, indeed, our existing constituencies were exclusively composed of bachelors and widowers, it might be argued that the reason was not sufficiently tempered by sentiment. But with the large bulk which they contain of family men, he felt quite satisfied that the womanly nature had quite as much play in making up the national mind as could be healthfully desired. The character of the legislation of a woman-chosen Parliament would be the increased importance which would be given to questions of a *quasi* social or philanthropic character (viewed with regard to the supposed interests, or the partisan bias of special classes, rather than to broader considerations of the public weal) in excess of the great constitu-

tional and international issues which the legislature was empanelled to try. We should have more wars for an idea, or hasty alliances with scheming neighbours, more class cries, permissive legislation, domestic perplexities, and sentimental grievances. Our legislation would develop hysterical and spasmodic features, partaking more of the French and American system than reproducing the tradition of the English Parliament. On these grounds he should vote against the second reading of the Bill.

Dr. LYON PLAYFAIR said that the House would observe that the opponents of the Bill had brought forward no objections to the questions of right and wrong involved in it, but had treated it simply as a matter of convenience and expediency. They were told that there would be a considerable innovation in the social habits of the people if this Bill passed into law, and to that view the right hon. gentleman the member for Kilmarnock had given powerful expression. Last session the objection received support from the First Minister of the Crown, when he described it as uprooting the landmarks of society. He was glad to find that that argument was not now repeated by the right hon. gentleman, although it had to a certain extent been re-echoed by the right hon. gentleman the member for Kilmarnock. When he had heard that expression fall from a Liberal Minister with regard to a Liberal measure he felt certain that the right hon. gentleman would be on their side before long ("hear" and laughter), for there was a fine extinct Tory roll about the phrase. (Cheers and laughter.) The phrase used to be brought forward to accompany the doctrine of the divine right of kings; it was urged against the negro emancipation, and had served as stage thunder on similar occasions from time immemorial whenever there was a question of extending suffrage among the people. The whole argument of the supporters of the Bill was contained in one sentence—that the law imposed upon women the burdens of citizenship, and that if sex was no reason for preventing the imposition of those burdens, so also sex should be no justification for withholding from them the rights which attached to citizenship. (Hear, hear.) The fact was that one-sixth to one-seventh of the tax-payers, being females, were not represented in that House. No person had said in the House that the average woman was not able by her intellect to carry out the smallest function of political duty—the voting for a member of Parliament. While they actually did give this privilege to the most ignorant and debased men, and refused it to the most cultivated and virtuous women, the only reason that could be urged against the enfranchisement of women was their sex. The argument employed by his right hon. friend the member for Kilmarnock amounted to this—that women had no

business to interfere in politics. But his definition of politics was the meanest and lowest view that could be taken, and referred not to the science of government, which was the true meaning of the word, but to the struggle of parties for power. Politics, properly understood, meant the government of the people in equal and fair relations to each other, with a view to their happiness and to the security of their property and persons. Why should one-half the human race be cut off from such a noble study? His right hon. friend had expressed his opinion that the concession of the municipal franchise was a mistake, and had instanced one or two cases in which votes were given in an unhappy state of intoxication. But all that showed was that there were degraded men as there were degraded women, and no doubt there would always be degraded female electors as there were degraded male electors. If his argument were worth anything it only implied disfranchisement of the unworthy of both sexes. (Cheers.) If his right hon. friend, in accounting for the interest which women took in the School Boards by the fact that the voting was secret, had promised this measure his support after the Bill for secret voting had been carried, his position would at least have been logical. It had been urged that women already possessed a vast amount of political influence. There could be no doubt that that was true, as they had lately witnessed in relation to a matter which was very repugnant to their feelings. His own opinions on that subject were well-known, so he was not likely to be misunderstood; but there could be no doubt that the women on this subject had exercised so much influence, whether rightly or wrongly, as to endanger the seats of many members of that House who did not take their view. If the opinion of these women was right the Act ought not to have been passed without greater regard being paid to their interests and feelings—if they were wrong the responsibility of rejecting the Acts ought to be shared by those who induced its rejection. Ultimately it was still the fault of those who, by excluding women from politics, had allowed them to act in a natural feeling of sympathy for the fallen of their sex, and not to subjugate their feelings to the exigencies of public policy. (Hear, hear.) But then the objection is made that women are not educated for politics. Quite true this, and whose fault is it? The same objection was brought forward at the late extension of suffrage to men; but experience has shown that actual responsibility was a wonderfully rapid educational power. The want of political education among women was the fault of the House in not having already given them the franchise—the greatest political educator at command. The old argument that the exercise of the franchise carried to its legitimate conclusion would result in the presence in the House

of representative women did not alarm him. If the Bill passed, the men would still number six to every single woman on the register, and although he was not sure that even now any law existed for disqualifying women from seats in the House, he was prepared to oppose any measure conferring such power, not on the ground of mental but physical incapability. The hon. member for Cambridge University and those who supported him acted on the traditional idea of women being subject to men, the old "rib" theory. It had been said by the hon. member for Pembroke, in the true "rib," spirit of the question, that the avocation of women was a high one—to make life endurable; the hon. member for the University of Cambridge had more elegantly put it that the avocation of women was to guide, to influence, to moderate, to regulate, and to suffer—not to govern. But convert his verbs into nouns, and why were guidance, influence, moderation, and endurance to be regarded as qualities opposed to government? The Prime Minister had said that to justify the denial of the franchise to any person it was necessary to prove personal unfitness or public danger. That was a perfectly sound political axiom; and judged by it the Bill should pass, especially as it was on all hands admitted that women exhibited a higher moral tone than men, which increased their aptitude, while their quiescence of character did not involve political danger. The right hon. member for Kilmarnock (Mr. Bouverie) had read them passages from the writings of eccentric authors of socialistic proclivities, as evidence that the suffrage should not be extended to women. He might as well have adduced the ravings of Red Republicans and Communists as an argument for refusing the suffrage to men. He also had alluded to the opinions of a distinguished constituent of himself (Dr. Playfair) John Stuart Mill. He read passages from his writings, and implied that these were calculated to dispute the sanctity of marriage. These passages, however, had no such bearing. They simply referred to the theory of subjection implied by the law, when it dealt such unequal justice to the two sexes. At Avignon there is the grave of an Englishwoman, on whose tomb there is a beautiful tribute to her high excellencies. She was the wife who had adorned the life of John Stuart Mill, and any one who had read these touching words would have known the veneration which that philosopher had for woman, and would blush to accuse him of desiring to destroy the sanctity of marriage. (Cheers.)

Mr. JAMES, although dissenting from the supporters of the Bill, could not discuss the question in the spirit in which it had been dealt with by the Prime Minister, or dwell on the trivial point of the absence of a preamble. Although the matter should not be treated technically, it was clear that every married

woman who might choose to be rated would be entitled under the Bill to a vote as well as the unmarried; but there were more important considerations than this. The natural consequence of granting the franchise was that all women were eligible to sit in the House of Commons, and they could, of course, claim their right to be represented in the House of Peers, to act as jurors, and even to sit on the episcopal bench. (Hear, hear.) Under these circumstances it was sufficient if the opponents of this Bill established that there was no precedent in the past or practice in the present to justify its passing; and having done this they had a right to stand on the defensive and say, "On what grounds should this Bill pass?" The speech of the Prime Minister upon the measure had given the greatest dissatisfaction, and some had heard it with sadness. To introduce the question of the ballot into such a grave matter as this was almost an insult to those who supported the ballot. (Hear, hear.) He assured the Prime Minister, with all respect, that he would get little support for the ballot if the moment it became law this measure would be regarded as unobjectionable by him. On hearing such arguments as those the Prime Minister had used for the Bill, and finding in the end that he would vote against it, he was disposed, with all respect, to remind him that while we were told Fame had no present, it was equally true that popularity had no future. (Cheers.) Supporters of the Bill on the other side of the House advocated it on the ground that property should be represented whether held by a woman or a man. But those who used that argument had overlooked the causes which had led to the possession of property being regarded as a qualification for the franchise. The possession of property had been made a qualification because it was held to indicate capacity and fitness in the holder. If the property itself were the thing to be represented, why should not minors vote? It had been formally resolved elsewhere, in language he did not accurately remember, that every person governed should take part in the Government, and the hon. member for Edinburgh University had said that those who bore the burdens should enjoy the rights. What did this convey? Universal suffrage and something more, for children and minors bore the burdens of the State. Mr. Mill, however, had rested his argument solely on the fitness and capacity of the person for whom he was speaking; but although it might be true that women in some mental qualities were stronger than men—in learning languages, for instance—in political matters they were decidedly not so. (Hear.) The sympathetic element in the mental constitution of women absolutely blinded them to all logic. (Hear, hear.) It might be that it was a gain to men that they were not judged day by day by those

who could strictly hold the balance. Of course there were exceptions to this rule, just as there were exceptions to the rule that men generally were superior to women in physical strength. On the question of fitness to govern, he asked whether it was not true that in all matters connected with the army, the navy, and matters commercial, diplomatic, and legal, women would have to judge on the basis of information obtained second-hand, and not from practical experience? It might be answered that all these things would come, but before they could come not only the whole character of our social life, but the very nature and passions of mankind, would have to be changed. What father would send his daughter, at the age of 19, into the world to fit her for a political life, saying, "I know dangers will await her, but the hon. member for Manchester says she has a political function to fulfil, and I must send her forth to fit her for its fulfilment?" There were other arguments based on matters about which men felt more strongly than they could express, but on the question of the practical effect such a measure would have upon constituencies he remarked that the measure was objectionable, not so much because of the influence it would give to women as to the undue influence it would give to men. The ballot was about to be adopted to prevent the exercise of undue influence over men; but if this Bill passed how enormous would be the power of the priest in one country and the clergyman in the other, to say nothing of the influence of the well-selected canvasser. Surely it could not be expected that women, if endowed with the franchise, would give an unbiassed vote, the result of political convictions? There was one other argument of which much had been made by those who lectured on the subject—namely, that our Sovereign was a woman. Possibly it would be useless to suggest that the possession of negative political qualities was regarded as a virtue in the Sovereign of these realms; but there was another answer to this argument which might have more weight. It was well known that Her Majesty had been fully prepared for her high office by wise statesmen, and that she was an Englishwoman with a full knowledge of the English character; but when it pleased her to take beneath her roof one of her own age, a stranger and a foreigner, and one who had little knowledge and experience of the English people, Her Majesty chose to receive the guidance and direction, the council and assistance, of that foreigner simply because she was a woman and he was a man. (Hear, hear.) The few itinerant, restless ladies—(cheers)—who passed from town to town giving utterance to the oft-repeated sentiments of Lady A. and Miss B. alleged that the women of England were on their side, but although he had read the periodical

advocating their views he had never found that in any of the meetings any lady rose and endorsed the views expressed by the lecturers. Their auditors, occupying their true position, preserved silence, and because of their courteous attention the advocates of women's suffrage assumed they endorsed the lecturer's views. There were other arguments which might be used against this measure—arguments which carried one back to one's first instructress, arguments which received strength in the minds of those who had felt the sympathy and support of a pure woman's love, and he could not doubt that there were many in the House who, in consideration of these arguments, would long resist any attempt to upset what nature had ordained and custom had ratified as the natural place for woman in the State. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. W. HUNT, having complimented the hon. and learned gentleman on the force and eloquence which characterised his argument, said:—I do not, however, think the argument irrefutable. From the speech of one of the chief supporters of the amendment he must have thought that this Bill was of the same kind as that withdrawn at Massachusetts, and which did not receive popular support in Utah, because the arguments he used were such as might be brought against a Bill proposing to revolutionise in this country the relations between the sexes. But the Bill proposes nothing of the kind. What it does propose is, that any woman who is placed in the position which gives a man a vote should be entitled to exercise the franchise. It does not propose to divide the vote in the case of a man and wife, and therefore all the arguments of my right hon. friend appear to me to be entirely out of place. Then he used what may be called "the hobgoblin argument." He said this was the first step towards socialism. If I thought that would be the effect of this measure, I should be very loth to give it my support. I confess I have always thought the female part of the population showed great reverence for law and order, and was more deeply imbued with religious feelings than the rest of the community—(hear, hear)—and I believe there could be no more certain means of checking the growth of socialism than by giving greater power to women. The right honourable gentleman (Mr. Bouverie) says he does not wish the female character to be contaminated by possessing and exercising the suffrage. According to that argument we have done great injustice to those whom, in the years 1867 and 1868, we thrust into the suffrage. It seems we have been contaminating them. But to pass to the speech of the hon. and learned gentleman who has just sat down. I understand he accepts the position of the hon. member for Cambridge, and says that if the female part of the community bear the same

burdens as the male, and also pay rates, there is no reason—unless they are personally unfit—why they should not have a vote. He accepts the conditions, adding that the female is personally unfit. And here, I think, he takes too low a view of the female intellect. In the latter part of his speech, where he speaks of maternal love, and of love of another kind, he seemed to forget that he might attribute other qualities than those of the heart to women. He says they are led away by their sympathies and are incapable of calmly exercising their reason, and that the female mind can rarely follow a logical argument. But if we were to go into the question who is able to follow a logical argument—"hear, hear," and laughter)—I fear we should have to bring in Bills of disfranchisement. (Cheers.) A great many of those whose opinions we in this House represent could not, I am afraid, put their opinions in a logical shape, and few, I apprehend, follow a logical argument when we go to the hustings. (Hear, hear.) He says that on political subjects it is notorious that women are not capable of forming independent judgments. I want to know is this not because they have not been entrusted with political power. (Hear.) We know that in some countries so low is the opinion of the female sex they are shut up with their families, while in other countries, and I fear in some parts of our own, they are treated as beasts of burden. The habits of mind of women, as in the case of men, must depend on their training; and I believe no greater means of education could be conceived than entrusting them with political power. My hon. and learned friend says they are unacquainted with subjects such as the army and navy, and other subjects upon which women in this country are supposed to have no opinions. But what did the right hon. member for Kilmarnock (Mr. Bouverie) say? That they were very usefully employed in hospitals and working charities, and that that was their proper work. But is not this House concerned in a great many social questions on which the opinions of women might be most usefully brought to bear? Such questions as the proper management of hospitals, and kindred subjects, might be thus dealt with most profitably. Some questions have come before this House, notably of late years, in regard to which it would be impossible for men to understand the feelings of the other sex. There is the question which was alluded to by the hon. member for Cambridge—the question of the Contagious Diseases Act. Who could say that men are capable of entering into the feelings of women on this question? It has been said that women were going about in an itinerant manner agitating on this subject. But I say, in any case, they have a right to their opinions. But why do they go about? It is because they have no legiti-

mate mode—(cheers)—of giving effect to their opinions, and, therefore, they are compelled to resort to itineracy as the only means open to them. (Renewed cheers). Supposing that this Bill were passed, and that female ratepayers were allowed to give their votes for the election of members of Parliament, I believe that that itinerant agitation would subside. But with regard to another question which has been before the House—that of altering the marriage law—is not that a question in which women are entitled to take an active part? Is the opinion of women of no value upon that? During the present and in other sessions this House has passed a Bill containing an alteration of the marriage law which I believe to be repugnant to 99 out of every 100 women in the country. And I ask again, is not this a question upon which they have a right to be heard. Can we assume to ourselves the right to alter the whole state of the marriage law, while more than half the population of the country are regarded as having no voice in the matter? I have never before recorded my vote in favour of this measure, and lately I have not voted at all upon the question, because when changes occur in one's opinions one does not like to commit oneself to such changes on a sudden, or without mature deliberation; but having considered the matter calmly, I have come to the conclusion that it is no longer right to refuse to accede to the principles contained in this Bill. (Hear.) It is not often that measures coming from that quarter of the House receive my support, but this particular measure commended itself to my reason. I believe that the feeling against granting the franchise to women is the result of old prejudice and not of reason, and therefore I shall with great pleasure support the second reading of this Bill. (Cheers.)

Mr. NEWDEGATE said: Sir, in common with many other members of the House, I have been gratified by hearing the able and eloquent speech of the hon. and learned member for Taunton. I rejoiced in it the more on account of the manliness with which the hon. and learned member, whilst acknowledging the ties of party, lamented the want of force in the speech of the right hon. gentleman, the First Minister of the Crown. But if hon. members on the Government side of the House, who acknowledge the bonds of party, have some reason to complain that their leader did not repeat emphatically the sentiments to which he gave expression last session in these words:—"I must say that I cannot recognise a necessity or desire for this measure, which would justify such an unsettling, not to say uprooting, of the old landmarks of society;" if, I repeat, hon. gentlemen opposite, while acknowledging party obligations, lament that those words were not repeated or the equivalent of these strong words by their leader, what must be

the feelings of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House, who in like manner acknowledge the obligations of party? Had not they much more reason to be dissatisfied, when they heard the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer of a Ministry who professed Conservative opinions, adopting this ultra-radical measure? (Loud cheers.) I regret extremely that the House was not fuller, when my right hon. friend, as I hope he will allow me to call him, the member for Kilmarnock, spoke in opposition to this Bill. That right hon. gentleman is true to all the best traditions of his party. He is an old Whig and something more; and he remembers that at the close of the last century and at the commencement of the present century, during the long war, the Whig party became involved by their acceptance of the Encyclopædist opinions, which were then prevalent in France; and he remembers their long and just exclusion from office, and that, at last, they wisely receded from those dangerous opinions, as did that great Sovereign, Frederick of Prussia. Acquainted, therefore, as he is with the history and the traditions of his party, the right hon. gentleman is, perhaps, one of the most competent as well as safest witnesses, who can warn this House against the consequences of accepting this dangerous measure, for I fully agreed with the right honourable gentleman, the Prime Minister, in what he said last session when he declared that it tends to the uprooting of all the relations of society. (Hear, hear.) The least that can be said is this—that if such a law were to be enacted, it would be established without reference to, if not in defiance of, the natural relations of society. I wish hon. members had been here in greater numbers to have heard the speech of the right hon. gentleman, the member for Kilmarnock; and I would express a hope, that a speech, which is no less worthy of perusal than it was worth hearing, may reach the country through the usual channels of communication. It appears to me, that the division which is about to be taken on this Bill, will establish a clear distinction between those who are sound constitutional and those who are unsound and unconstitutional reformers; between those who would effect changes in the constituencies, and therefore, in the constitution of this House and in the course of our legislation, consistent with the great traditions of the country, traditions are reflected across the Atlantic, in the United States, and those, who, disgusted with the popular privileges, to the concession of which they have been forced, now seek to degrade this assembly, which has been elected by household suffrage. I do not say this lightly—I say it because I know that this measure has been promoted out of doors by those who look upon the state of this country with disgust, and are prepared to adopt any measure to force a change. Indeed, where could be found

an expression of more intense disgust than is conveyed in the description given of England by Dr. Manning, when he deliberately described this country as the "sentinagentium," the cesspool of nations? Such is the expression which Dr. Manning thought fit, in 1864, to publish in a sermon. I shall look with suspicion upon every vote given in favour of this Bill by those who are known to be Dr. Manning's followers, because I am convinced that such votes will be actuated not by the desire for any wholesome reform, but that they will be given consistently with the policy of the Ultramontane, the Jesuit party, who hold really free institutions to be so antagonistic to their objects and those of the Papacy, that any measure is justifiable for the purpose of uprooting them. This, sir, is the feeling in the United States with respect to this class of politicians. I was conversing with an American gentleman, and I asked him "are you prepared in the United States to adopt this proposal for female suffrage, which is now agitating this country?" "No," he replied; "I was a strong advocate for the enfranchisement of the coloured population; but as to this agitation for women's rights which would shake the very foundations of society, by disregarding the natural relations between the sexes—no!" said he, and he spoke, sir, very plainly, "we are not such fools as to do that." (Hear, hear.) The fact is, that the whole history of this measure and the whole process of reasoning upon which it is founded are unworthy of and degrading to this House. What has the right hon. gentleman the member for Northamptonshire (Mr. Ward Hunt) said, in answer to the formidable arguments of the hon. and learned member for Taunton? The hon. and learned member for Taunton stated that the female population of this country have not been trained in those higher sciences which are necessary to direct the legislation of this House; that they have not been trained in diplomacy; that they have not been trained in law; that they have not been trained in political economy. The right hon. gentleman replies to this by saying, that there are some small municipal questions—questions, perhaps, touching family business for example; at most small municipal questions upon which women would be qualified to vote; and, therefore, the right hon. gentleman, setting at naught the united opinion of the majority of the people of England—for I am certain that the majority of the English people are opposed to this measure—setting at naught too the deliberate verdict of the men of the United States, would confound and confound the constituencies of this country by introducing an element, which has been adopted nowhere unless in Italy. The right hon. gentleman is not, that I am aware of, an advocate of the ballot. And I am not

aware either that he is an advocate for voting by delegation. Why, sir, in the United States they have the ballot, and yet the people of the United States have the common sense to resist this proposal. In Italy they have a different system of election. The people vote there by delegation, upon the same system that is adopted in Prussia; and I ask the right hon. gentleman whether that is the principle which he would introduce into the electoral system of this country? If not, the objection of the United States is unanswered. I am unwilling to detain the House, but it does appear to me that the arguments which have been advanced in support of this measure are utterly futile. What was the argument used by the hon. member for Penryn (Mr. Eastwick)? He said that because the Spaniards in South America oppressed the Indians, therefore the women of England ought to be enfranchised! Now I would put it to the common sense of the House, is there any analogy between the position of the Indians in South America, and that of women in England? Then the hon. gentleman attempted this further argument in favour of this measure: he would have the House of Commons enfranchise the women of England—why? Because he thinks it would set a good example in Turkey and in China! I have listened to the somewhat chemical analysis of the hon. gentleman, the member for the University of Edinburgh: he seemed to me to adopt this kind of argument, that whereas there are the same chemical elements to be found in the composition of men and women, therefore it is plainly just that women should be enfranchised. There may be some differences. I could not help imagining he might have continued, in the physical construction of men and women, and then he would have told us that through some Darwinian process of development these differences would eventually be obliterated. (Hear, and laughter.) I will content myself with again thanking the right hon. gentleman, the member for Kilmarnock, for having so plainly traced the evil source of the mischievous principles from which this measure has sprung, and for having, as he has often done before, effectively defended the dignity of the House, for such I trust will now be the result, from being betrayed into the extreme folly of adopting this gross exaggeration.

Mr. JACOB BRIGHT briefly replied. He stated that Arles Dufoure, who was then in London, was of opinion that the best remedy for the unstable condition of things in France, was to give women votes, and said that the one able speech made to-day against the Bill, that of the hon. and learned member for Taunton, could be demolished with the greatest possible ease, if the rules of the House permitted him to produce some women (who were then listening to the debate) at the bar to state their own case.

The House divided :—

For the second reading.....151
Against.....220

Majority against the Bill 69

The Bill was therefore lost.

DIVISION LIST.

Order for Second Reading read; Motion made, and Question proposed, "That the Bill be now read a second time."—Amendment proposed, to leave out the word "now," and at the end of the Question to add the words "upon this day six months."—(*Mr. Bouverie.*)—Question put, "That the word 'now' stand part of the Question."—The House divided; Ayes 151, Noes 220.

AYES.

Amphlett, Richard P.
Anderson, George
Anstruther, Sir Robert
Bagwell, John
Bateson, Sir Thomas
Bazley, Sir Thomas
Beach, W. W. Bramston, Hants N.
Beaumont, Somerset A., Wakefield
Beresford, Lieut.-Col. Marcus
Birley, Hugh
Booth, Sir Robert Gore
Browne, George Ekins, Mayo
Callan, Philip
Cameron, Donald
Campbell, Henry
Carter, Mr. Alderman
Cawley, Charles E.
Chadwick, David
Charley, William Thomas
Cholmeley, Captain, Grantham
Clifford, Charles Cavendish
Corry, Rt. Hon. Henry T. Lowry
Cowen, Joseph
Cubitt, George
Dalglish, Robert
Damer, Captain Dawson
Davie, Sir H. R. Ferguson, Hadd.
Dawson, Robert Peel
Dickinson, Sebastian S.
Dickson, Major Alex. G., Dover
Digby, Kenelm Thomas
Dilke, Sir Charles Wentworth
Dimsdale, Robert
Disraeli, Rt. Hon. Benjamin
Dixon, George, Birmingham
Dodds, Joseph
Downing, M'Carthy
Eaton, Henry William
Elliott, George
Ewing, H. Ewing Crum, Paisley
Ewing, Archibald Orr, Dumbarion

Fawcett, Henry
Fitzmaurice, Lord Edmond
Fletcher, Isaac
Fordyce, William Dingwall
Forester, Rt. Hon. General
Forster, Charles Walsall
Fortescue, Hon. Dudley F., Andover
Fowler, Robert N., Penryn
Gavin, Major
Gilpin, Charles, Northampton
Goldney, Gabriel
Goldsmid, Sir Francis, Reading
Gourley, Edward T.
Graham, William
Grant, Colonel Hon. James
Gray, Lieut.-Col., Bolton
Gray, Sir John, Kilkenny
Grieve, Jas Johnstone, Greenock
Grosvenor, Hon. Norman, Chester
Grosvenor, Capt. R. W., Westminster
Gurney, Rt. Hon. Russell
Hadfield, George
Hambro, Charles
Hardy, John, Warwick, S.
Harris, John Dove
Henderson, John
Herbert, Hon. Auberon E. W., Not.
Herbert, Henry A., Kerry
Hermon, Edward
Heron, Denis Caulfield
Hesketh, Sir Thomas George
Hill, Alexander Staveley
Hoare, Sir H. Ainslie, Chelsea
Hodgkinson, Grosvenor
Hughes, Thomas, Frome
Hunt, Rt. Hon. George Ward
Illingworth, Alfred
Jenkinson, Sir George S.
Johnston, William, Belfast
Jones, John
King, Hon. P. Jn. Locke

Kinnaird, Hon. Arthur Fitzgerald
Knight, Frederick Winn
Lancaster, John
Langton, W. Gore
Lawson, Sir Wilfrid
Lea, Thomas, Kidderminster
Lewis, Harvey, Marylebone
Liddell, Hon. Henry George
Lloyd, Sir Thos. Davies
Lopes, Sir Massey, Devon, S.
Lowther, James, York
Lush, Dr.
Lusk, Andrew
Macfie, Robert Andrew
M'Lagan, Peter
M'Laren, Duncan
Maguire, John Francis
Maitland, Sir Alex. C. R. Gibson
Manners, Rt. Hon. Lord J., Leic. N.
Mellor, Thomas W.
Melly, George
Miller, John
Mitchell, Thomas Alexander
Morgan, Geo. Osborne, Denbigh
Morrison, Walter
Mundella, Anthony John
Muntz, Philip Henry
Noel, Hon. Gerard James
Ogilvy, Sir John
Palk, Sir Lawrence
Peel, John, Tamworth
Playfair, Lyon
Potter, Thomas Bayley, Rochdale
Powell, Walter
Rathbone, William

Tellers for the Ayes, Mr. Jacob Bright and Mr. Eastwick.

NOES.

Acland, Thomas Dyke
Adair, Hugh Edward
Adam, William Patrick
Adderley, Rt. Hon. Sir Charles
Agar-Ellis, Hon. Leopold G. F.
Allen, Major, Somerset, E.
Amcotts, Colonel W. Cracroft
Annesley, Hon. Colonel Hugh
Anson, Hon. Augustus H. A.
Arbuthnot, Major George
Arkwright, Richard, Leominster
Armitstead, George
Aytoun, Roger Sinclair
Backhouse, Edmund
Bagge, Sir William
Baines, Edward
Baker, Richard B. Wingfield
Barclay, Alexander Charles
Baring, Thomas
Barrington, Viscount
Barttelot, Colonel
Beach, Sir Michael Hicks, Glos.
Beaumont, H. F., West Riding, S.
Beaumont, W. B., Northum. S.

Reed, Charles, Hackney
Richard, Henry, Merthyr Tydfil
Robertson, David
Round, James
Rylands, Peter
Salt, Thomas
Samuelson, Bernhard, Banbury
Sandon, Viscount
Sartoris, Edward John
Scott, Lord Henry J. M. D.
Selwin-Ibbetson, Sir Henry J.
Shaw, William, Bandon
Shaw, Richard, Burnley
Sherriff, Alexander Clunes
Simon, Mr. Serjeant
Sinclair, Sir John G. Tollemache
Smith, John Benjamin, Stockport
Smith, Eustace, Tynemouth
Smith, Wm. Henry, Westminster
Stacpoole, William
Stansfeld, Rt. Hon. James
Straight, Douglas
Sykes, Col. Wm. Hen., Aberdeen
Talbot, Chris. R. M., Glamorgan c.
Taylor, Peter Alfred, Leicester
Torrens, W. T. M'Cullagh, Finsbury
Trevelyan, George Otto
Villiers, Rt. Hon. C. Pelham
Wedderburn, Sir David
West, Henry Wyndham
Wheelhouse, William S. J.
White, James, Brighton
Whitworth, Thomas
Wingfield, Sir Charles

Bentinck, G. Cavendish, Whit'ven
Benyon, Richard
Bingham, Lord
Blennerhasset, Sir Rowland
Bourke, Hon. Robert
Bowring, Edgar A.
Brand, Rt. Hon. Hen., Camb. Co.
Brassey, Thomas, Hastings
Bright, Richard, Somers. E.
Brinckman, Captain
Bristowe, Samuel Boteler
Broadley, William H. Harrison
Brooks, William Cunliffe
Bruce, Lord Charles, Wilts, N.
Bruce, Rt. Hon. H. Austin, Renfr.
Bruce, Sir H. Hervey, Coleraine
Bruen, Henry
Burrell, Sir Percy
Cartwright, Fairfax, Northamp.
Cartwright, William C., Oxfords.
Cave, Rt. Hon. S., New Shoreham
Cavendish, Lord F. C., York, W. R.
Cavendish, Lord G., Derbyshire, N.
Cecil, Lord Eustace H. B. G.

Chambers, Montague, Devonport
 Chaplin, Henry
 Cholmeley, Sir Montague, Linc. N.
 Clay, James
 Clive, Col. Hon. G. Windsor
 Cogan, Rt. Hon. Wm. Henry Ford
 Cole, Col. Hon. Henry Arthur
 Conolly, Thomas
 Cowper, Hon. Henry F., Herts
 Craufurd, Edw. Henry J., Ayr
 Crawford, Rob. Wygram, London
 Crichton, Viscount
 Croft, Sir Herbert G. D.
 Cross, Richard Assheton
 Dalway, Marriott Robert
 Davenport, William Bromley
 Dease, Edmund
 Dent, John Dent
 Dowse, Richard
 Duff, Robert William, Banffshire
 Duncombe, Hon. Colonel
 Dundas, Frederick
 Dyott, Colonel Richard
 Egerton, Hon. Alg. Fulke, Lanc. S.
 Egerton, Sir Phil. Grey, Chesh. W.
 Elcho, Lord
 Elphinstone, Sir James D. H.
 Enfield, Viscount
 Ennis, John James
 Esmonde, Sir John
 Eykyn, Roger
 Fellowes, Edward
 Fitzwilliam, Hon. C. W. W., Malt.
 Forde, Colonel
 Foster, Wm. Henry, Bridgenorth
 Fothergill, Richard
 Galway, Viscount
 Gladstone, Wm. Henry, Whitby
 Glyn, Hon. George Grenfell
 Goldsmid, Julian, Rochester
 Gore, J. Ralph Ormsby, Salop N.
 Gore, Wm. Rd. Ormsby, Leitrim
 Gower, Hon. E. F. Leveson, Bodm.
 Greene, Edward
 Grey, Rt. Hon. Sir Geo., Morpeth
 Grove, Thomas Fraser
 Guest, Arthur E., Poole
 Hamilton, Lord Claud, Tyrone
 Hamilton, Ion Trant, Dublin Co.
 Hamilton, Marquis of, Donegal
 Hamilton, Lord Geo., Middx.
 Hardy, Rt. Hn. Gathorne, Oxf. U.
 Hardy, John Stewart, Rye
 Hartington, Marquis of
 Headlam, Rt. Hon. Thos. Emerson
 Henley, Rt. Hon. J. W., Oxfordsh.
 Henley, Lord, Northampton
 Hervey, Lord Augustus H. C.
 Heygate, Sir Fred. W., Lond. Co.
 Hildyard, T. Blackborne Thoroton
 Hodgson, Kirkman, D., Bristol
 Holland, Samuel
 Holms, John
 Hope, Alex. J. B. Beresford

Horsman, Rt. Hon. Edward
 Howard, Hon. Chas. W. G., Cumb.
 Hughes, W. Bulkeley, Carnarvon
 Hutton, John
 James, Henry
 Johnston, Andrew, Essex, S.
 Kavanagh, Arthur MacM.
 Kay-Shuttleworth, Ughtred Jas
 Kekewich, Samuel Trehawke
 Kingscote, Colonel
 Knatchbull-Hugessen, Edw. H.
 Laird, John
 Lawrence, Sir James C., Lambeth
 Lawrence, William, London
 Learmouth, Alexander
 Leatham, Edward Aldam
 Leeman, George
 Lefevre, George John Shaw
 Legh, William, J., Chesh. E.
 Lennox, Lord Geo. Gordon, Lym.
 Lewis, John D., Devonport
 Lindsay, Hon. Col. Chas., Abing.
 Loch, George, Wick
 Locke, John, Southwark
 Lowther, William, Westm'd
 Lyttelton, Hon. Charles George
 Mackintosh, Eneas William
 M'Arthur, William
 M'Clure, Thomas
 M'Mahon, Patrick, New Ross
 Marling, Samuel Stephens
 Mathews, Henry
 Maxwell, Wellwood Herries
 Milles, Hon. Geo. W., Kent, E.
 Mills, Charles Henry, Kent, W.
 Mitford, William Townley
 Monk, Charles James
 Morgan, C. Octavius, Monmouth
 Mowbray, Rt. Hon. John Robert
 Newdegate, Charles Newdigate
 Newport, Viscount
 Newry, Viscount
 Nichol, James Dyce
 Norwood, Charles Morgan
 O'Brien, Sir Patrick
 O'Connor, Denis Maurice, Sligo Co.
 O'Connor, Don, The, Roscommon
 Onslow, Guilford
 O'Reilly, Miles Wm., Longford
 Palmer, John Hinde, Lincoln
 Palmer, Sir Roundell, Richmond
 Parker, Lt.-Col. Windsor, Suff. W.
 Patten, Rt. Hon. Colonel Wilson
 Pease, Joseph Whitwell
 Peel, Arthur Wellesley, Warwick
 Pell, Albert
 Percy, Earl
 Philips, R. Needham
 Phipps, Charles Paul
 Pim, Jonathan
 Portman, Hon. W. Hen. B.
 Potter, Edmund, Carlisle
 Raikes, Henry Cecil
 Ridley, Mathew White

Rothschild, Nath. M. de, Aylesb.
 Royston, Viscount
 Russell, Arthur, Tavistock
 Sackville, Sackville G. Stopford
 Salomons, Sir David
 Samuda, Joseph D'Aguilar
 Seeley, Charles, Lincoln
 Seeley, Charles, Nottingham
 Seymour, Alfred
 Smith, Abel, Herts.
 Smith, Samuel George, Aylesbury
 Somerset, Lord Henry R. C.
 Stapleton, John
 Stone, William Henry
 Strutt, Hon. Henry
 Stuart, Colonel
 Sturt, Henry Gerard, Dorsetshire
 Sykes, Christopher, York, E. R.
 Talbot, John Gilbot, Kent W.
 Thynne, Lord Henry Fred.
 Tipping, William
 Tite, Sir William

Tollemache, John, Cheshire W.
 Tollemache, Hon. Fred. J., Granth.
 Tracy, Hon. Charles R. D. Hanbury
 Turner, Charles, Lancashire S. W.
 Turnor, Edmund, Lincoln S.
 Verner, Edw. Wingfield, Lisburn
 Verney, Sir Harry
 Walpole, Hon. Fred., Norf. N.
 Walsh, Hon. Arthur
 Walter, John
 Waterhouse, Samuel
 Waters, George
 Weguelin, Thomas M.
 Welby, William Earle
 Whalley, George Hammond
 Wharton, John Lloyd
 Whitbread, Samuel
 Whitwell, John
 Williams, Chas. H., Barnstaple
 Williamson, Sir Hedworth
 Wilmot, Henry
 Yarmouth, Earl of

Tellers for the Noes, Mr. Bouverie and Mr. Scourfield.

PAIRS.

| FOR. | AGAINST. |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Stevenson, J. C. | Bölcrow, H. W. F. |
| Heygate, W. U. | Johnston, Andrew |
| Brown, A. H. | Fowler, W. |
| Morley, S. | Cardwell, Rt. Hon. E. |
| Brise, Colonel Ruggles | Dowdeswell, W. E. |
| Laslett, W. | Pemberton, E. L. |

Sir John D. Coleridge was accidentally shut out from voting for the Bill.

To the Editor of the Times.

Sir,—Will you permit me to state through your columns that I voted to-day against Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill "to remove the electoral disabilities of women," under a misapprehension? I went to the House with the intention of voting in its favour; but having been prevented from hearing the debate, and erroneously believing from what I heard in the excitement of the division that the Bill would give votes to married women generally, irrespective of their being ratepayers or holders of property, I went into the lobby against it. My opinion is in favour of giving the suffrage to female ratepayers and holders of property, and I now find that the Bill would have done nothing more.—I am, Sir, yours obediently,

May 3.

EDWARD BAINES.

FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

OF THE

MANCHESTER NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING,
NOVEMBER 8th, 1871.

MANCHESTER:
ALEXANDER IRELAND & CO., PRINTERS.
1871.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,
1870—71.

WITH the year that has just expired, the movement for the removal of the electoral disabilities imposed upon women may be said to have entered on a new phase—that of steady progress on sure ground, uninterrupted by the vicissitudes and uncertainties which attended its course during the previous years, and which have served to clear the ground and mark out its present definite position.

Before entering on any agitation for the reform of the Representation of the People Act of 1867 in the direction of the enfranchisement of all persons possessed of the statutory qualification for a vote, it was necessary first to ascertain positively whether the Act itself did not confer votes upon them, and whether fresh legislation was needed. The work for the year 1868, was therefore devoted exclusively to the determination of this question, which was finally settled by the decision against the claims of women in the Court of Common Pleas.

The year 1869 was signalised by the grant of the municipal franchise to women, which was generally regarded by both friends and enemies as a concession of the principle of women's suffrage in public elections, that must sooner or later be followed by the Parliamentary vote. In the year 1870 the question was for the first time submitted to the House of Com-

mons under the changed conditions induced by the grant of the municipal vote. It might reasonably have been expected that the House would consistently carry out to its completion the principle which it had deliberately admitted, and in the first instance, when left unbiassed by the action of the Government, it showed itself prepared to do so. But the Bill which, in the absence of Government pressure, passed the second reading in the House of Commons by a considerable majority, was, on the application of the Government whip, rejected on the motion for going into committee.

In the same session a franchise of almost equal importance to the municipal vote was given to women under the Elementary Education Act of 1870—by which women were admitted to the right of voting and of being elected for seats at School Boards. It is gratifying to observe that some of the largest constituencies in the kingdom immediately elected women among their representatives on the School Boards, and that the ladies who have been selected for this important office have, as a rule, discharged their duties in such a manner as fully to justify the action of the Government and the choice of their constituents.

On the 13th February, 1871, the Women's Disabilities Bill, which was identical in terms with that of the previous session, was introduced in the House of Commons. On the back of the Bill were the names of Mr. Jacob Bright, Mr. E. B. Eastwick and Dr. Lyon Playfair.

On the 3rd of May Mr. Jacob Bright, in a speech of great ability, moved the second reading of the Bill. The motion was seconded by Mr. Eastwick, and supported by Lord John Manners, Dr. Lyon Playfair and Mr. Ward Hunt. The opposition was maintained by Mr. Bouverie, Mr. Scourfield, Mr. Beresford Hope, Mr. Newdegate and Mr. James. Mr. Gladstone after congratulating the mover of the Bill on the ability with which he had stated his case said he should state the reasons which disinclined him to vote for it in terms of great moderation. He did not think the present law perfect

but he was unwilling to adopt the principle of a measure for its amendment without some better prospect as to the satisfactory nature of the proposed amendment than he at present perceived. Speaking generally he was inclined to say that the personal attendance and intervention of women in election proceedings would be a practical evil of an intolerable character. The question in regard to women's rights was a question of degree. The ancient law recognised the rights of women in the parish. The modern rule has extended the rule to the municipality. With respect to School Boards he thought the Legislature had done wisely in giving both the franchise and the right of sitting at School Boards to women. Then came a question with regard to Parliament, and we had to ask ourselves whether we should or should not go further. He admitted that there was a presumptive case for a change in the law. He never heard any conclusive reason why we should not borrow a hint from the law now existing in Italy under which a woman is allowed to exercise the franchise if she is possessed of the qualification, subject to the condition that she shall only exercise it through a deputy. As far as he was able to judge there was more presumptive ground for a change in the law than some of the opponents of the measure are disposed to own. There are various important particulars under which women obtain much less than justice under social arrangements. He might be told that there was no direct connection between this and the Parliamentary franchise, and he admitted it, but at the same time he was by no means sure that these inequalities might not have an indirect connection with a state of the law in which the balance is generally cast too much against women and too much in favour of men. In the competition for farms women suffer in a very definite manner in consequence of their want of a qualification to vote. So far as he was able to form an opinion of the general tone and colour of our law, in matters where the peculiar relations of men and women are concerned, that law does less than justice to women. In the whole chapter of legislation where the

irregular relations of men and women and the consequences of those irregular relations are concerned the English law does women much less than justice, and great mischief, misery and scandal result from that state of things in many occurrences and events of life. If it should be found possible to arrange a safe and well-adjusted alteration of the law as to political power, the man who should attain that object, and should see his purpose carried onward to its consequences in a more just arrangement of the provisions of other laws bearing upon the condition and welfare of women, would be a real benefactor to his country.

Although he would not vote for the Bill in respect to which there was no promise of modification if it could not be adopted in its present form, Mr. Gladstone did not, as in 1870, vote against it, but left the House before the division took place.

On the question being put, there appeared

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| For the second reading | 151 |
| Against..... | 220 |
| Majority against the Bill..... | 69 |

The bill was therefore lost.

Your Committee desire here to record their grateful appreciation of the manner in which the promoters and supporters of the measure presented their case. They acknowledge their sense of the valuable and generous support rendered to the cause by the occupants of the front Opposition bench; and they rejoice that the principle of the enfranchisement of women has been accepted in its integrity by leading statesmen on both sides of the House of Commons.

The analysis of the division list shows that the Bill was supported by ninety-six Liberals and fifty-five Conservatives, including three members of the late cabinet, Mr. Disraeli, Mr. Corry, and Mr. Ward Hunt. Forty-two out of the one hundred and fifty-one who voted for the Bill were new supporters. Of these last, twenty were Liberals and twenty-two Conserva-

tives. Seventeen members who voted against the Bill in 1870, voted for it last session. Five others who voted against Mr. Mill in 1867 voted with Mr. Bright in 1871. Therefore out of the forty-two new adherents twenty-two were former opponents. Against this we have to set the defection of three members who voted for the Bill in 1870 and against it in 1871.

The majority which threw out the Bill contained one hundred and eighteen Liberals and one hundred and two Conservatives.

The five great towns which return each three members to Parliament give undivided support to this Bill. There is no other political or social question which secures the unanimous vote of the representatives of these great towns. Twelve out of their fifteen votes were recorded in its favour on the third of May last—the one accidentally adverse vote has been explained to have been given under a mistake, and two others were neutral.

Manchester and Glasgow gave their full complement of three votes each for the Bill. Birmingham, Leeds, and Liverpool gave two votes each in its favour. Twenty-two constituencies gave their full vote of two each for the Bill, namely

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Bolton | Finsbury | Sheffield |
| Brighton | South Hants | Shrewsbury |
| Carmarthen co. | Leicester | Wenlock |
| Chelsea | Oldham | Wexford co. |
| Coventry | Penryn & Falmouth | Weymouth |
| Derby | Preston | Westminster |
| East Essex | Salford | Worcester |
| Edinburgh | | |

Sixty-one constituencies have given their full vote of one each for the measure :—

| | | |
|---------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Aberdeen East | Ashton-under-Lyne | Berwickshire |
| Aberdeen West | Ayrshire South | Bridport |
| Aberdeen city | Banbury | Burnley |
| Andover | Bandon | Caithness |

| | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Calne | Elgin and Nairn | Leith |
| Cardigan co. | Ennis | Linlithgow |
| Cardigan dist. | Fife | Malmesbury |
| Carlow | Frome | Marlborough |
| Chippenham | Gateshead | Newport, Isle of |
| Clonmel | Gravesend | Wight |
| Cockermouth | Greenock | Paisley |
| Denbigh dist. | Haddington dist. | Perth |
| Devizes | Haverfordwest | Portarlington |
| Dewsbury | Hawick | Rochdale |
| Downpatrick | Helston | South Shields |
| Dumbarton | Hertford | Stirling |
| Dundalk | Horsham | Stockton |
| Drogheda | Invernesshire | Swansea |
| Edinburghshire | Kidderminster | Tynemouth |
| Edinburgh and St. Andrew's Universities | Kilkenny | Wakefield |
| | Knareborough | Warrington |

Thirty-eight constituencies have given each one vote to the Bill—their other vote being neutral on the last division:—

| | | |
|-----------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Bradford | North Leicestershire | Stoke-on-Trent |
| Buckinghamshire | Limerick | Stroud |
| Cork county | Macclesfield | Sunderland |
| Cork | Maidstone | East Surrey |
| East Cornwall | Marylebone | West Surrey |
| West Cumberland | Newcastle-under-Lyme | East Sussex |
| Denbigh | Plymouth | Tamworth |
| East Devon | Rutland | Tipperary |
| Glamorgan | West Somerset | Tiverton |
| Halifax | Southampton | South Warwickshire |
| North Hants | East Staffordshire | Waterford |
| Mid Kent | Stafford | Wigan |
| Kerry | | Winchester |

Thirty-four constituencies gave one vote for and one against the Bill, being thirty-four votes on each side.

| | | |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Belfast | Ipswich | Nottingham |
| Bristol | South Leicester | Queen's co. |
| Carlisle | Londonderry co. | Reading |
| Chester | Mayo | Sligo |
| South Devon | Merthyr Tydvil | Southwark |
| Dundee | Newark | Stockport |
| North Durham | Newcastle-upon-Tyne | Tyrone |
| Durham city | | North Wilts |
| West Essex | North Northampton | Wolverhampton |
| Exeter | Northampton | East Worcester |
| Grantham | South Northumber- | West Worcester |
| Hackney | land | York |

We see that eighty-five constituencies give full and clear votes for the Bill, and forty-one clear though not full votes for it—so that one hundred and twenty-six constituencies are now clearly ranged on the side of the Bill—against one hundred in 1870. The total number of members now in the House of Commons who have voted or paired in favour of women's suffrage is two hundred and two.

Counting tellers and pairs in the division of May 5, there were for the Bill, one hundred and fifty-nine, against two hundred and twenty-eight, absent two hundred and seventy-one. Of English members there were, for the Bill one hundred and two, against, one hundred and sixty-six, absent, one hundred and ninety-seven. Welsh: For, six, against, seven, absent, seventeen. Scotch: For, twenty-five, against, thirteen, absent, twenty-two. Irish: For, eighteen, against, thirty-four, absent, fifty-three. Of Lancashire members there were for the Bill fifteen, against, five, absent, thirteen. Only one member for a Lancashire borough voted against the Bill. The five members for Manchester and Salford voted for it, as did two of the members for Liverpool. Three out of the thirteen absentees voted for the Bill on former occasions, therefore eighteen out of thirty-

three, an absolute majority of Lancashire members, have voted in favour of the enfranchisement of women.

During the session of 1871 there were presented to the House of Commons 622 petitions, signed by 186,976 persons, in favour of the Women's Disabilities Bill. Of these 75 were from public meetings or municipal councils under their corporate seal. The Town Councils of Edinburgh, Stirling, Manchester, Salford, Burnley, Northampton, and Newcastle-on-Tyne petitioned in favour of the Bill. The petitions from the various wards in Manchester were signed by 31,065 persons and the Salford petitions by 4,268. The petitions sent through the efforts of friends of the Manchester Committee were 120 in number, signed by 45,251 persons. A complete list of all petitions for women's suffrage presented to the House of Commons during the session of 1871, is appended to the present Report. Some have been presented to the House of Lords, but of these a full list has not been obtained.

Public meetings in support of the Women's Disabilities Bill at which your committee have been invited to take part, have been held at Rawtenstall, Eccles, and Wigan. Reports of these meetings, and of the large number of others which have originated in connection with other branches of the society will be found in the *Women's Suffrage Journal*.

In the month of April, invitations to a conference in London in support of the Bill were issued by the secretaries of the London, Edinburgh, Dublin, Manchester, Birmingham, and Bristol committees. The conference met on April 28, at the Langham Hotel, under the presidency of Walter Morrison, Esq., M.P. A memorial to Mr. Gladstone, asking the support of the Government to the Bill, was adopted and signed by the chairman on behalf of the Conference. A similar memorial to Mr. Disraeli was also adopted.

The memorial to Mr. Gladstone, of which the following is a copy, was signed by upwards of 2,300 women from 187 different places in the United Kingdom, and these signatures were all sent in a very few days.

TO THE RIGHT HON. WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE, M.P.,
FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY.

The Memorial of the undersigned Members of the Executive Committees of the various branches of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, and others interested in the removal of the Electoral Disabilities of Women—

SHEWETH—

That the exclusion of women, otherwise legally qualified, from voting in the election of Members of Parliament, is injurious to those excluded, contrary to the principle of just representation, and to that of the laws now in force regulating the election of municipal, parochial, and all other representative governments.

That in former times, as is proved by returns to writs now in existence, women took part in the election of Members of Parliament; that in none of the old laws regulating the qualification of electors is there any mention of the exclusion of women from the right of voting; that the only statute which in terms limits the exercise of the franchise which it confers, to male persons, is the Reform Act of 1832, and that no judicial decision had abrogated or annulled the presumptive right of women to the suffrage, until the Court of Common Pleas in 1868, disallowed the appeal of five thousand women householders who had claimed under the provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1867, to be placed on the roll of parliamentary electors for the City of Manchester.

That from time immemorial, up to the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, women ratepayers had rights equal and similar to those of men in matters pertaining to local government and expenditure. That women can vote in all parochial matters, can take part in vestry meetings, called for various purposes, such as the election of church-

wardens, waywardens, appointment of overseers, and formerly the levying of church rates. They can serve as churchwardens and overseers, and vote in the election of guardians. In none of these ancient voting customs, and in no Act of Parliament prior to 1835, was the sex of the ratepayers taken into account as either a qualification or a disqualification for the right of voting in local affairs. Nor was the precedent introduced by the Municipal Corporations Act followed in subsequent legislation, for the Public Health Act of 1848, and other statutes providing for local government carefully guard the electoral privileges of the whole body of ratepayers.

That on the foregoing considerations Her Majesty's Government gave its assent in 1869 to the proposal to restore to women ratepayers in corporate districts the rights of which they had been deprived by the Act of 1835, and in consequence of the passing of the Municipal Franchise Act of 1869 large numbers of women were added to the burgess rolls in various districts. In Bath, there were 1,308; in Bolton, 1,534; in Bristol, 2,477; in Chester, 1,048; in Coventry, 1,022; in Derby, 1,270; in Leicester, 1,621; in Manchester, 9,013; in Rochdale, 1,018; in Salford, 2,829; in York, 1,101; and a proportionate number in other places.

That as a direct consequence of the extension of the municipal franchise to women, they obtained the right of voting in the election of Members of School Boards in corporate districts, through those provisions of the Elementary Education Act which confer the franchise in such elections in boroughs, on all persons whose names are on the burgess roll.

That the Elementary Education Act further recognises the right of women to take part in the government of the country, by admitting them to seats at School Boards. That these legislative councils have power to interfere with personal rights, to impose pecuniary penalties, and to deal with questions of the deepest social and political importance in a manner which has hitherto been beyond the scope of any local legislature, and for these important functions women have been deliberately

made eligible for Parliament, and actually chosen by great constituencies in free and popular election.

That the recognition by the Legislature of the fitness of women for the responsible office of Member of a School Board renders anomalous the maintenance of the disability which excludes them from voting in the election of Members of Parliament.

That the Legislature in preserving and restoring the ancient rights of women in local government, and in conferring on them the new franchise created by the Education Act, has pursued a course in regard to the civil and political status of women of which the removal of the only remaining electoral disability is the natural and consistent conclusion.

That the interests of women suffer greatly from the operation of this disability inasmuch as the denial of representative government to women makes it possible to maintain laws depriving them of property, educational and personal rights which could not be withheld from any section of the community which had the protection of the suffrage.

Your Memorialists, therefore, pray that you, on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, will give your support to the Bill now before the House of Commons, entitled, "A Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women."

The success of this conference suggests the desirability of organising another on a more extended scale, next year. A national demonstration bringing together representatives of the movement from all parts of the kingdom, and converging the forces of the various sections of the society in the metropolis during the Session of Parliament, could not fail to have weight in pressing it on the attention of the Legislature—while at the same time the friends and representatives of the different Committees would be strengthened and encouraged in their work by mutual acquaintance and sympathy.

Your Committee have issued invitations to the several committees inviting their co-operation in the endeavour to establish

a central point of union for the various branches of the society, and have received from most of them assurances of approbation, and promises of support in carrying the proposal into effect.

In order that the working of the municipal franchise for women might be observed, your committee again appealed to the courtesy of the Town Clerks, for returns shewing the number of women on the burgess rolls and the number who availed themselves of their right to vote on the 1st November last. They have to thank these gentlemen for the valuable information they have kindly supplied. The returns hitherto received are tabulated and appended to the present report.

Feeling the need of increased pecuniary support, to enable them to discharge their heavy liabilities and to carry on their operations, your Committee projected the holding of a bazaar in the hope of raising the sum of £500. They received much promise of support, and many valuable contributions, but a few friends of the movement, being desirous to relieve the Committee from the labour and responsibility of the undertaking, and of setting free their energies for more direct work, generously came forward to guarantee the amount.

The Committee desire here to express their cordial thanks to Mrs. J. P. Thomasson—who undertook to collect the £500—and to the ladies and gentlemen who have kindly contributed to the special fund.

Your Committee earnestly press on the friends of the cause the need for increased pecuniary support. The bazaar fund will be exhausted by the end of the next financial year, if the expenditure should proceed at its present rate, while the exigencies of the agitation demand an increase rather than a decrease in its amount. The necessity can only be met by a large increase in the subscription list, and they ask every subscriber to endeavour to obtain, during the coming year, a fresh subscription of at least equal amount to his own.

The issue of the Women's Suffrage Journal has been continued with an increased amount of favour and support. But it is not yet self-supporting, and your Committee earnestly

request its friends and readers to endeavour to obtain new subscribers. As the charge is but one shilling and sixpence yearly, they hope that numbers will respond to this appeal.

On a review of the year that has gone by, your Committee have confidence in congratulating their friends on the steady advance of the cause. The number of votes against the Bill was, it is true, the same as last year. But the number of votes in its favour has increased from ninety-four to one hundred and fifty-one, and consequently the hostile majority has decreased from one hundred and twenty-six to sixty nine. Last year the Government was actively hostile, the Prime Minister spoke strongly and voted against the Bill, and the leaders of the Opposition were neutral. This year Mr. Gladstone seemed to approve the principle of the Bill, and did not vote against it, while Mr. Disraeli voted for it and two of his late colleagues spoke in its favour.

Under these circumstances your Committee have the greatest pleasure in requesting their parliamentary friends to take steps as early as possible in the forthcoming session for the re-introduction of the Women's Disabilities Bill. They have the utmost confidence that the ability, tact, and earnestness which, employed in the advocacy of a just principle, have secured for it an amount of parliamentary support seldom if ever obtained for any measure in so short a time, will continue to guide it to still more prosperous issues. On their part they venture to promise on behalf of the society they represent, the most strenuous and unceasing efforts to strengthen the hands of their leaders in the House of Commons and they earnestly appeal to the members of the Society, and to the public, for the means to enable them to redeem their pledge.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Of the Society, held in the MAYOR'S PARLOUR, TOWN HALL,
MANCHESTER, November 8th, 1871.

The MAYOR OF MANCHESTER in the Chair.

The Secretary read the Report of the Executive Committee.

The Treasurer read the Statement of Accounts.

Resolution I.—Moved by Dr. Pankhurst, seconded by Joseph
Crook, Esq., supported by Mrs. Thomas Dale :

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

Resolution II.—Moved by Mrs. Josephine E. Butler, seconded
by Miss Ashurst Biggs :

That this meeting hereby expresses its earnest thanks to Mr. Jacob
Bright, Mr. E. B. Eastwick, the Right Hon. Lord John Manners,
Dr. Lyon Playfair, and the Right Hon. George Ward Hunt, for
introducing and supporting the Women's Disabilities Bill, also to the
Members of the House of Commons who voted or paired in its favour
in the division on the second reading of the measure on May 2, 1871;
and respectfully requests Mr. Jacob Bright and his coadjutors to
take steps for the re-introduction of the Bill at an early period of
the forthcoming session.

Resolution III.—Moved by Jacob Bright, Esq., M.P.,
seconded by Mr. Alderman Bennett, supported by Miss
Shedden :

That the following persons be the Executive Committee for the ensuing
year :—Jacob Bright, Esq., M.P., Mrs. Jacob Bright, Miss Barton,
Miss Becker, Miss E. Becker, Mrs. Butler, Thomas Chorlton, Esq.,
Miss Hacking, Mrs. R. R. Moore, Dr. Pankhurst, Rev. S. A.
Steinthal, Mrs. Sutcliffe, Mrs. J. P. Thomasson, Miss Alice
Wilson.

JACOB BRIGHT, Esq., M.P., in the Chair.

Resolution IV.—Moved by Miss Becker, seconded by Miss
Alice Wilson :

That the best thanks of the meeting be given to the Mayor of Man-
chester for allowing the Society the use of the Town Hall, and for
presiding on the present occasion.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, 1871

| Name of Borough. | Total No. of Persons on Register. | No. of Women on Register. | Proportion of Women to Men on Register. | No. of Wards in Borough. | No. of Wards Contested Nov. 1, 1871. | Total No. of Persons who Voted. | No. of Women who Voted. | Proportion of Women to Men who Voted. |
|---|---|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Aberavon | 569 | 50 | 1 to 10.3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Abingdon | 797 | 98 | 1 to 7.1 | 1 | 1 | 520 | 39 | 1 to 12.3 |
| Ashton-under-Lyne .. | 5,304 | 710 | 1 to 6.4 | 4 | 3 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (3 contested wards) | 3,525 | 455 | 1 to 6.7 | ..... | ..... | 2,563 | 393 | 1 to 5.5 |
| Banbury | 683 | 93 | 1 to 6.3 | 1 | 1 | 313 | 26 | 1 to 11 |
| Barrow-in-Furness .. | 2,307 | 130 | 1 to 16.7 | 1 | 1 | 1,393 | 65 | 1 to 20.4 |
| Bath | 6,149 | 1,408 | 1 to 3.3 | 7 | 2 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (2 contested wards) | 2,653 | 524 | 1 to 4 | ..... | ..... | 1,599 | 269 | 1 to 4.9 |
| Bedford | 2,352 | 198 | 1 to 10.8 | 2 | 2 | 236 | 3 | 1 to 77.6 |
| Berwick-upon-Tweed .. | 1,191 | 206 | 1 to 4.7 | 3 | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (contested ward) | 330 | 60 | 1 to 4.5 | ..... | ..... | 266 | 31 | 1 to 7.5 |
| Bewdley | 415 | 21 | 1 to 18.7 | 1 | 1 | 274 | 5 | 1 to 53.8 |
| Birmingham | 57,990 | 5,936 | 1 to 8.7 | 13 | 3 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (3 contested wards) | 14,609 | 1,588 | 1 to 8.2 | ..... | ..... | 6,676 | 693 | 1 to 8.6 |
| Bodmin | 590 | 94 | 1 to 5.2 | 1 | 1 | 441 | 46 | 1 to 8.5 |
| Boston | 2,517 | 490 | 1 to 4.1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Bradford | 25,699 | 3,436 | 1 to 6.4 | 8 | 7 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (7 contested wards) | 22,201 | 3,076 | 1 to 6.2 | ..... | ..... | 12,702 | 1,827 | 1 to 5.9 |
| Bristol | 21,232 | 2,412 | 1 to 7.7 | 10 | 4 | 3,751 | 414 | ..... |
| „ (4 contested wards) | 6349 | 842 | 1 to 6.6 | ..... | ..... | 3751 | 414 | 1 to 8 |
| Bridgnorth | 950 | 97 | 1 to 8.7 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Burnley | 6,963 | 970 | 1 to 6.1 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Bury St. Edmunds .. | 2,308 | 377 | 1 to 5.1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Calne | 309 | 56 | 1 to 4.5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Carmarthen | 1,676 | 317 | 1 to 4.2 | 2 | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (1 contested ward) | 883 | 167 | 1 to 4.2 | ..... | ..... | 505 | 74 | 1 to 5.8 |
| Carnarvon | 1,452 | 199 | 1 to 6.3 | 2 | 2 | 949 | 111 | 1 to 7.5 |
| Chard | 148 | 26 | 1 to 4.6 | 1 | 1 | 74 | 2 | 1 to 36 |
| Chester | 6,427 | 1,103 | 1 to 4.8 | 5 | 2 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (2 contested wards) | 2,742 | 472 | 1 to 4.8 | ..... | ..... | 1,088 | 163 | 1 to 5.6 |
| Chichester | 1,238 | 236 | 1 to 4.2 | 2 | 2 | 775 | 117 | 1 to 5.6 |
| Chipping Wycombe .. | 683 | 50 | 1 to 12.6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Clifton, Dartmouth, } Hardness | 650 | 104 | 1 to 5.2 | 1 | 1 | 361 | 37 | 1 to 8.7 |
| Congleton | 2,165 | 348 | 1 to 5.2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Coventry | 7,024 | 898 | 1 to 6.8 | 5 | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (1 contested ward) | 922 | 123 | 1 to 6.4 | ..... | ..... | 645 | 81 | 1 to 7 |
| Denbigh | 1,172 | 209 | 1 to 4.6 | 1 | 1 | 703 | 96 | 1 to 6.3 |
| Derby | 9,927 | 1,360 | 1 to 6.2 | 6 | 1* | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (1 contested ward) | 1467 | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| Dewsbury .. | 4,241 | 415 | 1 to 9.2 | 3 | 3 | 1,291 | 103 | 1 to 11.5 |
| „ elec. Nov. 20, 1871 | 4,241 | 415 | 1 to 9.2 | 3 | 3 | 2,826 | 259 | 1 to 9.9 |
| Dorchester | 740 | 69 | 1 to 9.7 | 1 | 1 | 427 | 15 | 1 to 27.4 |
| Dover | 3,339 | 433 | 1 to 6.7 | 3 | 2 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (2 contested wards) | 1,572 | 182 | 1 to 7.6 | ..... | ..... | 1,067 | 77 | 1 to 12.8 |
| Dunstable | 779 | 152 | 1 to 4.1 | 1 | 1 | 607 | 116 | 1 to 4.2 |
| Durham | 2,230 | 365 | 1 to 5.1 | 3 | 3 | 1,367 | 176 | 1 to 6.7 |
| Evesham | 723 | 79 | 1 to 8.1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Falmouth | 845 | 172 | 1 to 4 | 1 | 1 | 290 | 39 | 1 to 6.7 |
| Flint | 627 | 65 | 1 to 8.6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Folkstone | 1,864 | 327 | 1 to 4.7 | 3 | 2 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (2 contested wards) | 1,622 | 316 | 1 to 4.1 | ..... | ..... | 818 | 94 | 1 to 7.7 |
| Glastonbury | 428 | 34 | 1 to 11.5 | 1 | 1 | 176 | 2 | 1 to 87 |
| Godalming | 357 | 44 | 1 to 7.1 | 1 | 1 | 101 | 2 | 1 to 49.5 |
| Guildford | 1,126 | 172 | 1 to 5.5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Hastings | 3,232 | abt. 500 | 1 to 5.4 | 2 | 1 | 1,664 | abt. 250 | 1 to 5.6 |
| „ (1 contested ward) | 1664 | abt. 250 | 1 to 5.6 | ..... | ..... | 570 | abt. 100 | 1 to 4.7 |
| Haverfordwest | 965 | 129 | 1 to 6.4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Hertford | 799 | 100 | 1 to 6.9 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Kidderminster | 3,396 | 362 | 1 to 8.3 | 2 | 2 | 2,553 | 232 | 1 to 10 |
| Leominster | 915 | 116 | 1 to 6.8 | 1 | 1 | 451 | 24 | 1 to 17.7 |
| Lichfield | 1,274 | 197 | 1 to 5.4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |

*No real contest.

| Name of Borough. | Total No. of Persons on Register. | No. of Women on Register. | Proportion of Women to Men on Register. | No. of Wards in Borough. | No. of Wards Contested Nov. 1, 1871. | Total No. of Persons who Voted. | No. of Women who Voted. | Proportion of Women to Men who Voted. |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Lincoln | 4,413 | 471 | 1 to 8.3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Liskeard | 733 | 83 | 1 to 8.8 | 1 | 1 | 445 | 46 | 1 to 8.6 |
| Ludlow | 757 | 82 | 1 to 8.1 | 1 | 1 | 481 | 30 | 1 to 15 |
| Maidenhead | 566 | 63 | 1 to 7.9 | 1 | 1 | 265 | 13 | 1 to 19.3 |
| Maidstone | 3,494 | 358 | 1 to 8.7 | 4 | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (1 contested ward) | 590 | 50 | 1 to 10.8 | .. | .. | 257 | 17 | 1 to 14.1 |
| Maldon | 889 | 78 | 1 to 10.3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Manchester | 62,204 | 8,855 | 1 to 6 | 15 | 8 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (8 contested wards) | 37,405 | 5,231 | 1 to 6.1 | .. | .. | 19,044 | 2,666 | 1 to 6.1 |
| Margate | 1,934 | 471 | 1 to 3.1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Marlborough | 540 | 39 | 1 to 12.8 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Monmouth | 876 | 133 | 1 to 5.5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Morpeth | 738 | 135 | 1 to 4.4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Neath | 1,318 | 118 | 1 to 10.1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 0 | ..... |
| Newark | 2,104 | 235 | 1 to 8 | 3 | 1 | 1,761 | 157 | 1 to 10.2 |
| Northampton | 5,991 | 393 | 1 to 14.2 | 3 | .. | 1,197 | 39 | ..... |
| „ (1 contested ward) | 2807 | 186 | 1 to 14 | .. | 6 | 1197 | 39 | 1 to 35 |
| Nottingham | 15,542 | 2,031 | 1 to 6.6 | 7 | 0 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (6 contested wards) | 14,033 | 1,849 | 1 to 6.5 | 0 | 0 | 5,544 | 604 | 1 to 8.1 |
| Oldham | 13,763 | 1,770 | 1 to 6.7 | 8 | 5 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (5 contested wards) | 8,982 | 1,162 | 1 to 6.7 | .. | .. | 7,567 | 938 | 1 to 7 |
| Oswestry | 1,295 | 225 | 1 to 4.7 | 2 | 2 | 970 | 143 | 1 to 5.7 |
| Pembroke | 1,943 | 153 | 1 to 11.6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Penryn | 590 | 49 | 1 to 11 | 1 | 1 | 346 | 19 | 1 to 17.2 |
| Penzance | 1882 | 389 | 1 to 3.8 | 2 | 2 | 900 | 124 | 1 to 6.2 |
| Pontefract | 796 | 117 | 1 to 5.8 | 1 | 1 | 467 | 34 | 1 to 12.7 |
| Pwllheli | 466 | 0 | ..... | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Reigate | 1,974 | 215 | 1 to 8.1 | 2 | 2 | 437 | 33 | 1 to 12.2 |
| Richmond, Yorkshire | 637 | 77 | 1 to 7.1 | 1 | 1 | 502 | 47 | 1 to 9.6 |
| Rochdale | 8,316 | 1,576 | 1 to 4.2 | 3 | 3 | 6,268 | 1,064 | 1 to 4.8 |
| Romsey | 234 | 31 | 1 to 6.5 | 1 | 1 | 130 | 9 | 1 to 13.4 |
| Ruthin | 600 | 130 | 1 to 3.6 | 1 | 1 | 360 | 51 | 1 to 6 |
| Rye | 578 | 40 | 1 to 13.4 | 1 | 1 | 491 | 28 | 1 to 16.5 |
| St. Ives | 1,094 | 70 | 1 to 14.6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Salford | 21,916 | 3,238 | 1 to 5.7 | 12 | 11 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (11 contested wards) | 20,568 | 3,030 | 1 to 5.7 | .. | .. | 12,227 | 1,551 | 1 to 6.8 |
| Scarborough | 4,358 | 763 | 1 to 4.7 | 2 | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (1 contested ward) | 1,316 | 285 | 1 to 3.6 | .. | .. | 639 | 51 | 1 to 11.5 |
| Stratford-on-Avon | 642 | 102 | 1 to 5.2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Tamworth | 710 | 69 | 1 to 9.2 | 1 | 1 | 312 | 23 | 1 to 12.5 |
| Tenterden | 504 | 55 | 1 to 8.1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Torrington, Great | 627 | 147 | 1 to 3.2 | 1 | 1 | 550 | 135 | 1 to 3 |
| Tenby | 486 | 51 | 1 to 8.5 | 1 | 0 | 336 | 25 | 1 to 12.4 |
| Totnes | 647 | 120 | 1 to 4.3 | 1 | 1 | 351 | 39 | 1 to 8 |
| Truro | 1,579 | 253 | 1 to 5.2 | 2 | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (1 contested ward) | 657 | 84 | 1 to 6.8 | .. | .. | 389 | 19 | 1 to 19.4 |
| Wallingford | 415 | 40 | 1 to 9.3 | 1 | 1 | 21 | 0 | 1 to 9.3 |
| Walsall | 8569 | 650 | 1 to 12.1 | 3 | 0 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| Welshpool | 1,329 | 125 | 1 to 9.6 | 1 | 1 | 871 | 46 | 1 to 17.9 |
| Winchester | 1,932 | 291 | 1 to 5.6 | 3 | 1 | ..... | ..... | ..... |
| „ (1 contested ward) | 954 | 180 | 1 to 4.3 | .. | .. | 301 | 1 | 1 to 300 |
| Windsor (New) | 1,289 | 193 | 1 to 5.6 | 2 | 2 | 796 | 55 | 1 to 13.4 |
| Wisbech | 1,593 | 279 | 1 to 4.7 | 2 | 2 | 972 | 134 | 1 to 6.2 |
| Wolverhampton | 10,600 | abt 1000 | 1 to 9.6 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ..... |
| Wrexham | 1,343 | 205 | 1 to 5.5 | 1 | 1 | 845 | 125 | 1 to 5.7 |

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, 1869, 1870, 1871.

| Name of Borough. | No. of Women on Municipal Register in 1869. | No. of Women who Voted in 1869. | No. of Women on Municipal Register in 1870. | No. of Women who Voted in 1870. | No. of Women on Municipal Register in 1871. | No. of Women who Voted in 1871. |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Abingdon | 83 | 49 | 104 | 56 | 98 | 39 |
| Banbury | 83 | * | 94 | 28 | 93 | 26 |
| Barrow-in-Furness | .. | .. | 95 | 29 | 130 | 65 |
| Bath (whole city) | 1250 | .. | 1303 | .. | 1408 | .. |
| „ (2 contested wards) | .. | 111 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (1 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | 72 | .. | .. |
| „ (2 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 524 | 269 |
| Bedford | 243 | 5 | .. | .. | 198 | 3 |
| Berwick-upon-Tweed | 173 | * | 171 | .. | 206 | .. |
| „ „ (3 contested wards) | .. | .. | .. | 70 | .. | .. |
| „ „ (1 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 60 | 31 |
| Bodmin | 93 | 53 | + | + | 94 | 46 |
| Bolton | 1533 | 1112 | 1534 | 723 | + | + |
| Bristol | 2465 | .. | 2477 | .. | 2412 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | 242 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (5 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | 530 | .. | .. |
| „ (4 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 842 | 414 |
| Carmarthen | 234 | .. | + | + | 317 | .. |
| „ (2 contested wards) | .. | 107 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (1 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 167 | 74 |
| Carnarvon | + | + | 200 | .. | 199 | 111 |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | .. | .. | 88 | .. | .. |
| Chard | 83 | 7 | 25 | 2 | 26 | 2 |
| Chester | 698 | .. | 1048 | .. | 1103 | .. |
| „ (4 contested wards) | .. | 150 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (3 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | 9 | .. | .. |
| „ (2 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 472 | 163 |
| Chichester | + | + | 235 | 100 | 236 | 117 |
| Clifton, Dartmouth, and Hardness | + | + | 86 | 16 | 104 | 37 |
| Coventry | 799 | * | 1022 | 11 | 898 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 123 | 81 |
| Deal | 147 | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | 21 | 152 | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (1 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | 6 | + | + |
| Denbigh | 84 | * | 188 | 106 | 209 | 96 |
| Dorchester | 74 | * | 75 | 3 | 69 | 15 |
| Dover | 352 | .. | 462 | .. | 433 | .. |
| „ (2 contested wards) | .. | 98 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (3 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | 168 | .. | .. |
| „ (2 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 182 | 77 |
| Durham | 314 | .. | 346 | .. | 365 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | 63 | 128 | 98 | .. | .. |
| „ (3 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 365 | 176 |
| Falmouth | 61 | 9 | 134 | 60 | 172 | 39 |
| Folkstone | + | + | 315 | .. | 327 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | .. | 80 | 28 | .. | .. |
| „ (2 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 316 | 94 |
| Grimsby | 198 | 60 | 200 | 100 | .. | .. |
| Glastonbury | + | + | 45 | 14 | 34 | 2 |
| Guildford | 171 | 104 | 181 | 105 | 172 | * |
| Hastings | + | + | 468 | .. | abt 500 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | .. | .. | 72 | abt 250 | abt 100 |
| Haverfordwest | 128 | 62 | 145 | 13 | 179 | * |
| Hertford | 89 | 59 | 112 | 29 | 106 | + |
| Leicester | 870 | .. | 1621 | .. | + | + |
| „ (3 contested wards) | .. | 265 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (5 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | 603 | .. | .. |
| Leominster | 119 | 18 | 116 | 37 | 116 | 24 |
| Liskeard | 96 | 22 | 110 | 9 | 83 | 46 |

* No contest, or no real contest.

† No return.

| Name of Borough. | No. of Women on Municipal Register in 1869. | No. of Women who Voted in 1869. | No. of Women on Municipal Register in 1870. | No. of Women who Voted in 1870. | No. of Women on Municipal Register in 1871. | No. of Women who Voted in 1871. |
|-----------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Lyme Regis | 67 | 6 | 69 | 11 | † | † |
| Ludlow | † | † | 120 | 64 | 83 | 30 |
| Maidenhead | 51 | 14 | 46 | 12 | 63 | 13 |
| Maidstone | 344 | .. | 364 | .. | 355 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | 33 | .. | 3 | 50 | 17 |
| Manchester | 7187 | .. | 9013 | † | 8855 | .. |
| „ (9 contested wards) | 3599 | 1869 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (8 contested wards) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 521 | 2066 |
| Morpeth | 129 | 81 | 142 | 107 | 135 | * |
| Newark | 233 | .. | 229 | .. | 235 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | 49 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (2 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | 101 | .. | .. |
| „ (3 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 157 |
| Northampton | 394 | 78 | 333 | 119 | 393 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 186 | 39 |
| Penryn | 49 | 16 | 54 | 9 | 49 | 19 |
| Penzance | 306 | 46 | 354 | 65 | 389 | 124 |
| Pontefract | 69 | 7 | † | † | 117 | 34 |
| Richmond, Yorkshire | 69 | * | 70 | 1 | 77 | 47 |
| Rochdale | † | † | 1018 | 688 | 1576 | 1064 |
| Ruthin | 135 | 30 | 142 | 75 | 130 | 51 |
| Ryde, Isle of Wight | 298 | 93 | 327 | 157 | † | † |
| Rye | 43 | 26 | 38 | * | 40 | 28 |
| Salford | 2769 | .. | 2829 | .. | 3238 | .. |
| „ (5 contested wards) | .. | 1123 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (8 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | 728 | .. | .. |
| „ (11 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 3030 | 1551 |
| Seaborough | 528 | 97 | 620 | 259 | 763 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 285 | 51 |
| Totnes | † | .. | 114 | * | 120 | 39 |
| Truro | 268 | 64 | † | † | 253 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | .. | .. | .. | 81 | 19 |
| Welshpool | 89 | † | abt 50 | abt 22 | 125 | 46 |
| Winchester | 231 | .. | † | † | 291 | .. |
| „ (1 contested ward) | .. | 7 | .. | .. | .. | .. |
| „ (1 „ „) | .. | .. | .. | .. | .. | 7 |
| Wisbech | 290 | 103 | 277 | 132 | 279 | 134 |

* No contest, or no real contest.

† No return.



WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

It is now seven years since the question of giving votes to Women was first mooted in this country, as one deserving serious public attention, and the proposal has in this short time met with a success which is perhaps without precedent in the case of a movement at once so great and so novel. Nevertheless, many persons have very indistinct and erroneous notions of what "Women's Suffrage" really means, and so many of the objections against which it has to contend are founded on a misconception both of the nature of its object and the limits within which it is confined, that a clear explanation of these points not unfrequently induces a ready assent to the movement from those, who, on mistaken grounds, were formerly its vigorous opponents. Some suppose that all women are to have a vote, whereas MR. JACOB BRIGHT'S Bill in Parliament simply proposes to enfranchise those women, *unmarried* or *widows*, who are independent householders, or have the same property qualification that is required of men. The fact that married women are strictly excluded, even where they possess property in their own right, on grounds of obvious expediency, at once disposes of a favourite and powerful argument against the whole question. That fear of domestic discord which seems to sit like a nightmare upon the souls of some half-informed opponents of the movement, is a phantom hardly worth conjuring up now, when it can no longer frighten terrified husbands into a defensive alliance against it. There are always timid persons to be found, who are persuaded that if a proposed change is made, the world will immediately come to an end. Experience tells us, that the world generally goes on just as it did before,—perhaps a little more easily,—while the change is of great benefit to society. Four thousand years of history tell us, and every day's experience confirms the unhappy truth, that those who have interests to be looked after, must look after them themselves, or else they will go to the wall; and if any class of persons is both physically weak and politically defenceless, it is certain to suffer at the hands of those who are strong and powerful. The middle classes in England were oppressed until they demanded the power of political self-assertion in 1832; so were the working classes before the Reform Act of 1867. The same arguments were used in Parliament this Session on behalf of the agricultural labourer; and if any one wants stronger illustrations, let him consider the parallel (and perhaps more apposite) cases of serfdom and slavery. Now women, arguing for their own interests exclusively, make the same complaint; and with so much truth, that an English woman is not overstating her case when she says—that in no country in the world is the *legal* position of a female

so degraded, so barbarous, or so cruel, as her own. It is no consolation to her to be told that if she will only keep quiet, men will see that she gets her due. Men do not, and men will not—unless they are compelled to do so; and this is just why women want votes. Englishmen, indeed, are not bad enough to take advantage of the full powers the law allows them; most of them do not know what those powers are. If they did, the shameful nature of that law would shock many who are now ignorant of the injustice it tolerates and commits. A long course of legislation *by* men has produced a legislation *for* men, in which the interests of women are thoroughly ignored. Yet men are found who say, "If women get votes, they will do themselves more harm than good." How insolent such a remark appears, or how flippantly ignorant, when spoken to those who know what facts are; nor could a more cruel irony be uttered, or a more self-condemnatory sophism, when it is made in the presence of any one of that multitude of women, who are silently suffering wrongs which no man will remedy! It is worse than idle, it is more than folly, for men to preach to women what is good for them, when they every day refuse to redress those evils of which women alone feel the sting. It is the same futile nonsense which has been talked to every class of men who have insisted upon helping themselves; and we may well feel surprised that certain men are not ashamed of harping to that old tune, when all the world is tired of it. When it is an accepted principle in modern and enlightened politics, that every class must look after itself, why are women, the very class who must need such a right, to be treated, against their will, according to a different rule?

Compare the legal status of a married woman in Christian England and in polygamous and Mohammedan Persia. The Persian holds her own property, her own children, and her own person, in all circumstances, without being legally liable to her husband. She can demand a separation if he takes a second wife, and the law compels him to support her apart in a comfortable position in life. He is not permitted to treat her in any way contrary to her wishes, much less to abuse her. Such, so far as circumstances are the same, is the case with all lands of western civilization except our own. In this country, before 1870, every penny of the wife's property belonged absolutely to the husband; and, subject to certain exceptions in the case of some kinds of landed estates, if he died the day after it became his, the widow got none of it, for the law gave it to his heir, who might be a distant cousin. He was also at liberty to will all her personalty and leaseholds to whom he pleased; and to this day, a married woman is legally incapable of making a will. Cases have constantly occurred where not only has the husband spent his wife's fortune in profligacy, and treated her with neglect and cruelty, but when she has endeavoured to earn a living by keeping a school or a shop, or by one of the few miserable means of livelihood which are open to her sex, he, with the sanction of the law, has come, time after time, and seized her furniture and savings, in order to provide himself with the means of the grossest dissipation.

Our common law allows him to beat his wife with "reasonable" severity, to restrain her wishes, her movements, nay even her person; and if she, heart-broken by the cruelty and outraged by the infidelity of the man to whose uncontrolled discretion the law confides her every interest and her every hope, leaves her miserable home, she is denied even the consolation of her own children, whom she must suffer to grow up away from her care, with the infamous example of their father as their only guide. How many mothers, rather than suffer this cruel separation, submit in silent suffering to their fate, we may guess, but never know. A woman has literally no rights over that to which both nature and reason declare her to have the strongest and most sacred right—her own offspring. But, if her children are illegitimate, if it is man's interest to abandon them, then the unhappy mother must bear unaided the burden of a shame and sin of which she herself is but too often the injured victim. If, on the other hand, a husband dies without appointing guardians for his infant children, the law, made by that wisdom and that justice on which, we are told, women may trustfully rely, does not allow the mother to educate her own offspring, but hands them over to the husband's heir, to be brought up according to his views and his religion, totally disregarding any wishes of the mother to the contrary. The worst husband can direct the education of his children during his life, or by will after his death, and man-made law will not interfere. In short, there is no amount of injustice which the law does not perpetrate against the wife, who is regarded as a nonentity, incapable of owning herself, her property, or her children, of making a will, even of succeeding to her husband's rights after his death, or of resisting the most tyrannical exercise of them in his lifetime. In 1870 a small change was made regarding her property, chiefly owing to the efforts of a number of determined ladies, who refused to witness the silent slavery of married women, especially amongst the lower classes, without raising their voice against it; but even under this new law the old spirit so strongly prevails, that while a woman is allowed to keep her own earnings, her husband may forbid her to earn anything at all. In other respects the law remains as we have described it, and in divorce, the injustice between man and woman is, perhaps, greater. It is no use to say these cases are exceptional. Perhaps they are. But laws are made not for the good only, but for the bad; and if a law does not protect the good or the weak against the bad or the strong, but permits the most intolerable and heartless injustice to be perpetrated in favour of evil-disposed persons, that law is a wrong one; and he who made it or suffers it to continue, is not fit to be entrusted with absolute and uncontrolled powers of legislation on such a subject. Women therefore say that laws relating to women will never be satisfactory so long as they are excluded from a share in making them, and who will say, in the face of facts, they are not in the right? Take for instance the very insufficient punishments awarded for offences against women and children. In this recently much-discussed question, the legislative assistance of women would be valuable.

OPINIONS OF EMINENT STATESMEN

OPINIONS OF EMINENT STATESMEN

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

On still broader grounds, the desirability of abolishing the electoral disqualification of sex becomes apparent. It is not only for their own interests, but for the interest of the nation, nay of the world, that women ought to have votes. They will infuse a gentler and more philanthropic spirit into our legislation. People say few women want the franchise, or that they are not educated to use it. Then let them learn to want it, by being taught that they have responsibilities for the less favoured of their sex; and because a happy few can pass a life of luxury and ease, those who are in very different circumstances, and those who earnestly desire to perform a great duty and exercise a great right, are not on that account to be deprived of it. If they are not educated for it, why do we put them below the ignorant and miserable labourer, whom we are asked to entrust with the franchise as a means of education? Let us then educate our women by giving them something lofty and politics is the noblest of sciences—to which they may turn their attention, and devote that leisure which is often wasted in a trivial and lamentable way. There are over 600,000 more women than men in these islands, to whom, therefore, married life is not possible.

THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE.

"I cannot help thinking that for some reason or other, there are various important particulars in which women obtain much less than justice under social arrangements. * * * * * If it should be found possible to arrange a safe and well-adjusted alteration of the law as to political power, the man who shall attain that object, and who shall see his purpose carried onward to its consequences, in a more just arrangement of the provisions of other laws bearing upon the condition and welfare of women, will, in my opinion, be a real benefactor to his country."—*Speech in the House of Commons, May 3, 1871.*

THE RIGHT HON. B. DISRAELI.

"I say that in a country governed by a woman—where you allow women to form part of the estate of the realm—peeresses in their own right for example—where you allow a woman not only to hold land, but to be a lady of the manor and hold legal courts—where a woman by law may be a churchwarden and overseer of the poor,—I do not see, where she has so much to do with the State and Church, on what reasons, if you come to right, she has not a right to vote."

MR. J. S. MILL.

"No one, I think, can possibly pretend that women, many of whom are responsible heads of families, women who conduct an estate or manage a business, women who often pay rates or taxes to a large amount, women who in the capacity of schoolmistress teach a great deal more than the great proportion of male electors ever learned, no one can pretend that such women can be pronounced incapable of exercising the Franchise which is conferred upon every male householder. * * * * * If the Suffrage were conceded, an unworthy stigma would be taken off the whole sex; the law would cease to declare that they were unfit for serious things, and to pronounce that their wishes and opinions were not worth attending to on things which concerned them equally with men, and on many which concerned them much more. They could not be classed with children, idiots, and lunatics, as persons incapable of taking care of themselves and others, and who ought to have everything done for them without their consent."

RICHARD COBDEN.

"There are many ladies I am happy to say present. Now, it is a very anomalous and singular fact that they cannot vote themselves, and yet they have the power of conferring votes upon other people. I wish they had the Franchise, for they would make a better use of it than their husbands."—*Speech in Covent Garden Theatre, January 15, 1845.*

A much larger number is excluded by men's unwillingness to marry. About 200,000 women earn their own living, and have in this way direct stake, not only in their own happiness, but in the general political prosperity of the country, and no stake at all in that "chivalrous protection" by men, about which such feebleness is talked to prove, forsooth, that women don't want "rights." Is it impossible to stop twaddle of this sort, and are the men who employ this kind of reasoning incapable of understanding facts? But those who take a serious view of a great question will admit that in this class of women there is a vast and beneficial power, if it could be utilised politically. As to the proportion of women to men voters, the experience of municipal elections, where voting goes on just as at parliamentary ones, only much more frequently, and where both sexes exercise the franchise as one, tells us that it is but one to nine. But even here, the influence of the female element is strong. Women are generally more moral in life, and more sharp in perception than men; and as they often look at things from a different point of view, the introduction of that influence would be of great service to the State. In private life, too, the change would be eagerly appreciated. There are few men who do not admire a gifted and intelligent woman, and who would not prefer a wife capable of sympathising with their views, understanding their ideas, and interesting herself in all that concerns them. A pedant and a blue stocking are equally objectionable, but a highly educated woman is appreciated as thoroughly as a man of culture. To sneer at a woman because she has "rights," or demands those of which she is deprived, is now an anachronism. To expect she shall make herself truly man's equal, by using the rights which cannot long be withheld from her, will soon become a matter of course.

H. Armour & Co., Printers, Edinburgh.

OPINIONS OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

MR. JACOB BRIGHT, M.P.

"If it be just and right that a woman should be able to control the municipal expenditure to which her property contributes, should she not have a right to control the parliamentary expenditure to which her property contributes? The local expenditure of the country amounts to about £20,000,000, and the imperial expenditure to about £70,000,000; and if justice requires that she should have opportunity of controlling the expenditure of the smaller sum, is it not unjust to deprive her of the means of controlling the expenditure of the larger? But we want votes for something else than merely to control the expenditure of our money. Parliament can confiscate the property of women, and it does so to a large extent. It can deal with liberty and life, and pass laws affecting the happiness of people in the remotest cottages of the land—matters of far greater importance than anything connected with expenditure."—Speech in the House of Commons, May 4, 1870.

RIGHT HON. GEORGE WARD HUNT, M.P.

"I believe that the feeling against granting the Franchise to women is the result of old prejudice and not of reason, and therefore I shall, with great pleasure, support the second reading of this Bill."—Speech delivered in the House of Commons, May 3, 1871.

DR. LYON PLAYFAIR, M.P.

"Many say we object to women interfering in politics because it is their natural function to be wives and mothers, and to attend to domestic rather than civil concerns. That I understand to be the argument of hon. gentlemen opposite. Wives and mothers may be thus fully occupied, but there are many women who are neither; and when it is remembered that there are 487,000 widows in this country and 1,110,000 spinsters, it is absurd to try to limit all women to the domestic hearth, and to prevent them extending their sympathy beyond it. The world owes much to the sympathies of women, and I need only mention three names as a sufficient answer to the objection that women should only concern themselves with domestic and not with public matters. Those names are Miss Florence Nightingale, Miss Harriet Martineau, and Miss Burdett Coutts."—Speech in the House of Commons, May 4, 1870.

MR. PETER RYLANDS, M.P.

"Laws have been passed which pressed unjustly upon women, and some of these laws are in existence now. Women have a right to have their voice heard in the settlement of questions which affect their social position and their individual rights."—Speech at Manchester.

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OPINIONS OF EMINENT PERSONS

20

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

RIGHT HON. JAMES STANSFELD, M.P.

"I will say for myself, that whether the time for this movement and for the efforts of this Association, be five or fifteen years, or more, I know that opportunities will occur, and I shall embrace them with eagerness and satisfaction, of paying my tribute to the principles involved, and of endeavouring as far as opportunity may serve, of aiding a cause which I have most sincerely at heart."

LORD HOUGHTON.

"The same argument should be used with regard to the extension of political power to women, as has been used by all wise men with regard to the extension of the Suffrage to men."

PROFESSOR FAWCETT, M.P.

"Women pay taxes as well as men, and the argument that the Franchise should be given to working men, in order that their particular interests may be represented, applies with equal force to women. There are no laws on the Statute Book which so much demand to be repealed or altered as those which refer to the condition of women."—Speech in House of Commons.

MRS. GARRETT ANDERSON, M.D.

"I have been often told that I could scarcely be aware of what would happen to the health of women if they had this tremendous power of the Franchise * * * I must say that so far as I know anything of women, my conviction would be that it is entirely and ludicrously false; that, so far as an excitement of this kind, an excitement coming up from the domestic side of their nature, but leading them out into larger interests, and into a wider range of thought, so far as it had any perceptible influence on their health at all, it would be a decidedly beneficial one, and I should not anticipate any harm at all from giving them the right to vote. So far is this true that I believe one of the very greatest hindrances that women have to being really vigorous and healthy, is the cramped life that they ordinarily lead, and if they had a great deal more to do with large interests and with things that justly and rightly stir their souls, they would be more healthy and in every way more vigorous."—Speech at Aberdeen, April 3, 1871.

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