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H. D. Clark

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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

PUBLIC MEETING IN EDINBURGH

IN

QUEEN STREET HALL,

ON 17TH JANUARY 1870,

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

THE EDINBURGH BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY
FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

P PAMPHLET

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

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS AT PUBLIC MEETING,
JAN. 17. 1870.

A PUBLIC MEETING was held in Queen Street Hall, on 17th January, in favour of conferring the Electoral Franchise on all Women who are qualified as being the owners or occupiers of lands or houses in their own right. The meeting was a large and enthusiastic one, the hall, both below and in the galleries, being densely crowded—ladies forming a large proportion of the audience in the body of the Hall; and hundreds were obliged to leave who could not obtain admittance. It was computed that about 1200 persons were present. Among those on the platform were—Principal Sir Alexander Grant, Bart; Sir David Wedderburn, Bart., M.P.; Mr Duncan M'Laren, M.P.; Mr Jacob Bright, M.P.; Dr Lyon Playfair, C.B., M.P.; Mr Miller, M.P.; Rev. Dr Robert Wallace; Professors Masson, Kelland, and Calderwood; Mr Adam Gifford, advocate; Mr W. F. Bedford, D.C.L.; Councillors Mossman, Greig, Millar, Bladworth, Wormald, and Murray; Messrs Hugh Rose, W. M'Crie, Edward Blyth, Robert Cox, W.S., Wm. Smith, Duncan M'Laren jun., John Carmichael, &c.

On the motion of the PRINCIPAL of the UNIVERSITY, Mr D. M'Laren, M.P., was called to the chair.

The CHAIRMAN said—Ladies and gentlemen, I have first of all to thank you for the honour you have done me in appointing me chairman of this great meeting, and I am sure, from its respectable appearance, that my situation to-night will be a complete sinecure, for I have no doubt that you are all very much of one mind in the cause we have met, I may say, to inaugurate in this city; that it will command all your sympathies; and that everything will be conducted with the greatest propriety. It would be out of place for me, as chairman, to enter into any lengthened remarks, because it would only be anticipating what you would naturally expect to hear from other speakers. I will, however, take leave to read two letters of apology, and to mention the substance of two or three others. The first is from Sir Robert Anstruther, a warm friend of the cause—(cheers)—and the member for Fifeshire—addressed to the Ladies' Committee, who have the merit

of getting up this meeting themselves, without the interference of the gentlemen at all. (Laughter and cheers). He says—"Madam, I very much regret that it will not be in my power to attend the meeting on the 17th inst. I am, however, not without hope that, though debarred by the pressure of business from the pleasure of assisting you on this occasion, I may have an early opportunity of giving evidence in Parliament, at least by vote, of my sincere sympathy with the cause which you have in hand." (Cheers.) Sir John Murray, Bart. of Philiphaugh, after expressing his regret at not being able to be present, says he has pleasure in taking this opportunity of saying how much he sympathises with this movement in favour of conferring the electoral franchise on females. (Cheers.) He trusts that this justice will speedily be done to them, and their right to vote acknowledged by the House of Lords and the House of Commons. (Cheers.) There are other letters of apology—from Mr Macfie, the member for Leith, expressing his approval of the object of the meeting; a strong letter from Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, Bart., who desired to come down from London to attend the meeting, but having previously agreed to be chairman of an important educational meeting this evening in London, could not come; from the Rev. Daniel F. Sandford, who was to have been one of our speakers, and has sent a note excusing himself on account of illness in his family; from the Rev. Mr M'Phail, of Pilrig Free Church, expressing his sympathy with the object of the meeting; Mr M'Lennan, advocate, writes to a similar effect, as do Bailie Fyfe and several other gentlemen, with whose names I need not trouble you. (Cheers.) I have little more to say than to introduce the different speakers who will present themselves before you. I may, however, say one word respecting a misunderstanding of our object, which I have heard over and over again repeated, as if some persons were determined not to understand it. Those opponents of our cause say that the proposal is to give every woman a vote, no matter in what circumstances. Now I wish it to be distinctly understood that that is not the object of this meeting. Men get votes only because they are the occupiers of houses in their own right, or because they are the owners of lands in their own right, or because they are the occupiers of land in their own right. In the same way, if a woman be unmarried, and has a house that is her own house, or lands that are her own lands, this Committee thinks that that woman has as good a right as a taxpayer, and as an intelligent inhabitant of this country, to give a vote in the election of Members of Parliament as any man placed in the same circumstances. (Cheers.) In addition to that—and it is the only other remark I will venture to make—I think it would considerably improve the making of our laws, in some respects, if female influence were brought to bear on members of the Legislature on certain important and difficult questions. (Cheers and laughter.) I think that, as a rule, ladies take a great interest in all social and moral reforms, and that our legislators are more apt to take a deep interest in purely political questions, than in those social questions on which the well-being of the commonwealth so largely depends. (Cheers.) I think, then, that if ladies had the franchise they, as a rule, would be more imbued with

the necessity of attending to that class of questions, and would influence the minds of members in their favour; and I never held a stronger opinion on any subject in my life than that which I now express—of cordial approbation to the proposal for giving the electoral franchise to all women who are owners or occupiers of property in their own right, equally with men. (Loud cheers.)

Professor CALDERWOOD read the following report of the Edinburgh Branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage:—

"This Society has been in organised operation for more than two years. It originated from a growing conviction that it was not only just in principle, but important for national well-being, that women should be represented in the election of members of Parliament.

"That it was inconsistent with our constitutional principle of 'no taxation without representation' that a large proportion of intelligent ratepayers and holders of property should be excluded from a voice in the appointment of those who frame the laws and impose the taxes; and that it was altogether unjust that women should be debarred from the recognised representative rights of citizens, and yet be subject to laws which often bear upon them oppressively and unjustly, and that therefore the electoral franchise should be extended to women on the same terms as to men, viz., to such as are owners or occupiers of lands or houses in their own right.

"In support of these fundamental principles, the society has directed its efforts to extend an interest in the cause by the circulation of thousands of pamphlets, many of them emanating from the ablest pens in the kingdom, and by correspondents with other towns, and endeavouring to organise kindred societies throughout Scotland. These efforts have resulted in procuring from Scotland nearly 100 petitions to Parliament, signed by upwards of 19,000 names.

"The number of petitions presented to Parliament altogether on this subject has been 340, and the signatures have amounted to (126,475) one hundred and twenty-six thousand four hundred and seventy-five.

"In the report issued by our committee in 1868, a statement was given of the efforts made in Scotland through the agency of the society to test the validity of the question raised by Mr Chisholm Anstey and others, as to whether the wording of the new Reform Act did not include women as well as men when interpreted by Lord Romily's Act of 1850. Two hundred and thirty-nine (239) duly-qualified women, householders and ratepayers in Edinburgh, and a number in Wigton and other places, sent in claims to be registered as voters under the new Reform Act, and in Aberdeen the whole of the women householders had been placed by the assessor on the electoral roll. All these claims were tried before the Sheriffs of the counties, and some of them by appeal to the Supreme Court, but were rejected.

"The society was not discouraged by this result, but continued its operations of pressing for a special measure to entitle women to vote in Parliamentary elections, and they have learned with great satisfaction that notice

has been given that such a measure will be brought before Parliament in the ensuing session by Mr Jacob Bright, M.P. ; Sir C. W. Dilke, Bart., M.P. ; and Mr Peter Ryland, M.P.

"It is hoped that these gentlemen will be supported by largely-signed petitions from all parts of the kingdom, and this society would claim the aid of all interested in its efforts in this most important branch of its operations.

"The granting of the municipal franchise to women in England, gained mainly by the tact, earnestness, and perseverance of Mr Jacob Bright, supported by Sir C. W. Dilke, is a stepping-stone to granting the same right to women as regards Parliamentary elections. This Municipal Act does not include Scotland, but it is hoped that an opportunity will be found for extending its provisions to our country also. The societies for women's suffrage in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, and other towns in England are most energetic, aided and led on by Mrs Peter Taylor, Miss Becker, Mrs Jacob Bright, Professor Newman, and others. The Manchester committee have originated a guarantee fund of not less than £5000, payable over a term of five years in annual instalments of one-fifth each year. They have already obtained the names of five ladies and gentlemen who have agreed to give £100 each to this fund.

"In Ireland Miss Robertson, with unfailing energy, has, during the last year, procured from various towns petitions signed by 6727 names.

"Besides these actual indications of advancement there are others of no less importance, indicated by the improved tone with which the question of women's suffrage is generally received ; it is not now looked on with ridicule, and its claims are weighed and supported by some of the most eminent and intelligent men and women of Great Britain. Altogether, there is much to encourage from progress made, and much to stimulate to fresh exertion towards the attainment of an object which has been justly described as 'the joint election of a Senate which shall guard with equal care the rights of both sexes, and which shall embody in its laws that true justice which shall approve itself not only to the strong, but also to the weak.'" The treasurer's statement showed that the total income was £168, 9s. 4d. and the expenditure £160, 0s. 4d. leaving a balance in hand of £8, 9s.

Professor CALDERWOOD then proceeded—This organisation has now been in existence for more than two years. It originated from the growing conviction that it was not only just in principle to confer the franchise on women, but that it would be for the national well-being. I am satisfied that those who have listened to the Report of the Society will be prepared to say that there could not be a better introduction to the discussion of the subject. The question which is to-night for the first time laid before a public meeting in Edinburgh, may be expected to prove one upon which most people have as yet no very decided opinion. I believe, however, that when the nature of the claim is properly understood, and the grounds upon which it is rested are fairly examined, there will be a very general preparedness to acknowledge the justness

of the claim. In its nature the question is very simple. All that is asked is, that property which gives a right to a vote for a Parliamentary representative shall carry with it that right, irrespective of any question as to the sex of the occupant. The claim is, therefore, a simple claim of justice, and will on that account command a ready assent when it is considered. The franchise is granted upon household qualification ; but when the house comes to be occupied by a lady, the right to vote which is connected with the occupancy is withdrawn. There is thus a breach in the application of a principle which cannot in fairness be vindicated, and cannot be continued without disadvantage to the State. If the standard for the franchise be household occupancy, it ought to be uniformly applied. The franchise should go with the house, as obviously as ratepaying. (Cheers.) Women, then, who claim a vote on the ground of occupancy, only claim what they have a right to ; those already holding the franchise should in consistency support the right which rests on the same foundation as their own ; but most of all is it important that our Acts of Parliament should have undeviating application, without distinction of persons. (Cheers.) If, then, the present demand is based on an acknowledged political principle, what is there in the distinction of sex which should deny to the holder of property the right which, but for that distinction, would be secured by merely entering as occupant into the property ? When such a question is raised, one is apt to feel perplexed in answering. The most feasible reply that can be offered in support of present procedure seems to be, that property is so commonly held by the husband, father, or brother, who is guardian and supporter of the other members of the household, that it seems almost needless to take account of the exceptions. But this is rather excusing the omission than vindicating it ; and, when you learn from the report which has been read that 239 regularly qualified ladies in Edinburgh last year made application for the acknowledgment of their rights, the excuse is rendered extremely feeble. But, even if this most charitable view be taken, is there any reason which can be put into form in vindication of the exceptions ? Some may maintain that women are too pure and noble to meddle with politics. (Cheers and hisses.) But in point of reasoning it would seem awkward to argue that women are too good to attempt to influence their country by taking any share in its political affairs. (Cheers.) Such an argument would either place women too high, or the political interests of our country too low. (Hisses and cheers.) Still less can it be argued that women are not possessed of the intellectual capacity for forming a judgment on political questions. (Cheers.) The day has gone by when it will be seriously argued that women have not the intellect to understand such questions, or interest enough in them to make it desirable that they should have the franchise. But even if any should attempt to give an airing to these worn-out opinions, he must still be reminded that the Act regulating the franchise takes no account of the intellectual power or the interest in politics of the occupants of property. But passing the apologetic, I would ask if it be not plain that it is for the interest of the nation that women who are householders should use the franchise ? I believe, certainly, that what is just

ought to be done, all question of interest apart. But it is always possible to shew that what is just in principle is beneficial in practice. The question before us is no exception. Take the case of a widow with a young family. Is it for the interest of herself in her widowhood, or for the interest of her family, or for the interest of the nation, that she should be allowed to feel that she and her household are shut off from all political relations, except such as are involved in the visits of the tax-gatherer, or billets of assessment which the postman brings? When her boys are deprived of that part of their home training connected with a father's influence, should they on that account be separated from direct personal interest in politics which grows up in a boy's mind from listening to the discussion of political questions at the table? If the State has an interest in the training of these boys and girls, does not the State act wisely in distributing the franchise in such a way as to secure that the mother take that interest in the questions of the day which every one must who professes to give an intelligent vote for a representative? I shall not further trespass, save to remark that if a difficulty exists as to the experience of women in appearing at the polling-booth, this concerns mere details in arrangement, and with our University constituencies now using voting papers, there seems no great difficulty here. But it were a disgrace to us as a nation to allow that the voting for our senators may proceed in such a manner that we should feel unwilling to have our sisters taking any part in it. Feeling the justice of the claim now made in the Legislature, and believing that it is in the interests of the country to apply the principles of legislation uniformly to all loyal citizens, I have much pleasure in moving the adoption of the report. (Loud cheering.)

Councillor MOSSMAN, in seconding the motion, argued that as female householders had to pay their share of the municipal taxation, they had a right to vote in municipal matters; while the interest they took in moral and social questions rendered it desirable that their influence should be felt in the election of members of Parliament.

The CHAIRMAN then put the resolution to the meeting, and finding it received with acclamation, declared it carried.

Some persons, however, half-jocularly as it seemed, called for a vote. A show of hands was accordingly taken, when the resolution was carried all but unanimously, only a few hands being held up in opposition.

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 and 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 shew, 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 it may be 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 shewn, 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 battlefield, 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 and more provident; they give more to the family and take less to themselves. (Cheers and hisses.) These are not the moral qualities that 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 shew 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 misrepresentation. (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 alter 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 against women. The grammar schools of England are to a large extent monopolised by boys, and instances can be shewn 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 the possession of a 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 those women who are happily married know nothing of the legal position of married women. 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 a great 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 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—can 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 to 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, further, 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 the 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 from the wife 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 the character of members of Parliament. Members of Parliament, where they can honestly obtain votes at an election, are 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 country 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 received a degree of support which nobody a while ago could have believed possible. When that distinguished writer, Mr Mill—(loud cheers and slight hisses)—when Mr Mill—(renewed and loud cheers)—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 the 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 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 or 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 to be entirely 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 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 cheering.)

Professor MASSON (who was received with cheers) said—I have unusual pleasure in seconding the motion which has been brought before you so ably and so lucidly by Mr Jacob Bright. I am in the peculiar predicament at present of taking part for the first time in a public meeting specifically concerning the suffrage. Although I was in sympathy generally with the great movement which consummated itself in the recent change in our political system, it did not chance to be my duty—and perhaps I made it less my duty than I ought to have done—to take any direct part in that specific item of the movement. Nay, I will confess that, according to my notion, it might perhaps be argued by some that our representative system is not yet adjusted on that basis on which, when we come to think more on the subject, we shall wish to see it adjusted. (Cheers.) It seems to me possible that a mode of representation may be devised giving to the act of voting by a citizen of this country much more of the force and the

significance which so important an act deserves. (Cheers.) That by the way. But I have to say, with all my heart, that, since our system has been arranged on a certain basis, it appears to me the height of injustice that, where all other conditions for voting exist, sex should be a disqualification. The difficulty in this question is for any speaker to say what any speaker who has preceded him might not have already said. In the first place, as has been brought before you two or three times, it is plain justice to women that, when they come into the position which has been defined as the position of a voter, they should have the vote. The calculations are various as to the addition that would be made to the electoral body if women were allowed to vote. It has been estimated variously at an addition of ten per cent. or more to our present electoral body. Whatever is the addition, it is clear, I say—it is a plain act of justice—that these women should have that vote. (Cheers.) Is it to be thought of that a woman like Miss Nightingale or Miss Martineau, or many more that I could name over the kingdom—women whom men consult on political questions, women whose views on political questions influence large masses of the people round about them—that they shall have that influence, but the moment it comes to exerting their influence in the natural way of voting for a member of Parliament they shall be debarred from it? (Cheers.) I know in this city also women wise, thoughtful, able, skilled on many questions—the very persons whom any man would consult about any important question affecting himself; and it chanced by the present law that these women cannot vote, though the merest uneducated boor may and will. (Loud cheers and laughter.) But another argument has been brought before you in favour of giving the suffrage to women duly qualified. It will be not merely an act of justice to a certain large portion of the citizens who are at present excluded, but it will remove a restriction which deprives the nation of a great contribution which might be made to its legislation and to its views on important social concerns. Hitherto men only have legislated. It is proposed now that there should be an addition of women, to be concerned, at all events indirectly, in the legislation. Now that will not be a mere addition numerically to the voting body; I believe it will be also an addition of new ideas, new feelings, new experiences, so that the effect will be to ennoble our legislation, and make it more subtle than it has hitherto been. (Cheers.) Women actually at present do concern themselves with many matters of social interest—with education, with pauperism, and with many other questions that affect themselves and men socially; and they have acquired experience of a kind in the main that probably does not belong to the other sex. They have also naturally, I believe, ideas and feelings which enable them to take views of questions not quite in correspondence always with those which men take; and so I believe the addition of women to our electoral body would enrich and add subtlety to our present views on many questions. (Cheers.) I had the pleasure of hearing Mr John Stuart Mill plead this question in London, and this was a consideration on which he laid particular stress. He referred to pauperism, education, and other questions. But there is another which I may mention here, to shew how women may exert

a specific influence. We talk about reducing the public expenditure, about great economy in the State; and it is the universally accepted view that there will be no very great economy except when nations cease needlessly or capriciously to make war upon each other. Now, I think it is extremely likely, considering what are the native feelings and sentiments of women, considering the agony which *they* have to endure when the world is divided into battle-fields, considering all that makes women women as distinct from men—it seems to me, I say, very probable that, if war is to be extinguished in the world, or if it is to be diminished, or if the wars that take place are to be wars of necessity—if this earth is to be less scarred and reddened by mere horrors and ravages—we shall require to call in for that purpose the votes of the women of the world. (Cheers.) But, apart from the consideration of mere justice to women, and the probability of better and finer legislation, and higher and subtler views of social questions, when we shall have women voting, there is this argument—which to me is perhaps the chief—that there are injustices and impediments in the way of women in this community as well as in others, and that probably the only axe that can be laid to the root of these injustices and impediments is that women shall have some power in their own hands. (Cheers.) Without speaking again about the marriage laws, and about woman's rights as to property, let me look at the question of the occupations of women. The theory is—and it is the theory of our opponents, or at least they are bound to make it their theory—that every woman in the world is supported by men—(cheers and laughter)—that all women are supported by the labour of the other sex; the one sex living entirely without working, living on the labour of the other. That is the theory; and, observe, all people who take the opposite side argue on that theory. But what is the fact? The fact is that the theory is a sheer delusion, one of the greatest hallucinations ever propounded. (Laughter and cheers.) The saying in the well-known song is—

“Men must work and women must weep,
While the harbour bar is moaning.”

But the fact is, that, though the men work, they do not devolve the mere duty of weeping upon the women. Women have to do much of the work and nearly all the weeping too. (Cheers and laughter.) I have looked at the census of 1861 for England and Scotland; and, as there is a committee appointed in this city for regulating the census which is to take place next year, I will give my experience of the last census to this effect, that it might be vastly improved upon,—that a great deal of new information might be obtained along with the census in various subjects of social importance, and especially in regard to women's employments. I find, slumping together England and Wales and Scotland, that there are 11,900,000 females of all sexes. (Great laughter.) Sometimes one hits on a truth by a blunder, and if you do not know, I know that there are a great many “old women” in the other sex. (Great laughter and cheers.) The number of females of all ages, according to the census of England and Wales and Scotland in

1861, was 11,900,000; and, doing my best to make a calculation, I find that 3,800,000 of these were working for their bread—not only working domestically as members of families, as wives and daughters, but working in the ordinary sense in which we understand work. Now, if you take that proportion of the 11,900,000 of all ages, you will see what a vast proportion of the grown-up women are working—sometimes not working for themselves, but for people that are depending on them—nay, sometimes working for wretches of men who ought to be hurled beyond the frontier where good bread is given to hungry mouths. (Cheers.) But I find also the fact that there is a general tendency to keep women out of the higher occupations. So long as it is menial work, or anything approaching that, they are allowed to do it, notwithstanding the beautiful theory that every woman reposes in a cushioned chair and is ministered to. (Cheers and laughter.) But the moment they want to get themselves educated, to get to higher duties, then there is a dead-set made against them, as there has been here till recently. I saw in one paper, when there was a desire expressed by some women to become medical practitioners—(cheers and hisses)—I saw in one medical newspaper a letter with this argument:—There are a great many medical men that are not in practice—(laughter)—and what will be the consequence if we bring in women? (Loud laughter.) Observe what that means. It means that before you begin to help a woman, or allow her to help herself, all the men must be exhausted. (Laughter and cheers.) How different is that from our so-called gallantry! Let there be a dinner party in any part of the kingdom, and is not the rule that the women shall be helped first? (Laughter and cheers.) I daresay the women would be prepared to part with that privilege, and to let all be helped simultaneously on such occasions, if justice were allowed to them in other respects, and if they were allowed to suit their own tastes and cultivate and exercise their own faculties equally with men. (Cheers.) In regard to education, it seems to me so strange that the world should have come to this time and all but forgotten one half of the human species. When we have endowments and State helps of all sorts for the superior education of men—not only primary schools, but middle schools, grammar schools, and universities; with systems of scholarships, rewards, fellowships, everything that can encourage young men and push them forward—why, on earth, I wonder, should there not be something of all this for women too? (Hear, hear.) Have not women minds? Is there anything in astronomy, in mathematics, or in any other branch of knowledge that would not make the soul or mind of a woman as much nobler than that of an uneducated woman as it would make that of a man nobler than that of an uneducated man? (Cheers.) The time will come—I prophesy it—(cheers and laughter)—when universities and great schools, or at all events the precise equivalents to these, will be provided for our sisters and daughters. (Cheers.) But what is necessary towards all this is a little power on the part of women. A little of that power which consists of the right of giving or refusing a vote will be of great use; and I hold that those who have strong opinions on this question ought to begin to consider whether on the

occasion of elections they will not make this a testing question—whether, when two men come before us as a constituency, if the one is not thoroughly right on this question, we should not rather give our vote to the other, though he may not be so favourable to our views in other respects. Then as to the objections. I have heard an argument which has come from one or two of the extreme Liberal party, and perhaps I ought not to state this objection, because it has not been publicly stated before. It is like lending a sword to the enemy, and it may be used against us. (Laughter.) But there is nothing like frankness. It is said that the result of this vote will probably be a great increase of Conservative power. Well, now, as this is not a political meeting, and has nothing to do with party, I will just say that, so far as that argument may be deterrent to the one political party, it ought to be good news to the other. I have no opinion myself on the subject of the probability hinted at; but, considering the many advantages of other kinds, I am quite willing—without saying which side I take myself—I am quite willing to risk all that. (Hear, hear.) The other objections are entirely of the sentimental kind. One is to this effect—that it would be a terrible thing for women to become politicians—hard and pragmatist politicians—that it would be rubbing the bloom off the peach, and so on. (Laughter.) Now, I must say that I do not like a *man* who is merely a politician. There are some who have to make politics their business, who are called to it by positive duty or by the voices of their fellow-citizens; but, with these exceptions, I do not like a man who has addicted himself to nothing else than saying ay and no on political questions, morning, noon, and night. A man whose intellectual pabulum is merely newspapers and political discussions is to me, with the exceptions I have alluded to, on the whole very disagreeable. I would say to him, in the words of an old fragment of song,

“John makes a stir 'bout Lancaster and York;
Be still, good man, and learn to mind thy work.”

(Laughter.) Nay, I would even go so far as to profess considerable sympathy with the passive disposition represented in another verse—

“Happy the man who belongs to no party,
But sits in his own house and looks at Benarty.”

(Great laughter.) And so equally with women. But surely a man who took no concern in political matters, would, on the other hand, be a very insipid and very useless personage. A man who does not devote a certain amount of cultivated intelligence to reading the newspapers, to knowing what is going on, so as to be able to give a just vote when the time comes—such a man is not fit to be a citizen of a free country. And, in the same proportion, why may not women be politicians, not only without harm to themselves, but with much benefit to them, and to all rational discourse in society? Twenty minutes a day, and a vote every year or two, is about as much as many *men* even now give specially to politics; and would that be so very ruinous? And now for a final objection, still of the “sentimental” kind, as it is called, and indeed a sort of extension of the last. “Sentimental” though it

is called, I do not undervalue it; for I believe that, avowed or un-avowed, it constitutes the very strength of the opposition. It is difficult to lay hold of, for it exists as a kind of feeling or fear, diffused, like a vapour, through society, rather than in definite, argumentative shape; but not the less must it be laid hold of, for its force is more real than that of all the other objections together that are definitely brought forward. And here I will speak from the man's side, from the man's point of view, expressing the objection as it may be latently felt among men. Well, a great deal of the opposition is of this kind. There is a feeling as if that wonderful power in the world, which has consisted in the attraction of one human spirit to another, and in the consequences of that attraction throughout life, as if this great and glorious power in the world were either to be weakened or marred by such a movement as the present. If I thought so, really I should have thought twice before taking any part in such a movement. For, though this is named among us, and thought of among us, as a thing of sentiment and romance, it is, rightly considered, one of the most massive realities of the world, a thing as real as the rocks and the most solid hills. This attraction, or this attractiveness, of one human spirit to another, what does it not do in the world, of what is it not capable? Take young affection, the affection of the wooer. How for the young man there comes a time when, through this affection, all the world without is changed, vivified, recreated, by the exultation of his own spirit within, and the very walls and trees he passes in his walks are seen through a glamour of coloured air! Or take wedded and assured affection, the loyal love of hearth and home:—

“Thy voice is heard through rolling drums,
That beat to battle where he stands;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands:
A moment, while the trumpets blow,
He sees his brood about thy knee;
The next, like fire he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.”

Lastly, most solemn, and to be spoken of reverently, there is the love of the bereaved. Are there not even now among us men here and there, veterans or aged, leading high and serious lives, bent on great thoughts, or on labours to make the world better, and the misery in it less, who, it may be found, are secretly sustained all the while in their solitary way by one undying affection, and all whose high thoughts or high acts and endeavours are a sacred dedication to the memory of some one, once loved on earth, that has passed long ago into the realms of the viewless? Surely, to all whose notions of what is real are not of the lowest, this power of so-called “romance” is a great reality. Along with some kindred powers—the pursuit of truth, the sense of duty, religion itself—it is what makes our world worth living in, prevents all beneath the sky from seeming a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. Well, if this thing were to be abolished, this “romance” to be imperilled, by the movement now in progress, there might be second thoughts on the question. But it is in no danger. It has been

by the gradual elevation of women in the past that it has been brought to be what it now is. And so, as woman becomes more and more the civil co-equal of man, this feeling will be yet more ennobled, and the world will move on the pulse of this feeling into finer issues than hitherto. It will tend to become a world—as a world and a nation should be—the intellect of which is throughout large and shrewd, but which, at the same time, is living at a high mood. (Loud cheers.)

PROFESSOR LYON PLAYFAIR, M.P. (who was received with cheers), said—I am one of those who devote themselves to politics, and who cannot carry you over those high regions of poetry and of feeling which we have heard, and I must therefore bring you back to the stern realities of political discussion. Now, I know of no subject more difficult to discuss than the one which we are met to support. The difficulty does not rest in the weakness of our position, but in the fact that our assailants decline to attack it with any other weapons than those of ridicule, or, as Mr Mill puts it, with interjections. The logic is certainly on our side, but the sentiment preponderates on the other, and reason has little power when it has to combat either sentiment or interjections. No one, for instance, denies the abstract statement that women constitute one-half of the human race, and, as such, are entitled to its privileges, and subject to its responsibilities. It is freely admitted that women have souls to be saved, minds to be cultivated, and, when independent, purses to be taxed to exactly the same extent as those of men. Women's and men's souls are recognised as of equal value, for this is the essence of our religion, and so church privileges are freely accorded to the former: but here we stop, for when we demand equal facilities for educating their minds, these are but very partially yielded, and when representation is asked for their fully taxed purses, this is absolutely refused. So, though their abstract rights as human beings, constituting one half of the genus *homo*, are admitted in theory, they are violated in practice. All this time that their claims are opposed by sentimental objections, the opponents are willing to denounce any cruel treatment of women such as savages commit in uncivilised lands. Yet civilised States, in their actual legislation, adopt the law of the strongest, and cling with tenacity to ancient barbaric ideas of female inferiority, as is evidenced by the refusal of equal civil rights. Tennyson understood this when he wrote:—

“ And I saw
That equal baseness lived in sleeker times
With smoother men; the old leaven leaven'd all:
Millions of throats would bawl for civil rights,
No woman named.”

This is a legislative fact, whatever protestations may be made to the contrary. The laws are so cruelly against women, and so selfishly in favour of the men who made them, that marriage would be most miserable and wretched, if men in civilised countries, as Mr Mill has pointed out, were not, on the average, much better than the laws which they have made. There is this difference between civilised men and

savages in regard to their women, that the former act inconsistently and the latter consistently. The savage believes his wives to be much inferior to himself, and so treats them as beasts of burden, to be kicked and maltreated as fits his humour. The civilised man is forced, by his religion, to acknowledge equality, and yet, by his laws, enforces inequality and subjection. Now, the badness of human laws becomes reflected in the acts of bad men; the good men are governed by their consciences and sense of right, not by the letter of law. When there is a tyrant husband, the law not only protects but develops his tyranny. Among the less cultivated, in whom the sentiment of chivalry is not strong, and who are little amenable to public opinion, we find a frightful amount of misery, owing to the operation of unequal laws; and, even among the easy classes, it is common enough for each of us to meet such cases in our own walk of life.

Permit me to state one instance, as it happens to be that which first aroused my slumbering convictions as to the injustice of our laws in regard to women. Some years since, I was in a steamer, going from Hull to St Petersburg, when one of the lady passengers presented to me a letter of introduction. This unfortunate lady was flying from her husband, in order to seek that protection in a despotic country which the law refused to give her in England. She had a fortune when she married, but that had been squandered by her husband, who was then resorting to infamous practices for support. He lived in Germany, and used their children as a means of enticing governesses from England. When they crossed the Channel, provided with money for their journey, this rascal met and robbed them of their slender funds, leaving them destitute in a foreign country. The wife refused to share his guilt, and herself went out as a governess, but lost each situation by his demands on her earnings and threats of conjugal rights. For years she was protected in Russia, as the swindler was known to the police, who prevented his entrance into that country. A short time since the poor lady again visited me in London, in order to ask my aid in procuring the liberation of her boy, who was then in prison at Munich along with the father. I represented the case to some eminent Bavarian friends, who did their best to separate father and son; but bad law was more powerful than equity, and the young boy went out of prison with the father to pursue a career of iniquity, when the good mother, whose rights the law ignored, was standing by eager to rescue her lost child. Can you be surprised, with instances like these, that there are now many men and women who demand that they shall both be made equal in all legal and social relations of life? Women have long waited for such a recognition of their equality at the hands of men, and I for one am not surprised that it is now being sought in another and more effective way. There are few doctrines upon which liberal politicians are more agreed than that representation should be co-extensive with taxation; though, in application, the doctrine is limited to men. Women have not, and never can have, their just equality, unless they share with men the right to elect those who impose taxation. It has long ceased to be the case that men are either the sole taxpayers or bread-winners, and women mere recipients of their bounty. In Eng-

land, at least, there are two millions of them winning bread in entire independence of men.

Against such facts, What are the arguments on the other side? None; only interjections! There is an abundant crop of phrases which start up whenever the subject of female suffrage is mooted. In the first place, we are always told that its exercise would be "unwomanly." If that means simply that it is unusual for women to exercise political suffrage, that is a self-evident fact, and will remain so as long as the law classes them with lunatics and idiots, and considers them incapable of exercising the rights of citizens. If it have any deeper meaning, we may answer it with another phrase, by asking men whether it may not be "unmanly" to act on the law of the strongest when they refuse the right of citizenship to independent women, who are their own breadwinners and taxpayers, simply because the former wish a larger share of power for themselves. If a woman can sit upon the throne as wisely and virtuously as our present Sovereign, can her poorer sisters not be allowed to do their small share of public work by having a voice in the selection of the representatives from whom her Government is chiefly selected? (Cheers.) It cannot be alleged that women have a natural incapacity for understanding public affairs; for history tells us that out of an equal number of male and female Sovereigns there have been a larger proportion of able queens than of able kings. (Cheers.) If it be not unwomanly for a female to sit on the throne and exercise the highest functions of government, how can it be unwomanly for a female breadwinner and taxpayer to exercise the lowest functions of the government by securing her own representation? (Cheers.) What inherent superiority is there in man, that the factory operative who can neither read nor write should have a vote, when the learned Mrs Somerville is excluded by her sex from the legitimate expression of her interest in public affairs? What inherent superiority is it in man that enables Miss Burdett Coutts' footman, if he lives out of her house, to exercise the suffrage, when that lady, of large public sympathies and prudent benevolence, is not allowed to record her vote? (Loud cheers.) Then we are met by another phrase, that we are misdirecting the aims of women by inducing them to attend to public affairs, when their natural and primary duties consist in the fulfilment of their functions as wives and mothers. Truly, this double function, when rightly conceived, is very high and worthy of all ambition; nor do we ask the suffrage for wives whose interests are represented by their husbands as taxpayers. But why should this exclude the 487,000 widows who may have only a single function, or the 2,110,000 spinsters who have neither? When we find one-third of the adult women in England winning bread unaided by men, it is a mockery to tell them that they should be wives and mothers, and not trouble themselves with public affairs. (Cheers.) Those who urge the continued disqualification of women from political privileges are ready, with patronising condescension, to admit that they still have certain virtues greater than men. Among these, a higher morality is freely conceded. But does it not strike them that if the higher moral tone of women were thrown upon public affairs, less of corruption and brutality

would disgrace the exercise of the suffrage in the case of many men? (Cheers.) We have seen that this influence has exercised a highly salutary change almost in our own times among the upper classes. Wives, in their case, are no longer considered as convenient household appendages to supply the deficiencies of domestics, but are now freely admitted into the society and companionship of men; and the result is that, within two generations, there has been a great softening of the manners of men and the removal of drunkenness from the upper classes of society. (Cheers.) Trust this moral tone of women to improve political life in the same way. From the time that Gorgo, the young daughter of Cleomenes, King of Sparta, induced her father to spurn the bribe of the Ionian stranger, up to our own day, the influence of woman, when under a sense of responsibility, has usually been on the side of public morality. (Renewed cheers.) Like men, they have been sometimes influenced by evil counsels, as instanced in the Marys of England and Scotland, but, even then, they have leaned to these because they wrongly believed them to be on the side of sacredness and truth. I can conceive no function of woman that would be deteriorated by accustoming her to take an intelligent interest in public affairs. As a wife and mother, she should be keenly alive to the changes in the law which affect every member of her household, and, by their wisdom or foolishness, influence to a greater or lesser degree, the destinies and happiness of herself, husband, and children. Doubtless, there are certain politics affecting social life and well-being which appeal to the feelings, and would be vastly benefited by the active sympathies of women. The health of the people, the support of the poor, the reformation of the criminal, the care of the sick in their own homes, infirmaries, and workhouses, the enlightenment of the ignorant, are surely subjects adapted to woman's sympathies, and likely to be promoted by her active co-operation—(cheers)—and, after all, these form nine-tenths of the social politics of our age.

But we are told that the education of women unfits them for the exercise of the suffrage. If there be truth in this allegation—and it is no doubt partially true—whose fault is it? Men have monopolised all the higher schools and universities of learning, and by this monopoly have lowered the education of women. Many of the foundations of our endowed schools were for both sexes; but the male sex took the lion's share. Take the case of Christ's Hospital in London, founded equally for boys and girls, the number of the former having now increased to 1100, while that of the latter has fallen to 26. Though this part of the subject interests me more than any other, I do not intend to detain you with its discussion, because I believe this city has become well awakened to its importance. Already university courses are open for the instruction of girls of the upper classes, and university examinations for those of the middle classes, while I am glad to learn that the trustees of our great educational foundations are maturing schemes to extend their advantages more fairly to the girls of the wage-making class. (Cheers.) No one can doubt for a moment that women are fitted to receive a higher education than is now attainable by them. I admit that it is an open question whether there will ever be female

Galileos and Newtons, or Beethovens and Mozarts, or Raphaels and Angelos. But they are sufficiently rare among men, and our schools are certainly not for the purpose of producing men of genius, whom Nature takes care of, but for the multitude of boys and girls, among whom there is no difference of mental capacity due to sex, though there is much due to the circumstance that the existing education of boys is calculated to feed and strengthen their intellects, while that of girls is to starve and weaken theirs. I am rejoiced to see that the prejudice against a higher education of women is passing away, and that universities are opening their degrees to them. Better by far, as a lady has aptly expressed it, that both old and young maids should take degrees in the school of science than in the school of scandal. (Cheers.) This improved culture of women will be quickly attained when they receive political and social rights; for the first use they are likely to make of them will be to secure a fair share of the educational resources of the country, while the country itself will be greatly benefited by a largely increased fund of intellectual wealth which, in advancing civilisation, is the only permanent source of prosperity to a nation. By treating boys and girls after our present fashion, as beings to be kept apart, and to have all their thoughts, feelings, and knowledge of a separate kind, although they are afterwards to come together and coalesce in a life-long relation for mutual happiness and society, is a strange perversion of natural laws and a gigantic waste of our educational outcome.

Having now alluded to the usual sentimental objections to our proposal, allow me finally to answer a question often put by advocates of the *laissez faire* school of political economy, and in precise terms to me, on this occasion, by an eminent literary man of our city—“Why tease women with questions of suffrage till they ask for it? Many do ask for it, though undoubtedly the great majority do not; and it would be a marvel if they did, brought up as they have been in subjection to men, and with cultivated sentiments but uncultivated intellects. If all of them did see at once the immense advantages, social and educational, which they would receive by enfranchisement, then all the subjection of centuries, and the miserable style of education to which they have been confined, would have produced no effect. But the very absence of an universal demand on the part of women shews what deep effects these causes have produced. Just as history tells us that slaves never ask for enfranchisement, though they do ask for amelioration of their condition, and as the cry for reform does not begin with the ignorant but with the educated, so cannot we expect women, kept under subjection by the law of man, and estranged from public affairs, to rise above the hopes and customs of their class and shout of their own accord for political equality. Yet what does the present movement mean? It is not confined to this city, or limited to a few districts. It is a wave of public opinion rising in height and in power. (Cheers.) Already the great universities of England are beginning to be moved by it, and are admitting women to examinations. Every large provincial town is organising courses for their higher instruction. Under its influence, our Legislature has been shamed into giving them an instalment of equal social rights, by protecting the earnings of wives when

they are deserted by their husbands. The upper classes of society have learned how to cheat the law, by fathers protecting their daughters from conjugal tyranny through the fictions of marriage settlements. Women are everywhere asserting their rights to occupations, and are filling them in a manner which extorts admiration from unwilling men. (Cheers.) These movements are as marked on the Continent as they are in England, and their impulse has crossed the Atlantic. They are far less the result of women's agitation than of a recognition, in the conscience of mankind, that at last the period has arrived when all worthy citizens, whatever may be their sex, are entitled to equal rights; and I believe we are not in advance of, but are simply obeying, the spirit of the time. Nothing will hasten the realisation of this just desire so much as political equality. Both sexes did probably possess it at an early period of English history, and it will be worthy of the liberties of this country if we are among the earliest nations to accord it at the present time. We cannot be the first to do so, for Austria and Italy, Sweden, and at least one of the United States allow votes to female taxpayers, either directly or through proxies. Social, educational, and political enfranchisement of women will double our liberties, will largely increase our intellectual fund, and complete the sense of national justice. But social equality can never be the offspring of political inferiority; and if man's conscience and religion teach him that he should accord to woman full equity, he must give her, in the eye of the law, full equality. For these reasons, I have pleasure in moving the following resolution:—“That all women who are owners or occupiers of lands and houses in their own right should be entitled to vote for members of Parliament in the same circumstances as men who are owners or occupiers of land and property of the same description and value.” (Loud cheers.)

Dr WALLACE seconded the motion. He believed that in past times as well as at the present day the Church had had a good deal to do, if not with creating, at least with fostering the false idea and the pernicious prejudice which has made such a movement as this necessary. To a considerable extent it had lent a hand to inculcate the belief—the wrong belief as he was persuaded—in the absolute ineligibility of women for public life. Now, that seemed to him of the nature of a heresy, and he felt uncommon satisfaction in any opportunity afforded him of protesting against any form of heresy or unsoundness. (Laughter.) He was not one of those who supported this movement upon any general idea of the equality of the sexes, or what was called the abstract rights of women. He did not believe in the equality of the sexes any more than he did in their identity. He was of opinion that man was upon the whole, and in all the qualities of human nature, the stronger creature. His opinion was that if we could get all the men and women in the world together, and plant them down upon some moral, intellectual, and physical field of Waterloo or Sadowa, and set the two in earnest onset, the lords of the creation would be left with their title untarnished. At the same time, this did not seem to him to be any reason why we should not receive from women all the usefulness, personal, domestic,

and political—(laughter)—all the helpfulness of every kind that it was possible for us to obtain. Nor did he support this movement upon any idea of value that he attached to the abstract rights of women, for he believed in no abstract rights of women or of men either that could be shewn to be inconsistent with the public good. If it could be proved that the admission of women to Parliamentary representation was inconsistent with the public good, there should be found no more uncompromising opponent of the movement than himself. He was one who held very strongly to the opinion that the good of the community was best promoted when the largest amount of freedom consistent with the limits imposed by nature itself was conceded to all persons who were able and willing to exert themselves in the public service. He held there was a presumption against every restriction that was laid upon free action ostensibly and avowedly directed to objects that were praiseworthy; and when he came to consider the particular question of female voting in the light of this general principle, he found that British society had come to be of opinion that wherever there was human energy represented by the capacity of paying £4 of annual rent and upwards, there was also an advantage in consulting the possessor of energy so represented; and what he wanted to know was this—If £4 human energy and character was a thing that should be consulted, why was it not as good when it came in a feminine form as when it came in a masculine form? (Laughter.)

It was objected that, in conceding the claim, they were obliterating the great distinction which had hitherto been held sacred and inviolable throughout the whole experience and history of the human race—namely, the principle that it was not safe or advisable, that in public life the sexes should be mingled together. In explaining the view he took of it, he could not do so better than by making reference to an illustration borrowed from the general discussions that had taken place of late months upon this question, considered in some of its other aspects. They were asked, if they let women exercise political privileges, where were they to stop—why not permit them to enter Parliament itself—(hear, hear)—nay, why not allow them to fight in defence of their country? Now, common sense and common feeling told us that it would never do to have an army, composed partly of men and partly of women. Wherever the disturbing element that sprang out of the contrast of sex was certain to make a mixed assembly, or a mixed organisation of men and women, more harmful as an instrument of the public service than an assembly or organisation constituted only of one sex, then the exclusion of one sex or the other was an advisable thing. And if it could be made clear that a Parliament composed of men and women would operate to the prejudice of that even balance of thought and reasoning requisite for the proper guidance of public affairs, then he for one should be found to prefer a one-sexed Parliament; and very probably, for reasons it was not necessary now to give, he should be found voting for a male Parliament. If he had approached the settlement of the distinguishing principle, he considered he had made out that each question connected with the subject was to be settled precisely on its own merits. What he held in regard to

female franchise was, that a useless and pernicious restriction upon human freedom should be removed, and that the framework of society should be so fashioned, as that men and women should be allowed to shake themselves into their right places and relationships to one another, in public, as well as in private life, according to the grand, and simple, and wise laws of nature, without any interference from the artificial regulations and restrictions that were made by shortsighted mortals, with the view, as they thought, of improving nature, but very often with the effect of obstructing her action and disfiguring her beauty. (Cheers.)

The resolution was put to the meeting, and was carried by acclamation.

Sir DAVID WEDDERBURN, Bart., M.P., in moving the concluding resolution, said that certain gentlemen had undertaken, during the ensuing Parliament, to bring in a bill which should embody the principles in favour of which the meeting had expressed themselves so decidedly. It was one thing to approve of a measure, but it was a very different thing to undertake the arduous task of forcing its consideration upon a lukewarm or hostile Legislature. A measure such as this was certain to encounter delay and opposition of every kind, and those gentlemen who had undertaken to fight the battle would require all the support and assistance which this meeting, and those who agreed with them, could afford. During each individual session of Parliament time appeared to fight upon the side of the opponents of progress and reform; and a measure which had swum for its life in the troubled sea of the House of Commons was liable to receive a very summary quietus in another place. Such was the fate last year of the Married Women's Property Bill, and he grieved to say that it was quite possible a similar fate might await the bill now desired during the ensuing session. But they must not be disheartened, for in reality time fought not upon the other side, but upon theirs, and there was no doubt the day would come when their opponents would not only cease their opposition, but would take credit for the share borne by them in so reasonable a measure of reform. It could hardly be doubted that the franchise, both Parliamentary and municipal, would ere long be conferred upon women by general acclamation. (Cheers.) A few years ago, when standing on the same spot, he had ventured to assert that he knew of no surer test of the stage of civilisation reached by a nation than the social position accorded to women. Subsequent observation had confirmed him in this belief. He could not help recognising in the ignorance and degradation of women an important cause of decay in the Turkish empire, while in their emancipation and enlightenment he saw one of the brightest hopes for the future of the great American republic. In the matter our nation occupied an honourable place among the great nations of the world. We were advancing steadily, but we had a long way to go before we reached a due equality between the sexes. The passing of such a bill as that now sought would go far to bring about such a desirable result. When it became law, questions affecting the interests and happiness of women would no longer fail to receive at the hands of

those in power that respectful attention which had been, since the passing of the late Reform Act, accorded to questions affecting the interests and happiness of working men. In these circumstances, he could confidently ask the meeting to agree to the following resolution;— "That this meeting rejoice to learn that Jacob Bright, Esq., M.P., Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, Bart., M.P., and Peter Ryland, Esq., M.P., have agreed to bring in a bill during the ensuing session to remove the electoral disabilities under which women now suffer, and that this meeting resolve to use their influence in support of the measure, and authorise the chairman, at the proper time, to sign a petition to Parliament in favour of the bill." (Cheers.)

Mr EDWARD BLYTH seconded the motion. He maintained that if women voted for the election of their ministers, as was almost universally the case in this country, there was no reason why they should not vote for their legislators. He thought that the influence which women could bring to bear on Parliament was great, and contended that, had that influence been exercised at last election, the promotion of the most disgraceful act that ever had been passed by the Legislature would not have occurred last session. He concluded by making an appeal to the public for funds to enable the ladies to carry on the agitation.

The motion was carried by acclamation.

On the motion of Mr MILLER, M. P., a vote of thanks was given to the chairman, and the meeting separated at twenty minutes before eleven o'clock.

EDINBURGH BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

The National Society for Women's Suffrage

OBJECT

To obtain for Women the right of Voting for Members of Parliament on the same conditions as if men.

Approval of the object of the Society with an Annual Subscription of £5000.

Edward Alexander jun.,
Miss Ashworth,

Miss Bouchewell,
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Miss Brindley,
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Women

Form to be filled up by persons desirous of assisting to promote the object of the Society

I authorize you to add my name to the list of Members of the

Edinburgh Branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage and I

advise to both a Subscription of £

and a donation of

to the National Society for Women's Suffrage

at the rate of

per annum

for the term of

years

and I

authorize you to add my name to the list of Members of the

Edinburgh Branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage and I

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to the National Society for Women's Suffrage

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS.

Edward Alexander jun., . . .	£1 0 0	Mrs Forbes Kerr, . . .	£0 10 0
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Friend, . . .	1 0 0	Mrs Masson, . . .	0 10 6
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Misses Hunter, 5 Gt. Stuart St. (2 years' subscription), . . .	4 0 0	Mrs Nichol, Huntly Lodge (2 years' subscription), . . .	2 0 0
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Mrs Ferguson Home, . . .	2 0 0		

EDINBURGH BRANCH OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

OBJECT.

To obtain for Women the right of Voting for Members of Parliament on the same conditions as it is, or may be, granted to men.

Approval of the object of the Society, with an Annual Subscription of any amount, constitutes membership.

Form to be filled up by persons desirous of assisting to promote the object of the Society.

Madam,

I authorise you to add my name to the List of Members of the Edinburgh Branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, and I agree to pay a Subscription of £ . . .

Name and Address in full.

To Mrs Nichol,

Treasurer,

Huntly Lodge, Merchiston, Edinburgh.

Mrs A. Renton, 5 Leamington Terrace,	£2 5 0	Miss Helen Taylor,	£1 1 0
Mrs J. H. Renton, London,	3 3 0	Do., donation,	5 0 0
Miss Riddel, Lauder Road,	0 2 6	Sums under 2s. 6d.,	2 19 10
Ellen T. Riddel, do.	0 2 6		
Per Miss Riddel,	0 8 0	Mrs Warren,	0 5 0
Jane Rudd,	0 2 6	Do.,	0 10 0
Mrs Reid, Nairn,	0 5 0	Miss Walker, 7 Queen's Cres. (2 years' subscription),	0 10 0
Miss Robison, 2 Henry Place,	0 2 6	Mrs Wigham, 5 Gray Street (2 years),	1 0 0
		Do., donation,	0 5 0
Miss Smith, London,	1 0 0	Miss Wigham,	0 7 6
Miss Smith, do.,	1 0 0	Thos. Wilkie,	0 2 6
Mrs Wm. Smith,	0 5 0		
Miss Stephenson, 13 Randolph Cres. (2 years' sub.),	1 0 0		
Do., donations,	9 5 0		

TREASURER'S STATEMENT.

INCOME.

Received in Subscriptions and Donations from January 30, 1867, to December 31. 1869, £168 9 4

EXPENDITURE.

Printing,	£36 6 0
Canvassers,	73 2 10
Pamphlets,	36 16 6
Postages, Carriage of Parcels, &c.,	11 10 6
Advertising,	2 4 6
Balance in hands of Treasurer,	8 9 0
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	£168 9 4

As the Subscription List was not given with last year's Report, it includes the whole Receipts since the commencement of the Society, and the Treasurer's statement covers the corresponding period.

FORMS OF PETITION.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

The Humble Petition of the Undersigned Inhabitants of

Sheweth,—

That the exclusion of Women, householders and ratepayers, legally qualified in every respect but that of sex, from the power of voting in the election of Members of Parliament, by depriving a considerable portion of the property, the industry, and the intelligence of the country of all direct representation, is injurious both to the persons excluded and to the community at large.

That women are competent, by law and in fact, to carry on a business, to administer an estate, and to fill other positions, which, both by investing them with interests requiring representation, and by affording tests of fitness, are usually considered to give a claim to the suffrage.

Wherefore your Petitioners humbly pray that your Lordships will pass the Bill, entitled—"A Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women."

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED ;

The Humble Petition of the Undersigned Inhabitants of

Sheweth,—

That the exclusion of Women, householders and ratepayers, legally qualified in every respect but that of sex, from the power of voting in the election of Members of Parliament, by depriving a considerable portion of the property, the industry, and the intelligence of the country of all direct representation, is injurious both to the persons excluded and to the community at large.

That women are competent, by law and in fact, to carry on a business, to administer an estate, and to fill other positions, which, both by investing them with interests requiring representation, and by affording tests of fitness, are usually considered to give a claim to the suffrage.

Wherefore, your Petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable House will pass the Bill, entitled—"A Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women."

And your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

POINTS OF PETITION

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORDS SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

The Petition of the ...

Sheweth

That the exclusion of Women from the House of Commons and the House of Lords is a grievance of the highest nature and one which has long been a subject of complaint to the Legislature.

That women are entitled to the same rights and privileges as men in all respects and that it is just and equitable that they should be admitted to the same.

That the exclusion of Women from the House of Commons and the House of Lords is a grievance of the highest nature and one which has long been a subject of complaint to the Legislature.

And your Petitioners will ever pray

TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED.

The Petition of the ...

Sheweth

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PAMPHLET