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REASONS
FOR THE
ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN.

BY
MRS. BODICHON.

READ AT THE MEETING OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE
PROMOTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE, AT MANCHESTER, OCT. 6, 1866.

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THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN.

That a respectable, orderly, independent body in the state should have no voice, and no influence recognized by the law, in the election of the representatives of the people, while they are otherwise acknowledged as responsible citizens, are eligible for many public offices, and required to pay all taxes, is an anomaly which seems to require some explanation, and the reasons alleged in its defence are curious and interesting to examine. It is not however my present purpose to controvert the various objections which have been brought forward against the extension of the suffrage to women. Passing over what may be called the negative side of the question, I propose to take it up at a more advanced stage, and assuming that the measure is unobjectionable, I shall endeavour to show that it is positively desirable.

Mr. Anthony Trollope, speaking in reference to the restrictions on voting in some departments of the Civil Service, says:—"A clerk in the Customhouse, over whom no political ascendancy from his official superior could by any chance be used, is debarred from voting. I once urged upon a Cabinet minister that this was a stigma on the service,—and though he was a Whig, he laughed at me. He could not conceive that men would care about voting. But men do care;—and those who do not, ought to be made to care." The case is very similar as regards women. Many people, besides Cabinet ministers, are unable to conceive that women can care about voting. That some women do care has been proved

by the Petition presented to Parliament last session. I shall try to show why some care,—and why those who do not ought to be made to care.

There are now a very considerable number of open-minded unprejudiced people, who see no particular reason why women should not have votes, if they want them, but, they ask, what would be the good of it? What is there that women want which male legislators are not willing to give? And here let me say at the outset, that the advocates of this measure are very far from accusing men of deliberate unfairness to women. It is not as a means of extorting justice from unwilling legislators that the franchise, is claimed for women. In so far as the claim is made with any special reference to class interests at all, it is simply on the general ground that under a representative government, any class which is not represented is likely to be neglected. Proverbially, what is out of sight is out of mind, and the theory that women, as such, are bound to keep out of sight, finds its most emphatic expression in the denial of the right to vote. The direct results are probably less injurious than those which are indirect, but that a want of due consideration for the interests of women is apparent in our legislation, could very easily be shown. To give evidence in detail would be a long and an invidious task. I will mention one instance only, that of the educational endowments all over the country. Very few people would now maintain that the education of boys is more important to the State than that of girls. But as a matter of fact, girls have but a very small share in educational endowments. Many of the old foundations have been

reformed by Parliament, but the desirableness of providing with equal care for girls and boys, has very seldom been recognised. In the administration of charities generally, the same tendency prevails to postpone the claims of women to those of men.

Among instances of hardship traceable directly to exclusion from the franchise and to no other cause, may be mentioned the unwillingness of landlords to accept women as tenants. Two large farmers in Suffolk inform me that this is not an uncommon case. They mention one estate on which seven widows have been ejected, who, if they had had votes, would have been continued as tenants. The following letter is from the unmarried sister of these gentlemen, herself a farmer in the same county:—

“It is not perhaps sufficiently considered how large a proportion of women occupy and cultivate farms entirely on their own account, nor how sensibly a share in the suffrage would affect their interests. In strictly agricultural counties, like those of Norfolk and Suffolk, it is a thing of daily occurrence for leases to be granted or renewed to the widows, daughters, or sisters of farmers, and many tenant-farmers are unwilling to hire of landlords who, as the phrase is, ‘turn out the women.’ In these districts the agricultural class is richer than almost any other, and the female portion of it receive as a rule, a much better education than the daughters of clergymen and the poorer professional men. In fact they receive the best within reach. I think you would find very few farmers who do not consider their wives or daughters quite as capable of voting as themselves, and would not show their faith in their business capacities by making them executrixes and administrators of their property. Land proprietors, as a rule however, like, and with reason, to have their estates represented in Parliament,—and here I come to the chief point I would urge upon your attention. Instances daily occur of the widow of a deserving tenant being ejected from her farm with a large young family unprovided for, simply because she cannot vote. Farming is a healthful, easy, and natural profession for women who have been brought up in agricultural counties, and have thus been learning it from childhood. Moreover, for holders of capital, it is a tolerably lucrative one. I know many and many a single woman living upon the narrow income

derived from a fair property invested in the funds, who would gladly hire land instead, and thus obtain a higher interest for her money. It seems to me not a little hard, that a woman possessing capital should be deprived of the privileges other capitalists enjoy, but it seems harder still that she should be robbed of her livelihood, simply because an anomalous custom has shut her out from such a privilege.

“Take for instance the following cases which have come under my own notice, which show the working of the law both ways:—The other day a widow was left with a large family, in a farm her husband had occupied for years. The landowner was one of those gentlemen who highly estimate parliamentary influence; his unfortunate tenant was only saved from want by a generous public subscription. People might say,—if she had sufficient capital to carry on a farm, how was it that she was in need of assistance? But such a question shows an utter misconception of the subject. Any one at all acquainted with farming will understand how ruinous is a sudden ejection, admitting as it does no opportunity of preparing for high valuation; and any one acquainted with general business will understand what an advantage it is for capital to be used. A sum quite adequate for carrying on a moderate sized farm would bring in a miserable income, if ‘safely’ invested.

“Take another case. My next door neighbour, a respectable widow lady, has gained a competent living for herself and daughter, on a farm she has occupied since the death of her husband, twenty years ago. Had she been ejected then, she must have eked out a miserable income by keeping a third-rate school, or thrown herself upon friends. As it is, she has maintained a respectable and independent position, and has of course, employed her capital to the utmost advantage. It seems a little hard that this lady, who in every way performs the duties of an employer, should have no vote, whilst the keeper of a low beerhouse close by, who demoralises labouring men, and is hardly able to write his name, exercises the right from which she is denied.

“In conclusion, I beg to say that I have been a farmer for some years, that I know few parishes in which women are not owners or occupiers of land, and that every practical farmer with whom I have discussed the subject of the extension of the franchise to women, has recognised the justice of such a claim. They certainly see no reason why we should be entrusted with property, and not entrusted with the influence pertaining to it. The only wonder is that the attention of the public has not been drawn to this matter before.

“M. B. EDWARDS.”

The case, as stated by Miss Edwards in behalf of

farmers, is scarcely less strong as regards all women, who, as heads of a business or a household, fulfil the duties of a man in the same position. Their task is often a hard one, and everything which helps to sustain their self-respect, and to give them consideration and importance in the eyes of others, is likely to lessen their difficulties, and make them happier and stronger for the battle of life. The very fact that, though householders and taxpayers, they have not equal privileges with male householders and taxpayers, is in itself a *deconsideration*, which seems to me invidious and useless. It casts a kind of slur on the value of their opinions, and I may remark in passing, that what is treated as of no value is apt to grow valueless. Citizenship is an honour, and not to have the full rights of a citizen is a want of honour. Inconspicuously it may be, but by a subtle and sure process, those, who without their own consent and without sufficient reason, are debarred from full participation in the rights and duties of a citizen, lose more or less of social consideration and esteem.

These arguments, founded on considerations of justice and mercy to a large and important class, might, in a civilized country and in the absence of strong reasons to the contrary, be deemed amply sufficient to justify the measure proposed. There remain to be considered those aspects of the question which affect the general community. And among all the reasons for giving women votes, the one which appears to me the strongest, is that of the influence it might be expected to have in increasing public spirit. Patriotism, a healthy, lively, intelligent interest in everything which concerns the nation to

which we belong, and an unselfish devotedness to the public service,—these are the qualities which make a people great and happy; these are the virtues which ought to be most sedulously cultivated in all classes of the community. And I know no better means at this present time, of counteracting the tendency to prefer narrow private ends to the public good, than this of giving to all women, duly qualified, a direct and conscious participation in political affairs. Give some women votes, and it will tend to make all women think seriously of the concerns of the nation at large, and their interest having once been fairly roused, they will take pains, by reading and by consultation with persons better informed than themselves, to form sound opinions. As it is, women of the middle class occupy themselves but little with anything beyond their own family circle. They do not consider it any concern of theirs, if poor men and women are ill-nursed in workhouse infirmaries, and poor children ill-taught in workhouse schools. If the roads are bad, the drains neglected, the water poisoned, they think it is all very wrong, but it does not occur to them that it is their duty to get it put right. These farmer-women and business-women have honest sensible minds and much practical experience, but they do not bring their good sense to bear upon public affairs, because they think it is men's business, not theirs, to look after such things. It is this belief—so narrowing and deadening in its influence—that the exercise of the franchise would tend to dissipate. The mere fact of being called upon to enforce an opinion by a vote, would have an immediate effect in awakening a healthy sense of responsibility. There

is no reason why these women should not take an active interest in all the social questions—education, public health, prison discipline, the poor laws, and the rest—which occupy Parliament, and they would be much more likely to do so, if they felt that they had importance in the eyes of Members of Parliament, and could claim a hearing for their opinions.

Besides these women of business, there are ladies of property, whose more active participation in public affairs would be beneficial both to themselves and the community generally. The want of stimulus to energetic action is much felt by women of the higher classes. It is agreed that they ought not to be idle, but what they ought to do is not so clear. Reading, music and drawing, needlework, and charity, are their usual employments. Reading, without a purpose, does not come to much. Music and drawing, and needlework, are most commonly regarded chiefly as amusements intended to fill up time. We have left, as the serious duty of independent and unmarried women, the care of the poor in all its branches, including visiting the sick and the aged and ministering to their wants, looking after the schools, and in every possible way giving help wherever help is needed. Now education, the relief of the destitute, and the health of the people, are among the most important and difficult matters which occupy the minds of statesmen, and if it is admitted that women of leisure and culture are bound to contribute their part towards the solution of these great questions, it is evident that every means of making their co-operation enlightened and vigorous should be sought for. They have special opportunities of observing the operation of many of the

laws. They know, for example, for they see before their eyes, the practical working of the law of settlement—of the laws relating to the dwellings of the poor—and many others, and the experience which peculiarly qualifies them to form a judgment on these matters, ought not to be thrown away. We all know that we have already a goodly body of rich, influential working-women, whose opinions on the social and political questions of the day are well worth listening to. In almost every parish, there are, happily for England, such women. Now everything should be done to give these valuable members of the community a solid social standing. If they are wanted, and there can be no doubt that they are, in all departments of social work, their position in the work should be as dignified and honourable as it is possible to make it. Rich unmarried women have many opportunities of benefitting the community, which are not within reach of a married woman, absorbed by the care of her husband and children. Everything, I say again, should be done to encourage this most important and increasing class, to take their place in the army of workers for the common good, and all the forces we can bring to bear for this end are of incalculable value. For by bringing women into hearty co-operation with men, we gain the benefit not only of their work, but of their intelligent sympathy. Public spirit is like fire: a feeble spark of it may be fanned into a flame, or it may very easily be put out. And the result of teaching women that they have nothing to do with politics, is that their influence goes towards extinguishing the unselfish interest—never too strong—which men are disposed to take in public affairs.

Let each member of the House of Commons consider, in a spirit of true scientific inquiry, all the properly qualified women of his acquaintance, and he will see no reason why the single ladies and the widows among his own family and friends should not form as sensible opinions on the merits of candidates as the voters who returned him to Parliament. When we find among the disfranchised such names as those of Mrs. Somerville, Harriet Martineau, Miss Burdett Coutts, Florence Nightingale, Mary Carpenter, Louisa Twining, Miss Marsh, and many others scarcely inferior to these in intellectual and moral worth, we cannot but desire, for the elevation and dignity of the parliamentary system, to add them to the number of electors.

It need scarcely be pointed out that the measure has nothing of a party character. We have precedents under two very different governments, those of Austria and Sweden, for something very similar to what is now proposed. With regard to voting in Austria, Major Noel, who has resided many years in Germany, writes as follows:—"In all the so-called 'crown and hereditary lands' of the Austrian empire, the principle has been established by the Imperial Patent of 1864, of the representation of classes and interests in the respective Diets. One class represented is that of the large landed proprietors. In this class all females, whether of noble or citizen blood, if they possess the property qualification, have votes just the same as males. Women in their corporate character, as *stiftsdamen* or nuns, have the franchise too, if their revenues are derived from land. As regards the representation of citizens

proper (townspeople), I know that in some of the electoral districts, widows carrying on business, or spinsters possessing houses and paying the necessary taxes, vote likewise. But when I made more particular inquiries on this head last January, Count Thun wrote me that the law as regards the female franchise, with the exception of the class of large landed proprietors, was very vague and undecided. It was the intention of the Government, however, to introduce laws for the acceptance of the various Diets, whereby independent women should have votes like males in everyone of the represented classes. Whether such laws have been introduced and carried, I know not. I must mention however, that in the Hungarian Constitution of 1848, when so many democratic changes were introduced, there is an express clause *excluding* women of any class of society from the franchise."

In Sweden the Reform bill passed in December, 1865, gave the election of members of the Upper Chamber to municipal and county bodies, called *Stads-full-mäktige*, and *Landstingsmän*. In the election of these bodies, women take part. In order to be an elector, a woman must be unmarried or a widow, and must have attained her majority (twenty-five years), and be possessed of more than 400 riksdalers riksmünt (about £22.) per annum.*

In England, the extension proposed would interfere with no vested interests. It would involve no

* Article 15 of the Italian Electoral law, provides, "That the taxation paid by a widow, or by a wife separated from her husband, shall give a vote to whichever of her children or relations of the first or second degree of propinquity she may select. In the same way, a father, who pays direct imports in several electoral districts, shall be able to delegate his vote in the one which he does not inhabit himself, to either of his sons he may select. These delegations of power can be cancelled at will."

change in the principles on which our Government is based, but would rather make our Constitution more consistent with itself. Conservatives have a right to claim it as a Conservative measure. Liberals are bound to ask for it as a necessary part of radical reform. There is no reason for identifying it with any class or party in the State, and it is, in fact, impossible to predict what influence it might have on party politics. The question is simply of a special legal disability, which must, sooner or later, be removed.

It was said by Lord Derby, in his speech on entering upon the office of Prime Minister last Session, in reference to Reform—that “there were theoretical anomalies in our present system which it was desirable, if possible, to correct; that there were classes of persons excluded from the franchise who had a fair claim and title, upon the ground of their fitness to exercise the privilege of electors; and that there was a very large class whom the particular qualifications of the Act of 1832 excluded.” I venture to submit, that the exclusion of female freeholders and householders from the franchise is an anomaly which it is very desirable, and not impossible, to correct; that there is no class of persons having a fairer claim and title upon the ground of their fitness to exercise the privileges of electors; and that whatever may be deemed expedient with regard to other classes, this class, at any rate, should not be excluded by the particular qualifications of the Reform Act of the future.

BARBARA LEIGH SMITH BODICHON.

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THE
ELECTORAL DISABILITIES
OF WOMEN :

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BY

RHODA GARRETT,

IN THE

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THE ELECTORAL DISABILITIES OF WOMEN.

In speaking on the subject of the Electoral Disabilities of Women, it is no longer necessary to preface one's remarks by an elaborate explanation of what is meant by this demand that we are now making for admission to Electoral Representation. The subject has of late been too widely discussed to allow of any very great ignorance as to the matter to be dealt with in a lecture upon Woman's Suffrage; still I do not for a moment venture to hope that this discussion has caused even one-hundredth part of the excitement created by the Tichborne case, for example, though it involves a great political reform affecting not one family alone, but all classes of Her Majesty's subjects. In what manner it thus affects the interests of the entire nation, it will be my endeavour to point out in the course of my lecture to-night.

In order to bring my subject within as narrow a compass as possible, I will divide it into three parts—

- 1st. The education of women;
- 2nd. Their economic position;
- 3rd. The existing laws especially affecting the interests of women.

I dare say that at first sight you will be unable to see how the possession of the Suffrage by women would improve their position either educationally, economically, or legally; but by the time I have concluded my paper I am bold enough to hope that I may have convinced those who need convincing, that the Suffrage is, as Mr. John Stuart Mill says, the turning point in women's cause, and that with it, they cannot long be denied any just right, or excluded from any fair advantage.

Let us first of all consider the present state of education among women, from the time when they are first capable of receiving any education at all, until they arrive at that happy climax, when they are pronounced by their parents and guardians "finished." In the training of very young children there is, of course, comparatively little difference between the actual teaching given to boys and girls, but in their moral and physical training, the difference is even then apparent. Boys are taught from the earliest period of life to be self-dependent and self-reliant; while girls are taught, on the contrary, to be yielding, self-sacrificing, and reliant on any-one rather than upon themselves. A boy is encouraged to develop his physical powers by out-door sports of all kinds, and to interest himself in a variety of pursuits, which cultivate habits of observation, and often lay the foundation for a love of natural science which in after life proves most valuable. A girl generally receives a training of a very opposite character. If she shows a disposition to join in her brothers' games and amusements she is probably told that such conduct is "unladylike," that little girls should not be "tom-boys," and that, instead of running and jumping and climbing she should get to her sewing and knitting and "keep quiet." I believe it is a generally received axiom that men are more selfish than women, and it is easy to trace the growth of this selfishness in men to that spirit of excessive self-sacrifice in women which, even as boys, they have been taught to look upon as natural, and to regard as a right.

Passing from the home life, let us see how boys and girls are respectively prepared for the work of life by the education given to them at school. Everyone knows how immensely superior the educational advantages open to boys are, to those which are offered to girls. A boy is sent, or at any rate may be sent, to one of the great public schools and afterwards to one

of the Universities. In each case his education will be conducted by men of the highest ability and learning. Contrast with this the education his sister is likely to receive at the small private school which is open to her. The teachers here, when they are women, have seldom been trained to teach, and have in nearly every case undertaken the profession from necessity, and not from choice; consequently they are only able to impart to their pupils the smatterings of knowledge that it has been in their own power to acquire. The most important subjects for female education are generally considered to be accomplishments so-called—a little bad French and music, and worse drawing, with a great deal of fancy needlework. If anyone doubts the truth of my statements let him read the School Commissioner's report which lately enquired into the state of education in girls', as well as in boys' schools. Here the evidence is so united and voluminous that my difficulty, in selecting any one part as especially illustrating the poverty and worthlessness of the education now offered to girls, has been to choose, out of so great a choice, not to find suitable matter. Before I read the quotation I should like to draw the attention of those present, who take an interest in the education of girls, to a book which has been compiled by Miss Beale, of Cheltenham, from the reports issued by the Schools Inquiry Commission; it is most valuable as containing in one small volume all the evidence, and the reports, which were received by the Commission on Girls' Schools. After describing the teaching given in a girls' day school, one of the assistant commissioners says "The boarding school, (assuming it, as one may do, to belong to the same class), follows (in all probability), the same vicious system as the day school; and the only difference that it makes to the girl is to take away some of the primitive roughness or simplicity of her manner, and give it an air of affectation and restraint. Then at sixteen she goes home 'for good.' She displays the two or

three pieces of ornamental needlework, each of which has occupied her three months, and some drawings, copies from the flat, of figures and landscapes, whose high finish betrays the drawing master's hand. A neighbour drops in, conversation turns upon Jane's return from school, and the mother bids her play one of the pieces she learnt there. For two or three weeks this exhibition of skill is repeated at intervals, and then it ceases, the piano is no more touched, the dates of inventions, the relationship of the heathen gods, the number of houses burnt in the fire of London, and other interesting facts contained in Mangnall are soon forgotten, and the girl is as though she had never been to school at all. There are few books on her father's shelves, perhaps two or three green or yellow novels, some back numbers of the Family Herald, Mr. Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy, Cowper's poems, with gilt edges, dusted more often than opened, Enquire within upon Everything, and one or two religious biographies. It is not this want of material, however, that quenches her taste for reading, for school gave her no such taste; her life henceforth, till marriage, is listless and purposeless, some of it spent in petty occupation, more of it in pettier gossip; and when at last she is called upon to manage a household she finds that her education has neither taught her anything that can be of practical service, nor made her any fitter than nature made her at first to educate and govern her children. In point of knowledge and refinement, she is just where her mother was, and her sons and daughters suffer for it."

I must here say a few words on the question of endowments as affecting educational establishments. It is a well known fact that all the enormous sums set apart for purposes of education are almost entirely devoted to the teaching of boys. The trustees of public educational charities have generally managed to employ the funds exclusively for boys, and Parliament, in voting money for

education, has very often forgotten the existence of girls. Where funds have been left for education without distinction of sex, girls have often been unfairly dealt with; as in the case of Christ's Hospital (the Blue-coat School) which was originally established for the purpose of maintaining a certain number of boys and girls. The funds of this school now amount to £42,000 a year; out of these funds one thousand two hundred boys are fed and clothed, and educated in such a manner as to fit them to proceed to the Universities, and nineteen girls are trained as domestic servants.

It must be remembered, moreover, that it is not alone to boys whose parents are rich that all those advantages are open. To every large public school there are attached scholarships open for competition to all the pupils, and therefore any boy of fair ability and perseverance may, by gaining one of them, obtain a sufficient yearly sum to enable him to pay, at any rate, a considerable part of his college expenses; and, when once the doors of the University are open to him, it is surely his own fault if he does not win for himself both honour and emolument.

Where now shall we look for similar advantages for the sisters of these fortunate boys? Referring to this subject, the report of the Schools' Enquiry Commission before mentioned says: "Examinations and endowments afford, at the present time, the best practical method of improving female education. We can only improve the education of the classes below by beginning at the top and improving the higher education, especially that of the teachers. Here scholarships would be most useful."

Of course it is impossible for me to point out, in the brief space of time at my disposal, all the evils that must arise from such a one-sided system of education as this—in the one case, we educate entirely for life in the world, in the other, for life at home. We well know that men neither can,

nor do, live entirely in, and for, the world; nor can women live entirely in, and for, the home. Both are impossible as both are undesirable.

Let us now trace the connection between the education of women and their electoral disabilities. It will be readily admitted that the scope of education is to fit the child for his, or her, future place in the world; and here, as elsewhere, as we sow, so also shall we reap. If, therefore, we give to girls such an education as that I have just described, is it unlikely that when they grow up they will be both physically and mentally weak, ignorant, dependent and frivolous, unfit, as they are often declared to be, to be entrusted with civil and political rights?

But think you these evils will be best remedied by insisting upon their remaining in this state of dependence, or by admitting them to a broader and a freer life; by giving them responsibility as an educational power? Is not this what was done for working men in the passing of the last Reform Bill? Was it not argued that none but working men could tell what the needs of their own class were, and that, through their representatives, they had a right to express their opinions to Parliament? Is the same argument less forcible when applied to women? Would they consent to be excluded from a fair share in educational advantages if they could, in like manner, make their voices heard in the legislature of the country? Would not their claim to be educated as solidly, and in the same branches of knowledge as men, be argued with a far greater chance of success, if they possessed the power of urging its justice before that tribunal where men are able to lay their grievances, and enforce their redress?

Having now given a brief sketch of the early life and training of a woman, let us see how she is likely to fare when she is ready to take her part in the real work of life. In other words, let us examine the economic condition of women. Most people will tell us that a

woman has no need to take part at all in the world's work; that if she is all she ought to be, attractive, young, and with an adequate knowledge of cookery and shirt-buttons, some man will certainly wish to marry her, and then she will have no need to trouble her head about politics and the like, with which she has no concern. This is no doubt very plausible, and the majority of women will probably always choose to marry, if a suitable opportunity presents itself; but granting that the greater part of the female population is thus comfortably provided for, there still remains an enormous proportion of unmarried women, most of whom must support themselves by their own earnings. Now custom usually attaches a kind of stigma to what is called an "old-maid," that is to say, to a woman who, either from necessity or choice, is still unmarried when she has passed her early youth. But possibly custom might be a little more lenient to her misfortunes, if it were universally known that, in consequence of the great excess of the female over the male population in this country, there are two millions and a half of British women without husbands, many of whom are obliged to work for their own subsistence. As, therefore, a great many women are, willing or unwilling, compelled, by the law of this land that a man shall have only one wife at a time, to remain in single blessedness, it will be for the advantage, both of themselves, and of the community at large, that they should not only be self-supporting, but productive labourers.

I will not here enter particularly into the many difficulties and disadvantages of women of the so-called working classes, simply remarking, as I pass, that the universally low rate of wages amongst them, as compared with those of men of their own class, is accounted for principally by the fact that women rarely receive a proper training for the work they undertake to perform; consequently, their work is unskilled, and therefore inferior. Even where a woman is

able to perform the same work equally well with a man, her labour is not remunerated in the same degree in consequence of the custom I have just alluded to. If a man engages in the trade of a mason or carpenter, or even a tailor or cook, he receives a proper training, and serves a regular apprenticeship; but it is not thought necessary to give these advantages to a woman; at any rate not on the same thorough and distinct understanding. I will give one or two illustrations of what I mean in regard to this subject, and then pass on.

Let us take as one example, out of the many that might be advanced, that of a cook in a wealthy family. If this same cook is a man, he has exactly similar work to perform as a woman would have in the same position—neither more nor less—but he has, in all probability, served a proper and recognised apprenticeship to his trade, and he can, therefore, always command a high price for his labour. A woman may have exactly the same amount of knowledge; may be quite as competent to prepare those marvels of cookery that aristocratic palates delight in, but she has no credentials from Soyer or Francatelli to assure her employers of her capability; she has, moreover the precedent of custom against her, and therefore, for the same work, performed in an equally satisfactory manner, she is paid half, or at any rate, one third, less than a man would be. Again. A large hairdresser in London has lately (to his credit be it spoken) adopted the sensible custom of employing young women in his establishment to cut and dress the hair of his lady customers. One of the girls employed in this business told me the other day that the women were always paid less than the men. Now this is obviously unfair. The girls do their work most satisfactorily; and their department is certainly more difficult and requires more skill than that of the men, for they have not only to cut a lady's hair, but also to construct upon her head one of those marvellous erections with which too many

English girls in these days disfigure themselves, and which I am sure it would puzzle their male competitors to fabricate.

These two instances alone will show you how unfairly even the skilled labour of women is remunerated. But I grieve to say there are thousands of women, who through deficient training, have not the same skilled labour to offer, and must suffer accordingly. We do not ask for these that competent, or incompetent, they should receive the same wages as men. What we *do* ask is that women should no longer be placed at a disadvantage; we ask that they should have as good an education, and as many opportunities as men for fitting themselves for their work; which, with the removal of trade monopolies, will at least give them a fair chance; and then, and then only, can it be justly said that it is their own fault if they do not make their way in the world as men now have it in their power to do.

But, bad as the economic condition of women of the working classes is, it cannot be regarded as so difficult to improve as that of the more educated middle-class women, who, in addition to a training which tends absolutely to unfit them for work, have to contend with a mass of prejudice against their working at all, which is all the more formidable inasmuch as it is unreasonable, and therefore *unconvinced*. The economic condition of such women, their exclusion from nearly all lucrative and honourable employments—their consequent dependence upon men for their support—are evils which increase with the growth of the population, and which the State is no longer justified in ignoring. For an educated woman there is no middle path. Either she must be Queen of England—the head of the State—or she must be shut out from nearly all the advantages of a citizen in a country over which a woman rules. To begin with the offices under Government. The numerous servants employed thereby (some of whom earn, or, to speak more

precisely, receive several thousands a-year) are exclusively male subjects of her Majesty; except in the telegraph offices where, through the exertions of Mr. Scudamore, women have been admitted. But even here, they are admitted, as Mr. Scudamore himself told me, only in the lower grades, where, after years of faithful work, they might eventually earn £200 a-year. The office of superintendent, which women are quite as competent to fill as men, is denied to them, solely because they are women, *not* because they are in any way incapable of fulfilling its duties. There are many other civil offices quite as suitable to women as telegraphy, though requiring a higher education, for which hundreds of British gentlewomen would gladly fit themselves, the greatest proportion of whom, even the most delicate, would have physical strength enough to read the *Times* daily from ten to four.

The influence thus exercised by the Government in declaring women ineligible to hold office under it permeates through society and countenances their exclusion from the three learned professions—from the Church, where, as teachers of morality their influence and example would be as valuable as that of men; from medicine, though it is often said that it is a woman's special province to minister to the sick; and from the law, where—well, perhaps, some more of that tenderness of conscience, which men tell us is one of the peculiar characteristics of woman, might not be injurious to the higher interests of that learned profession.

Let us now note the difficulties a woman is likely to encounter, if she seeks to enter trade. Here there are no charters, it is true, as in the professions, to prevent her entrance at the very threshold. But there are lions in the way quite as formidable; blind prejudice, on the one hand; and a fear of injuring established interests on the other. You must not think I am drawing a fancy picture—that no woman would wish to engage in trade. I know women who have tried to do

so, and whose difficulties lay, not in their want of power to acquire the requisite knowledge, but in the almost over-whelming prejudice of those already in possession of the vantage ground which stops them at every turn. It is often urged against admitting women to a share in the real work of life that they are neither physically nor mentally strong enough to compete with men; but no amount of hard work, with the hope of success at the end, would break down a woman's health in comparison with the struggle with anxiety, disappointment and contempt, which she now has so often to endure, and which truly makes "the whole head sick, the whole heart faint." I do not believe that men mean deliberately to be unjust to women; but they think *they* are the best judges of what nature intended women to be, and to do, and it must be confessed that, to a certain degree, women have hitherto endorsed this opinion, by accepting with more apparent than real content, the rôle of dependence and frivolity prescribed for them. The only qualities expected, nay, insisted upon, in women by men, are but too often those declared by Sir Charles Sedley to be the sole characteristics of the female mind:

All that in woman is adored
In thy fair self I find,
For the whole sex can but afford
The handsome and the kind.

But here let me point out that the prejudice middle class-parents, almost without exception, have against their daughters working, possesses a power which in very few other cases prejudice is able to wield. There is no trade which can be entered into without capital, whether a shop of the humblest dimensions be opened, or a brewery established. Years before a boy has left school the prudent father is casting about in his own mind what trade or profession shall be adorned by presence of his cherished young hero. Every taste that he has given the slightest indication of

is considered ; and even, in some cases, the merits of his personal appearance and manners receive due weight. But the trade fixed upon, the next question which the father propounds to himself is, "How can I provide the capital, first to article my boy to a respectable firm in the trade he has chosen, and afterwards to establish him in a business of his own?" But though parents thus recognise the necessity of providing capital for their sons, it never seems to enter their heads that the same thing should be, at any rate, offered to their daughters. Girls never have any capital ; they hardly know what it means ; yet without it the very first move is impossible ; they may enter a shop, but they cannot own one. A boy is considered almost a miracle of goodness if, his premium paid, and his living expenses provided for, he lives morally and respectably, keeps out of debt, and applies himself with a moderate amount of intelligence to learn his business. To a girl, who, without any of these encouragements, plods on her way, eagerly learning the drudgery of some trade in which she can scarcely ever hope to be a master hand, such a meed of praise and encouragement is rarely offered. The excuse which parents generally give for making such a distinction between their boys and girls, is that if the girl married at the end of her apprenticeship, the money paid for her premium would be lost.

In answer to this several counter arguments may be used. In the first place it may be urged, that even if she did marry before she had regained in trade the sum expended upon her training, the business habits acquired during her apprenticeship, and the knowledge of how to expend her money to the best advantage would ensure her becoming the satisfactory steward of her husband's domestic expenditure, instead of (as is now too often the case) the thoughtless and extravagant agent, who is, during the first few months of her marriage "chaffed" for her ignorance in money matters ; next, angrily expostulated with, and finally deprived of any power over the expenditure

whatever. In the next place the advantage may be pointed out, that the girl who has a trade at her fingers' ends, would not be likely to accept the first man who offered himself for her hand, whether she loved him or not. In other words, marriage would not be (as it too often is now) the only profession into which women can enter, and the one position in which society will recognise their right to lead free and individual lives. For, as the *Times* observes, "At present the language held by society to women is 'marry, teach, die, or do worse.'" I do not for one moment believe, and, if I did, I should never succeed in persuading you, that boys and girls will leave off falling in love and marrying. I am sure that few men are so modest as to believe that they are likely to find really formidable rivals in dusty ledgers, hard office stools, or even in full cash boxes. So far from this I would contend that the wives they would gain would become their wives voluntarily and joyfully, and the more joyfully because voluntarily. Whatever business they were engaged in would either be disposed of, or perhaps carried on for the advantage of the family. Women now but too often feel that in marrying they are submitting themselves as it were to a fate which they suppose is inevitable ; for as Mr. Mill says, marriage must be regarded as Hobson's choice—that or none—so long as its only alternative is a dull, lonely life, embittered by the thought of the wasted energies or mis-used talents that, under other circumstances, might have been turned by the despised old-maid, to her own welfare, and to the advantage of the world.

Is there any difficulty now in seeing how the general position of women hinges on their exclusion from the suffrage ? Has not Representation been the point for which all classes, who have had wrongs real or imaginary, have struggled ? Is it necessary to explain what an advantage it would be to many women, now forced to work with competitors, who, at every turn, receive privileges and encouragement which are denied to them, to be

placed in this respect, at least, on an equal footing with men? And lastly, is it necessary for me to point out how the responsibility of possessing a share in the government of the country (and a vote does give that share) would awaken from their lethargy those women who are now leading selfish—wickedly selfish—lives of indolence and gaiety; would force them to think out questions to which they now persistently shut their eyes, because they are painful or disagreeable, and would teach them that the souls and lives of their poorer sisters, whom a helping hand might save from despair, or guard from temptation, will be required of them. Thousands of women need only this awakening to be capable of doing noble deeds. "Women often take meaner things because meaner things only are within their reach."

Having now considered, as fully as time permits, the position of women educationally and economically, we come to the last point that remains for me to examine. What is the legal position of women in this country? I will speak, in the first place, of the laws relating to married women; and, in exposing their injustice and partiality, I hope all the husbands here present will not think I am having a sly hit at them individually and collectively; at the same time, if, in any case, the cap should fit, they have my free permission to put it on. Of course we all know that laws are not framed for those who do well; and it is a merciful thing that the majority of husbands have not the disposition to put in force all the power of tyranny and cruelty that our English laws place in their hands. As marriage is the only, or almost the only, career appointed by society for a woman; the one for which she is educated, and taught that it is her highest duty to prepare herself; it might naturally be supposed that everything would have been done to make this condition as eligible and attractive as possible, so that she might never be tempted to desire any other. But surely, if women carefully considered what the laws of marriage really are, they would

be more likely than when they are absolutely ignorant of these laws, to remain single, and to believe, with St. Paul, that "they are happier if they so abide!" Wives in England are, in all respects, as to property, person, and children, in the legal condition of slaves. When a man takes a wife he swears to endow her with all his worldly goods; then the law steps in and helps him to keep his vow by at once handing over the entire property of the wife to the husband, and declaring her incapable of holding property. Speaking on this point reminds me of the amusing description of the marriage service given by Sir John Bowring, "Look at the marriage ceremony," he said, "it is wicked from beginning to end. 'With this ring I thee wed'—that's sorcery; 'With my body I thee worship'—that's idolatry; 'With all my worldly goods I thee endow'—that's—that's a lie!" It is true that the richer classes in this country are able, by the costly means of settlements, to set aside the law, and to withdraw the whole, or a part of the wife's property from the control of her husband. But even then they are not able to give it into her own keeping—it must be held for her by trustees, and hedged round by numerous perplexing and irritating provisions.

In the Session of 1870 an Act was passed entitled, "The Married Women's Property Bill." This Act was supposed to do for poor women what settlements do for rich ones. It was intended to prevent the personal property of a woman, her wages, her savings, and her earnings, being at the absolute mercy of her husband or his creditors. I have not time to enter into all the provisions of the Act, which is certainly a step in the right direction, but unfortunately a very short step; for it does not in any way recognise the only just principle of all legislation, namely, the perfect equality of all before the law. One illustration will be enough to demonstrate to you the kind of justice meted out to women under the new Act, and you shall

judge for yourselves whether it is unreasonable for women to ask for something a little better. The case was recently tried in the law courts, and the account of it which I am about to read to you was taken from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a paper which, as a rule, certainly never errs on the side of over-justice to women. "It is to be hoped," remarks the *Pall Mall Gazette*, "that women will not read the case of *Shillitoe v. Shillitoe*, which has just come before Vice-Chancellor Wickens, for it will give them a real grievance with which to make themselves and others uncomfortable, instead of those imaginary grievances that occupy so much of their time and attention. It seems that no settlement was executed on the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Shillitoe. At the time of her marriage, Mrs. Shillitoe had a sum of £500 at the Selby Bank in her maiden name. Soon after the marriage, at her husband's request, she drew the sum out of the bank on a cheque of her own and brought it home in order to pay rent and other specific sums with it. Two days after Mr. Shillitoe died. No rent was paid, and Mrs. Shillitoe for the first time ascertained that her husband was indebted to his father and his brother and to other persons, and was so when they married. The estate was being administered, and she was called upon to account for the £500 as part of her husband's property, without which sum the assets would be insufficient to pay the creditors. She declined to account for, or to pay over the money, and claimed it as her own by right of survivorship. It was insisted, on behalf of the creditors, that there had been a good reduction into possession of the £500 in the lifetime of Mr. Shillitoe, and that his widow could not retain it. On the other hand, Mrs. Shillitoe's counsel urged that the bank had paid the money to that lady as hers, and would not otherwise have paid the money at all; that it was in equity hers, for if she had known her husband's actual position at the time of the marriage, she would have insisted upon a settlement of the

money, and could have done so at any moment if he had refused. If this fund were taken from her she would have only £4 10s. a-year to live upon. The Vice-Chancellor decided that there had been a perfectly good reduction of the money into the possession of Mr. Shillitoe, and that the widow must hand it over to the executors. The case was no doubt a hard one for her, but the law—and a most important one it was—was too clear upon the subject."

Well! this is how the law protects an Englishwoman's property. Now let us see what protection it affords to her person. A wife is regarded by the law as part of the husband's goods and chattels; and, in olden times, women were absolutely *sold* by their fathers to the husband. Even in these days there are some (of course very ignorant persons) who believe that the law sanctions such a proceeding. Only the other day I saw a case in the newspapers of a man who sold his wife to another man for half-a-crown. Again, how many cases of the brutal personal violence of men towards their wives, may be read of every day in the columns of our newspapers, and the very inadequate punishment frequently accorded to them, by the magistrates, for the offence. Many a man, I really believe, conscientiously holds with the old proverb:

A wife, a dog, and a walnut tree,
The more you beat 'em the better they be.

Again, if a woman is cruelly treated by her husband, she cannot leave him, or, if she does so, she can be compelled to return to him by law or by physical force. It is only legal separation by a court of justice, which can entitle her to live apart from him; and this legal separation is most difficult to obtain, and is only granted in cases of desertion and extreme cruelty.

Now what is the power of a woman over her own children, who are, at least, as much hers as her husband's? They are by law *his* children. He only has legal power over them; she can only act towards

them by delegation from him; after he is dead she is not their legal guardian, unless he by will has made her so; he could constitute any stranger their legal guardian, and deprive their own mother of any power whatever over them. After seven years of age, the custody of a woman's children belongs exclusively to her husband; after that age she has not the right even to see them, unless by special legal decree.

"My brethren, these things ought not so to be!" But there are laws affecting both married and unmarried women, worse even than these; more degrading, more cruel, more unjust, more barbarous; laws, which if Englishmen once thoroughly understood, and reflected upon, would not, I venture to say, disgrace much longer the statute books of our country. And if women had the power of showing by their votes at an election, that they approved or disapproved of laws which have so much to do with the happiness and well-being of their whole lives—if they had this power, would they not, I ask you, do their share in helping to abolish such legislation as this?

It is constantly said that women's interests are so carefully guarded by men that it is unnecessary to give them any voice in the matter. Did working men think that their well-being was so completely safe in the hands of the richer classes, that it was unnecessary to pass the Representation of the People's Bill? We women demand, as men have demanded before us, the right to protect ourselves; and we believe, as they believed, that this end will only be gained by our obtaining a voice in the framing of those laws which we are called upon to obey.

At the commencement of my lecture I expressed a hope that before I had finished speaking I might have convinced some of those who differed from me on this subject, that politics have, after all, a great deal to do with women; that as they cannot live in the world without bearing a part in its business, responsibilities, and sufferings, they there

fore do well to strive for a share of the power to work with men, for the general well-being and prosperity of their common country. In order to do this, I have pointed out, that they demand the removal of their electoral disabilities, believing that until this is done they can have no efficient weapon with which to fight their battles. We are constantly told, in tones of scorn, that the women who desire the suffrage are a mere handful of female fanatics. As compared with the entire female population we *may* be only a handful, but we are an ever-increasing handful of very obstinate people; and, if a wilful man must have his way, a wilful woman is likely to be quite as invincible:

If she will, she will, you may depend on't;
And if she won't, she won't, and there's an end on't.

Every year a larger number of petitions are presented to Parliament in favour of this measure, and last year these petitions were signed by 187,000 persons. One hundred and eighty-seven thousand persons is, at any rate, a considerable handful, especially if they are all, as they have been declared to be, violent fanatics.

Before I conclude I must make it clearly understood what the measure really is to which you will be asked to assent in the Resolution which will be put to this meeting. There is apt to arise a little obscurity on this point, I know. At a meeting in one of the large towns in the North, a short time ago, the Mayor, who was to preside, came up to me just before the meeting began, and said, in an excited manner, "Now promise me that you will not advocate the suffrage for *married* women." I have no doubt that my worthy chairman had visions of his wife rushing to the polling-booth to record her vote in favour of the wrong candidate; and, worse still, of being kept waiting for his dinner! However, I assured him, as I now assure you, that we are not seeking in any way to change the present basis of the suffrage. We only ask that women who fulfil the same conditions as men

—who are householders, who pay taxes, and are rated to the relief of the poor, shall be admitted to the franchise. More than this we do not ask— at present.

I have not attempted, this evening, to answer many of the objections that are commonly urged against giving women the suffrage. So much has already been said and written on the subject that those who wish to read the arguments on either side can easily obtain pamphlets by application to the secretaries of the Association.

In conclusion I will quote from one, whose name in the cause of freedom is of world-wide fame, and whose words, taken in their widest meaning, will need no comment of mine. What he — a man — pleaded for men, I — a woman—would plead for women. Mr. John Bright, in upholding the claims of working men to the suffrage, said:—"England has long been famous for the enjoyment of personal freedom by her people. They are free to think, they are free to speak, they are free to write; and England has been famed of late years, and is famed now the world over, for the freedom of her industry, and the freedom of her commerce. I want to know, then, why it is that her people are not free to vote? Who is there that will meet me on this platform, or will stand upon any platform, and will dare to say, in the hearing of an open meeting of his countrymen, that these millions for whom I am now pleading, are too degraded, too vicious, and too destructive to be entrusted with the elective franchise? I, at least, will never thus slander my countrymen. I claim for them the right of admission, through their representatives, into the most ancient and the most venerable Parliament which exists among men; and when they are admitted, and not till then, it may be truly said that England, the august mother of free nations, herself is free!"

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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE:

A LIBERAL VIEW OF THE SITUATION.

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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

A LIBERAL VIEW OF THE SITUATION.

At a temperance meeting, not long since, Canon Wilberforce was asked, "have you any new arguments?" and replied, "No, but the old ones are getting red-hot!" The women who for seventeen years have reasoned and pleaded for a share of representation for their sex, have no new arguments to offer on behalf of justice; but they feel intensely that the pressure of present circumstances has made the old ones red-hot. In our ranks are women belonging to both the great political parties, and, indeed, to all the sub-divisions of parties. But undoubtedly the majority of them are Liberals, and they look on with surprise and displeasure at a state of things created by a Liberal Government, with an immense majority in the House of Commons, which seems to them to cut across every Liberal tradition, and to disobey every Liberal principle.

We should like to have an Ithuriel's spear, whose touch would reveal the real sentiments of public men. We want to know which of them are sincere Liberals, and really hold by the old axioms, that "taxation without representation is tyranny," that "Government exists for the greatest happiness of the greatest number," that "people know their own wants best," and find out how they make themselves believe that these axioms do not apply to women. We want to know which of them divide their brains and their consciences in two; and while truly holding Liberal principles as regards men, are plain despots, benevolent or otherwise, as regards women. We want to know which of them are not Liberals in heart at all, but merely take what seems now the successful side; and therefore exclude, silence, and oppress women simply because they are the

only persons now who can be so treated with impunity. There is another class whom we do know, for we have had many speeches and leading articles addressed to us lately in their name; those who do hold Liberal principles so fully as to apply them to the claims of women as well as men,—who are our friends,—who have often voted for us in the abstract air of a Wednesday afternoon on a private Member's Bill; but who, on the first chance of our joining in a general claim for the extension of the franchise, gave way before the outcry which was made on behalf of the other claimants, without stopping to enquire whether the upholding of our right would have delayed the admission of other people's rights by a day. Of necessity, for all time to come, women must honour far more highly than any other public men, the last and best class of Liberals,—those, whether Members of Parliament, or officials of political associations, or writers for the press, who absolutely refused to deny their own judgment at an appeal from the Prime Minister; whom they were ready to follow for the inclusion of their countrymen, but not for the exclusion and injury of their countrywomen. It is easy to resist an enemy; it is hard to resist an honoured leader; even if it is not he, but others sheltering behind him, who are believed to be responsible for the error.

It shows a want of discernment, and it is not complimentary to Mr. Gladstone, to pretend that he holds that position of infallibility which no human being ever held, even as regards men. But as regards women he has not the means or the materials for forming an opinion, such as makes his opinion on men's affairs so powerful and important. Outside of the inner circle, where probably the influences are equally weighty, the difference of opportunity is one not of degree merely, but almost as between life and death. A Cabinet of men,—a Parliament of men,—elected by men only,—hundreds of political associations composed of men only,—public meetings,—private conferences on all possible affairs, but in which none but men's voices are heard,—endless newspapers, pamphlets, documents written by men, pressing on him every day of his life, give a great minister the most ample data from

which to gather what the wants and wishes and convictions of men are, upon every subject for which legislation is possible. But what is there to supply him with similar data from which to gather, and to weigh, the wants and wishes and convictions of women, whose interest, not only in special legislation, but all legislation, is equal to that of men? The speeches, necessarily restricted to a very few occasions, of those high-minded members who care as steadily for the interests of non-constituents as of constituents,—rare letters and rarer articles in a few of the newspapers,—occasional resolutions from political associations, sent up only in unexciting times,—a few direct memorials and letters. That is all. And yet it is half the nation which needs to be heard,—which is living, loving, thinking, feeling,—struggling for life,—working hard for those dear to them,—many feeling their scanty bread made bitter by the sense of injustice,—many more, whose own life is bright, feeling that they can take no pleasure in its brightness till they attain the power of protecting and helping others. True, and well it is, that at a thousand points the men who have power are influenced by the women who have none. But influence is a frail thing to trust life and honour and freedom to; it fails here,—it is incomplete there,—it is misunderstood elsewhere,—it is put aside to “a more convenient season” whenever it demands a little trouble. How could the wisest, the most far-seeing of men, know and understand the relative position and importance of women's claims during the recent crisis, with such scanty opportunity of learning? Even, therefore, if Mr. Gladstone had discussed the whole field of the interests of the nation, women as well as men, and the need which both have of being represented, we should still say that he had not the means to know the case thoroughly, and that the authority of his great name could not justify us in standing silently aside. But neither in his speech on introducing the Bill, nor in that on Mr. Woodall's amendment, did he say one word about the double interest of the nation, or the special interest of women. He left it wholly untouched; not, as it seemed, from hostility, but from a sense that

he was unable to deal with it. Whether that inability arose from feeling that he had not studied it, or from the knowledge that he had implacable enemies of women beside him, among the very men upon whom he relied to fight the battle of the agricultural labourer, we can only conjecture. But the gentlemen who fancy that we Liberal women have somehow rejected advice from the Prime minister, have certainly not read his words with the thought of how they sound in women's ears. If they did, they would know that he has given no opinion, and offered no advice, but simply tried to ignore us. But no one can successfully ignore,—first, the women-householders, nearly three quarters of a million; second, the host of women whom the householders largely represent. If he had appealed to us women, if he had asked us to consider the fact that, while the majority of the Liberal party are on our side, the official world (naturally perhaps) is more divided, so that he would find it easier to press the enfranchisement of the agricultural labourers first, and that of women after, *and given his promise that the latter should be done*, we should still have felt that to make every woman wait until every male householder had a vote, showed a want of knowledge of the life and thought of women, though we should probably have yielded to the appeal. But no such promise was made. We were expected to wait, without any promise,—entreated to stand aside, supported by a vague hope,—threatened with awful pains and penalties because we felt ourselves of more importance to ourselves than politicians expected.

There is a class of writers who despise women, and who seem to expect women to despise themselves. They have just discovered that the great mass of women have a profound respect for themselves and each other; and that their leaders have a profound belief that the whole country is the worse for their exclusion from a recognized position in politics. They are very angry at the discovery; but their anger will only serve to show many unobservant friends how much evil was covered by that insidious entreaty to *wait*. Let those who have not considered the subject think for a moment what this

waiting means. It is not we who are indifferent to the passing of the Franchise Bill. On the contrary, we who suffer from want of representation sympathise more strongly with the unrepresented than any man in possession of a vote can do. We know well that there was nothing to prevent our being enfranchised together but the bitter feelings of a few men in office. But we look forward, and see a fight whose duration it is impossible to tell, before the Bill becomes law. What then? Will the obstructives be any more willing to listen to us than now? Not at all. "Don't stand in the way! We must have a Re-distribution Bill, you must wait!" The Re-distribution Bill gets under weigh, hot party contests take place over it, and it will be unlike any other great discussion if it is not delayed and complicated with foreign and other affairs. Somewhere in the midst of things comes a dissolution, and the general election, and the whole country is in a ferment. The most sanguine soul does not expect that this reform business will be got through till two, three, four, sessions have been consumed by it. And after that, what will be our position? Of course, we cannot expect the newly enfranchised to be very much more enlightened than their social superiors. One and all will say "We are trying a great experiment, we must see how its works: and you, you must wait!" Wait! we have waited for seventeen years; and what have we done in that time? We have converted great numbers of men in all parts of the kingdom, in all ranks, of all varieties of opinion. (Our education has, indeed, been chiefly successful with Liberals; but the education of the Conservatives, begun by us, has just been carried to a point very near completion at a forcing pace by the Government.) We have done an even greater work; we have found a voice for the host of women who cannot speak for themselves, we have taught the gentlest that their right to think, and to say what they think, and to try to make their thought effective, is as absolute as that of the strongest; we have brought hope to hearts almost broken; we have held up a steady and an ever-broadening light, which guides tens of thousands of women and girls safely through that tangled maze of poverty which is more

dangerous to them than to men; we have turned that light upon the dark places of the earth, and it is beginning, at least, to scare away the foul things that lurk and watch for their prey. The specific gains of legislation obtained during that time, by the same people and practically under the same influences as the suffrage work, are not, any or all of them, so great and grand a thing as this moral revolution. And yet they have been great,—such an advance in acknowledging women's rights and clearing the way for women's duties, as never took place in the world before. But it was the shadow of the coming vote which added a needed element of power to the moral power of the workers. But at what a cost has this been done! Starting without any of the training for public work which men have, oppressed by the prejudices of the good as well the insolence of the bad, with slender pecuniary resources, and able to give only such portions of their time as could be spared from duties often very varying and uncertain, women have had to create their own machinery, and make the roads they were to travel upon. Every success that has been gained has cost far more to flesh and blood and nerves and brain, than any similar success gained by men. What a waste is here! But also, what a power to carry on all great social and moral reforms has been developed in this hard school! It *waits* till the door is opened, by which it shall enter upon a new and splendid career.

Now let us see what knowledge or strength we have brought out of the fierce conflict which is for the moment suspended,—out of the heat and the dust and the noise; the cross blows and the cross voting; the revelations of character unsuspected, perhaps, even by their owners; the trial of faith and truth and loyalty of that chivalrous band who preferred justice to ease. First, we have discovered that the opposition we meet with, bitter as it is, and wielding a formidable power from being lodged in certain places of vantage, is very much smaller and less serious than the most hopeful of us had supposed. The number of men professing Liberal principles who are opposed to women's suffrage on its merits, has suddenly dwindled to a surprising extent, and that notwithstanding the excessive

irritation caused by the difficulty of being popular and right at the same time. It is true that some gentlemen tell us that because we have declined to allow the question of women's enfranchisement to be delayed indefinitely, they are not going to help us to get it after any amount of delay. But whenever that feeling is not the result of mere vexation, which will evaporate when they consider the matter more coolly, it is obvious that they never were true supporters of the principle of just representation at all. The recent crisis has been a touchstone, not only of friendliness to women, but of real Liberal convictions. It has been said, "Everybody does not believe in progress, any more than everybody believes it good to love your enemy, and there must be thousands still who think in their hearts that the object of constitutions is to restrain the people from frankly governing themselves." We always guessed that there were some men who professing to believe in self-government, would like to cut out women from "the people" before they should be allowed to "frankly govern themselves," and who think that the Golden Rule must be a mistake if women claim its support. Now the severest possible test has been applied, not only to uncertain friends, but to the immense multitude of men who had never taken sides at all. The result is that, while there are plenty of people who find difficulties and want delay, there are proportionately very few who downrightly oppose women's suffrage in itself. This remarkable phenomenon proves that our agitation has followed the same course as other reforming agitations, it has undermined the walls of monopoly even at the very moment when it seemed repulsed from them. It shows that, whatever the fortune of the immediate battle may be, the ultimate victory is sure. A century has passed since Edmund Burke wrote—"It is but too true that the love and even the very idea of genuine liberty is extremely rare. It is but too true that there are many whose whole scheme of freedom is made up of pride, perverseness and insolence. They feel themselves in a state of thralldom, they imagine that their souls are cooped and cabined in, unless they have some man, or some

body of men, dependent on their mercy." It has required a century of agitations and struggles to escape from that "dependence on other people's mercy;" of uprisings against authority which called itself lawful, and honestly thought it was; of efforts to restrain power, which those who fought most stoutly against by no means wished to destroy; of reforms, which were not unmixed good, because resistance had been kept up to the verge of revolution. But who doubts that not only our own country, but the whole world, has risen into better and purer light with the success of all these agitations? Class after class has escaped from suffering and silence, and, finding a voice, has found safety and dignity, within the circle of the electorate. Class after class, having got rid of the badge stamped upon it by separation, has become absorbed in the nation, and ceased to be antagonistic. The lesson has not been lost. Tens of thousands of men are to-day as anxious to secure the same voice, the same freedom, for women as for themselves; and know that then only will the fear of antagonism, which besets less wise students of history, be wholly removed.

Next, we have proved the wisdom of continuous and persistent fighting. If we had been base enough to desert the host of women who trust us, and asked our champions to be silent whilst others were enfranchised, we should have taken the heart out of our work, we should have been flung to the foot of the hill, and had our Sisyphus-like toil to begin all over again. Some of that very large class of persons who see nothing but what is thrust very forcibly before them, have managed hitherto to evade the knowledge of our agitation, and have exclaimed a good deal at the newness of the apparition; but now the dullest has seen and the deafest has heard our claim, and the men who are sensitive to right, but, being busy, had hitherto neglected to attend to it, are listening and responding. Our ranks are drawn closer, our knowledge of each other's powers is increased, the confidence of our clients is unbroken and even enthusiastic. There are some questions of administrative detail or of experimental improvement, which may justifiably be asked to give precedence to

those of a broader nature, and resting on long-tried and deeply-rooted principles. Ours belongs to the latter class. Our claim was the very strongest that could be presented, and rested on identically the same basis as that of the other "capable citizens" whose claim was admitted. The conflict through which we have passed has made this fact abundantly clear, not only to our friends—friends of all shades and grades—but to our foes. For the first time, probably, all public men know how much we expect from the admission of women to the electorate, because they know how high and assured is the ground on which we stand. The gain of this is incalculable in making our way clear at all points, and so strengthening as well as defining our position, and in bringing to our side all true Liberals, who know that the real progress of a nation depends upon principle and not upon tactics. Those persons who, as was said of a certain French statesman, "spend their lives in coming to the rescue of the strongest," are still, of course, on the other side. By-and-bye they will come over, and then we shall know that the victory is nearly won.

In the meantime, our work must be done boldly as well as wisely. It is not conversions that are needed now, but the gathering and concentration of the moral forces of that great host of men whose judgment and whose sympathies are with us. Our friends are busy men, and this is a time of great political excitement. But, with energy and tact, we can show them that they cannot put aside or omit our just claim without doing vital injury to the Liberal cause. We can make them see that every argument they use for others applies to us; that a "principle" from whose operation a great body of people is excepted is no principle at all; that if it be the head and front of the Lords' offending that they "don't trust the people," it is as grave a fault for any body of men "not to trust" women; that there is but one guide which is safe in politics, as in all other mundane affairs,—fearless justice. We must remind them too, that indifference or forgetfulness on their part, and melancholy yielding on ours, if they were possible, would not bury the question of women's rights, either permanently or temporarily. The hope of this reform

has entered into the very hearts and souls of women, and they will find leaders or make them. We are all conscious, especially those of us who have had much experience in public work, of the rising of a great new force behind us. Women of all ranks and all countries have for untold generations believed that their wrongs were too great to be remedied on earth; and even now, when women and men have been fighting for justice, and gaining victories in that warfare, the old tradition still clings to women, that absolute justice is too great a blessing for them to possess. But a change is coming in two directions. Girls, especially of the educated classes, are growing up without that tradition of necessary submission to inevitable wrong. And all classes of busy women are awakening to the fact that they themselves are their own conscience-keepers, and the final judges of their own duty. This is wholly good in itself. But security of position is the condition of wise action; and the ever-growing work of women requires that Parliamentary representation which alone gives sufficient security in a self-governed country. There has been some talk of reviving the old cry of the first reform agitation,—“the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill.” But that Bill, the first blow delivered at the old oligarchy, made no profession of being complete; it simply enlarged the circle of trustees for the people, so as to take in a great variety of new classes. The cry was good for the times; but the present times are very different, and such a cry now would carry a dangerous fallacy. The present Bill professes to complete household suffrage,—and leaves out all the women-householders! But a safe cry, and a true cry, has been raised by a clergyman of the Church of England, who has fought for truth in other fields, “The People, the whole People, and nothing but the People!” *That* we may place on our banners, we, and all Liberals together. For all the people, men and women alike, we can fight with a clear conscience and a high heart. For nothing less can we fight, but for that we *shall* fight, until the blessing of God crowns us with success.

ISABELLA M. S. TOD.

COURTNEY,

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HOW WOMEN ARE FOOLED.

[Reprinted from the "Cambrian News," September 8th.]

Last week a deputation of women was introduced by Mrs. Elmy to Mr. Courtney, M.P., who asked him to present a memorial from them to the House of Commons praying that the parliamentary franchise should be granted to them on equal terms with men. Mr. Courtney was very civil but said "he was afraid he could not hold out any immediate hopes of doing anything himself, or of Parliament doing anything, likely to bring about a quick realization of what the deputation desired."

Women are like the teetotallers, they will not listen to me. Many of them think that it is their duty to forward Liberal movements and to work for Liberal candidates, and some of them are so anxious to be quite fair that they will not even ask for justice for themselves!

I have been telling women for many years that this sort of thing will not do. Governments never grant reforms as long as the people are satisfied without them. Women are satisfied with playing the second political fiddle, and they never choose the tune.

I know quite well that the cause of women is advancing, but they themselves are not promoting their enfranchisement by working for politicians who are opposed to them. That is not how men go to work. In Wales we return twenty-eight Liberal members out of thirty, but if the Liberal Government will not disestablish the Church then Wales will not return twenty-eight Liberals, nor half that number. Certainly not.

Women are playing with politics. They are not in earnest. Some of them have learnt the worst tricks of the official politician. I know members of Parliament who smile freely and are most pleasant and flattering to those who interview them, but who nevertheless manage to go their own way. It is about as easy to catch them as to catch eels in a bucketful of soap suds. Women have learnt this oily, diplomatic way and they think they are clever.

My belief is that reforms have to be fought for. The way to liberty is not by kisses and caresses and smooth words. Women do not believe me, but let them ask themselves whether their movement is not going backward under tactics of the manœuvring, political woman, who is a sort of bad imitation of the diplomatic man, and is seen through and understood far oftener than she is told so.

If I were a woman I would fight for freedom just as I fight for it as a man, and not necessarily with guns and swords. There is no other way. Women do not want any fighting. They think they will wheedle and kiss their way into political privileges. It cannot be done, and some day women will have to confess that it cannot be done.

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THE
PRESENT ASPECT
OF
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
CONSIDERED.

BY ARABELLA SHORE.

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PRESENT ASPECT OF WOMEN'S
SUFFRAGE CONSIDERED.

[The following paper was delivered as a Lecture at a meeting convened by the London National Society for Women's Suffrage, on the 14th of May in S. Matthew's School, Great Peter Street, Westminster, when Mr. Roebuck, M.P., was in the chair. It has been printed with very slight alterations, chiefly consisting of some remarks on the debate which took place in the House of Commons last Session on the subject.]

IN opening the subject of Women's Suffrage, my first wish is to present it in such a light that it shall not at once awaken prejudices against it; and I should wish to approach it not as a novelty advocated by a distinct and necessarily aggressive party, not as at first blush it may be considered as merely an agitation, a battle maintained by a class whose view of their due position in the world is different from that which the world has hitherto been disposed to take, and who, therefore, can expect for a long time little save uncompromising opposition, contempt, or at least utter indifference.

I hope we have passed that stage; but I wish the question not to be regarded simply as one of Women's Rights—an unlucky phrase fostering bitterness. It is a question of men's and women's rights, the rights of both to the fullest good that our social and political system can yield. It is the complement of other advances—a part of an inevitable movement, of which there can be no more doubt than of the lapse of ages or of the movement of the heavens, or of the growth of the human individual. Carrying on the idea, I may say this claim for women is only one outgrowth in a general and manifold development which resembles a tree

budding forth in all directions. We find it linked with kindred with, almost all that is good and useful in public effort and in social renovation, with consciousness of women's needs, social, material, and moral, and of the needs of the community in general. This advance cannot be stayed; it springs from a law of nature more real and fixed than that which draws a hard and fast immovable line between the spheres of the two sexes according to theories and usages of earlier and very different ages. This law that I speak of is that duties and spheres will change, expand, and modify according to the other changing conditions of human communities. In this case the recognition of this law coincides with the full operation of an established principle. What we now ask is, that the Constitutional system may be fully and fairly carried out—that the freedom and justice it is supposed to secure to all classes and individuals may not by legislative enactment be confined to about half the nation—that anomalies caused by artificial restrictions, not inherent in, not contemplated by, the original system, may be removed; the anomaly, for instance, of a large amount of the landed property of the country being in the hands of persons without political rights; we ask that men and women may not oppose but co-operate with each other in all great and wide objects for the national good.

I trust in all that I shall now say I shall appear to be speaking, as I feel, in a friendly and reasonable spirit. How, indeed, can I feel otherwise when I know how many good and wise men are helping us now; when I believe that we shall finally win our cause, and that it will be through the good will of *men* that we shall win it, of those men who compose the House of Commons—and moreover, when I see a most distinguished member of that House kindly consenting to do us the service of presiding at a meeting for the furtherance of our object.

I may as well just say what it is that we ask for—what we mean by Women's Suffrage. We mean simply Women-householder's Suffrage. That is, we ask it only for those women who have the same qualifications as give men a right to vote; for those who are house-

holders and ratepayers—nothing more. But we are argued against as though we were demanding the suffrage for *all* women; that would be Womanhood or Universal Woman's Suffrage. This would be to demand a complete change in the whole Constitutional system; and an absurd change, for it would give women the vote in cases where men would not have it. Some who perfectly understand us complain that the term, thus constitutionally limited, is misleading—False Women's Suffrage, they are pleased to call it. This seems to me rather unnecessary quibbling; the words are in fact as correct as the converse term of Women's Disabilities. But to men who reproach us with inconsistency because this definition excludes married women (all but a most minute fraction) we can only say that the laws which necessitate this exclusion by depriving wives of their property are not of our making. As to those very few who *are* householders independent of their husbands, I should myself think it just and desirable that they should have the franchise; but to ask this would be to raise quite a different question. The claim must be based on other than Constitutional grounds, and would involve all manner of issues that I cannot dwell on now. As it is, the principle that we are contending for—that sex should cease to be in itself a disqualification, will be once for all secured; and no line can really be drawn between the rights and interests of such interchanging sets of persons as the married and the single. In fine, we ask for what we can get, not for what we cannot; and we know, and those who reproach us know very well too, that to ask for more than this would simply be to ensure the total defeat of the whole bill under a storm of opposition.

To return to our general subject. This claim of the franchise has been objected to as a novelty—which no doubt it is, and as an innovation—which I shall hope to show that it is not. Every beneficial change was at first a novelty; even an innovation would be matter of alarm only till it ceased to be an innovation; and a political measure in particular becomes an accepted fact in a year or so. This fact in especial will have nothing politically revolutionary in it. It is not, as one might judge from

the language of its opponents, a new nation living apart, with laws, language, and ideas of their own, that it will admit within the pale of the Constitution; it will only increase the number of voters within the classes already enfranchised, and in those mainly of the more educated section, that by circumstances most orderly and law-abiding. A small additional number 300,000 or 400,000—that is, less than a seventh of the whole electoral body—will share with men the privilege of having a voice in the nomination of the men who are to represent us in Parliament. This will not affect the action of the Constitution or the organisation of Government; the same system of men and measures will prevail, subject as now to the approval of the bulk of the electors.

But this proposal, though denounced as a departure from the usage of time immemorial, is in truth *no* constitutional innovation. It is against no early custom, was till 1832 against no existing statute, and is in fact rather a usage let drop than a claim to be newly conceded.

“Time immemorial,” we know, does not protest against women having a vote, since the Parliamentary system has not existed above 600 years. Still less has “time immemorial” protested against women having a share, a good large share, in government, since from the earliest ages we have seen women-sovereigns, sometimes with absolute power.

In our own England we have, as the earliest form of a ruling council under the Sovereign, the Witenagemot, or *assembly of the wise*, which definition happily did not exclude women, as kings’ wives, and mothers, and abbesses sat by prescriptive right in it. There was also local government, shire, borough, and parish courts, the basis of the later system of representation; and in these women had a vote, as since in our similar modern institutions. And when Parliamentary representation was established no limit of sex seems to have been thought of; freeholders simply are named as entitled to the franchise, and freeholds, we know, might be held by women. It was a principle expressed then by our kings that “what concerned all should be approved by all.”

Whether the right was much used we cannot tell, as no registries of electors were kept in those days, but probably in times when political liberty was so imperfectly comprehended women thought no more of their vote than men did of theirs. In Henry VI.’s reign occurred the first limitation of the franchise to 40s. freeholders; the word used here to designate the voters is “people.” In James I.’s reign, which was about the time when first the idea of civil liberty began to be associated with representation, we find on two occasions, when women’s votes had been recorded, that the question was brought before the Courts in Westminster Hall, where it was decided that “a *feme sole*, if a freeholder, might vote for a Parliament man.” And in the Record Office are to be found the names of several women-electors; women even figure as returning officers.

In William III.’s time Parliamentary representation first began to be a matter of party organisation, and the system fell into the hands of political cliques, of the great nobility, of the wealthy landowners. As whole classes and masses of men acquiesced in their exclusion from the suffrage, it was scarcely to be supposed that women would make any stir for *their* rights. Their claim, then, may be said to have been simply ignored. But before the question *was* agitated, the emancipation of women (on the supposition that a right long unexercised did not exist) was first demanded in 1826 by a meeting of working men! and some thinking men and enlightened women were already raising the question in other circles. So far was the question from being settled that a lady still living, with whom I am acquainted, then a young married woman, but of the family of a burgess, once gave her vote in a borough election with no further formula than the being caused to make affidavit before the mayor that she did it under no compulsion from her husband. But when the first Reform Bill, that of 1832, was passed, there was no claim for women made in the House; and those eligible for the suffrage were in the Bill qualified as male persons. In 1850 Lord Romilly’s Act declared that all phrases betokening the masculine gender should be taken to include

women unless the contrary were expressly provided. And certainly in various Acts at the time the term "men" was used for both sexes alike, so that when in the second Reform Bill, that of 1867, the word "male persons" in the superseded Bill was changed to "men," it was resolved to put the question fairly to the test.

In the elections that followed a number of women applied to be put on the register and several recorded their votes. The case of those who had been refused registration was tried at the Court of Common Pleas and their cause was argued by several distinguished lawyers, among them the present Lord Coleridge, who held that the "women's vote was an ancient Constitutional right that had never been rescinded." And even the *Times* stated that should the plea be rejected "the nation would be distinctly committing itself through a judicial tribunal to the dangerous doctrine that representation need not accompany taxation." It did so however; it was decided that the word "men" used in different clauses of the same Act should include women for purposes of taxation, but should exclude them where a right and privilege was concerned. Thus legally foiled, the cause had to be fought out constitutionally.

This movement had already begun, though still in its infancy, when in 1866 a petition was presented to Parliament in its favour, and in 1867 it was nobly inaugurated in the House itself by that great and good man Mr. John Stuart Mill. He took advantage of the new Reform Bill then introduced to propose the striking out the words supposed to signify male suffrage only. It is said that at that time Mr. Mill was the only man who could have brought forward this claim in the House without exciting general laughter, and even he expected to find scarcely a single supporter. But to his surprise, and thanks to his splendid advocacy, seventy-three members followed him into the lobby. Since then the number of parliamentary supporters has been steadily though slowly rising. Through six successive sessions (from 1870 to 1876, omitting only 1874) the Bill has been regularly presented to Parliament by our faithful and able champions Mr. Jacob Bright and Mr. Forsyth. In 1875 the majority against it had diminished in a house of 339 members from 67 to 35

It is true that in the two last sessions the Bill was defeated, in 1876 by a larger majority than usual, and this year not by votes, but simply by a noise, the majority refusing to hear arguments on the other side, and thus literally roaring the question out. But in neither case did the House represent any change of opinion outside; the result must be attributed to special circumstances within—a very strong whip of a party which has lately proved itself exceedingly violent in its opposition to all Liberal views. But the number of its Liberal supporters had not diminished; and I believe Mr. Forsyth was right in saying that whatever the chances in this Parliament, in a new House the result could scarcely be doubtful. We shall see how public opinion has been growing if we look back the ten years of this movement. The only notice the public press at first took of it was to denounce it as the work of a few restless noisy agitators; though, as Miss Becker has well remarked in answer, in all great movements for the common good, it has invariably been the few who were restless and dissatisfied with a wrong state of things who first essayed to put it right. In private society there was at first a strong prejudice against it as there always is against anything quite new, and not well understood, a prejudice felt by women as well as by men. But there has been an active and rapid progress since, especially in women's minds, which I think every one who mixes at all in society of any kind or class can testify to, and of which the tangible signs are the increasing number of signatures to petitions in its favour. In 1874 and 1875 there were upwards of 400,000 of which about half were women's, about four times the amount of 3 years before; the two next years somewhat less, only because much less time was given to collect them, but as it is, we have had this year 235,832 signatures. Four thousand women signed a memorial to the Prime Minister in its favour, and numbers of women are coming forward to work for it in every way. These years of effort have meanwhile done us much good; they have made us fitter for the suffrage by teaching us to understand it better. We are thankful for the ridicule, even for the occasional abuse, that has been dealt out to us, it has braced us up

to prove it unjust and unwise, it has given ardour to the championship of a well abused cause. I don't mean that the persecution has been very cruel, but some amount of scorn, even of sneers and personalities, must be expected by those who come forward to maintain whatever runs counter to public prejudices. All we ask of favour is to be listened to, not shelved and ignored. We are thankful then for the bracing opposition—and still more thankful for the help which prevents this question from any longer being regarded as one of women *versus* men, the view with which it was first encountered. For men, many men, legal minded and statesmanlike men, of all parties, from the sincere Conservative to the fervent Radical, have joined our camp and accepted the charge of carrying our banner. Has it ever been known that a cause so begun, so seconded, so long and steadily and earnestly maintained by a growing number of good and able men and of the women best qualified to form a judgment, has failed of final success?

I attribute the increase of favour which this movement has met with, not only to its being better known and more talked of, but also to the increased and increasing need of it. The condition of women in England has been gradually but greatly changing with all the changes—social, political, commercial, material—of the last forty years. In this period of transition, as we may trust it is, the traditional state of dependence and protection for women is becoming less and less the rule, while freedom, power to act and the means of self support have not increased in like measure. The fact that there are nearly a million more women than men, and that fully three millions (that is nearly half of the adult women) are obliged to earn their bread, alone presents a case to which the old theory of "women's sphere" ceases to apply. The political enfranchisement bestowed by successive Reform Bills, joined with legislation promoting commerce and private enterprise, have very much benefitted the men of various classes in this country, have given them laws enabling them to protect their rights, obtain better education and higher wages, laid open to them more extensive and profitable fields of

labour, and raised them in dignity and importance in the political scale. Of course, as wives and daughters, women share more or less in the improved material condition of the men, yet legislation keeps them in the same state of thralldom and hopelessness which so often counteracts those benefits; while, as women having to support themselves, few of these advantages are shared by them. The opening of new spheres of employment to men leaves an immense number of women still to starve at shirt making for two-pence farthing the shirt, or at other almost equally unremunerative drudgery, while the higher and more honoured callings are still shut from them. And in such work as they do in common with men, even with equal qualifications and equal skill and sometimes with harder labour, they are almost invariably paid much smaller wages. Too often they are kept down by the illgrounded fears and jealousies of those very men who force their masters to give the women the most laborious and the worst paid part, or drive them from the business altogether, thus using their trades-unionism both to secure their own rights and deprive women of theirs.* Moreover the facilities for education have not been extended to women in anything approaching to like measure with men; and to crown all, that enlargement of Parliamentary representation which has so much helped to raise the position of all classes of men, leaves women the same political cyphers as before.

I do not suppose the strongest upholder of "things as they are," could point out a way in which keeping women out of citizenship will remedy such grievances as I have enumerated. But if I am asked what effect political emancipation would have on them, I answer

* Of this, if called upon to do so, I could give instances too many for citation here, but will only allude to the rules and regulations made and enforced by strikes or threatened withdrawal, all with the objects above mentioned, on the part of the workmen in various trades—as the wood engravers of London, the watchmakers, the carpet workers of Kidderminster, the factory weavers of Yorkshire and Nottingham, printers and type setters in Manchester, painters of pottery-ware in Staffordshire, not to mention such opposition as many members of the medical profession are still offering to women-students.

in general terms that in the first place, we believe the social status of women will be raised by the legislative acknowledgement of their complete equality with men. For—explain it as you will, the not having a vote, that is, the belonging to a class not considered fit to judge of or help to decide even its own affairs, is a slur and a brand which must affect the general estimation of women, joined as it is with legislation that in many points expressly affirms their inferiority. Justice to any class or individual implies, in my thought, liberty to make the most of their life, to develop all their faculties, be socially useful and personally independent. Legislation, political or social, that hinders this, is not in my opinion justice. We are not asking for legislation to favour women over men, or to force social regulations to their advantage; we only ask that it may not help to obstruct what, given free play, women may hope to do for themselves.

It is very true that a beginning *has* been made; some steps have been gained, thanks in great measure to the terrible force of necessity, and to the resolute purpose of women themselves in qualifying themselves for wider spheres, and their usefulness in some branches of public work begins to be acknowledged. But all this progress has been hampered by difficulties and opposition at every step, and I contend that the political inferiority of women renders their work much slower and more imperfect than it need be. I ask for a reform on principle to put an end to this curious, inconsistent state of things, a great advance in feeling and knowledge mingled with barbarous survivals that deny on one hand what is inevitably yielded on the other.

In two ways the exclusion from the franchise tells directly against women who have to work for their livelihood; their value as tenants is less to their landlords from their not having a vote, and cases are frequent in which they have not been able to carry on a business which had been their source of maintenance after a husband's or father's death. They have been turned out of a farm,* or a shop, or a public house, of

* The frequency of this case was denied in the late debate,

which perhaps they had been the real and successful managers; and this may often be a terrible hardship, amounting sometimes to ruin. Again, there is a growing tendency to legislate for women in restriction of their personal liberty, whether supposedly for their benefit or not, without any consulting of their wishes. One of these measures is intended as protective; women's working hours in factories and workshops have been shortened by law. For as the *Spectator* itself says of those natural rulers and protectors under whose reign of chivalry women are supposed to be so safe and happy, "experience shows that men will always make women work harder than they ought, harder than they do themselves." The consequences are that women's wages have been reduced, and workwomen often dismissed to be replaced by men. Men, not being meddled with by legislation, have been able to get their hours reduced and their wages not diminished.

The value of the political franchise for men has been so thoroughly recognised that every change has been in the direction of extending it, and the last Reform Bill admitted to it a great proportion of the working classes. By the advocates of "things as they are," the very same arguments were brought against this extension as are now urged against the women's franchise. It was said they did not want it; they were not educated enough for it; they would make a bad use of it; it was a revolutionary measure and would subvert the Constitution. But these fears have not been realised, the nation has not been revolutionised, the same class of men is returned as before, and the result is, more equitable Legislation, more attention in the law-makers to the needs and education of the people.

This just and simple principle, that all classes should join in choosing the men to make the laws which control them all as classes and as individuals, that some share in

though not, as far as I am aware, from any personal knowledge on the subject; but even supposing it to happen in comparatively few cases, it is worth citing as illustrating most vividly the violation of constitutional principle contained in this law of exclusion, which is therefore distinctly answerable for all the evil, be it more or less, involved in it.

regulating the State should be possessed by all who help to maintain it, who bear its burdens and obey its decrees—this principle is now being applied to the only class of men still excluded—the agricultural labourers,—by the proposal to assimilate the county to the borough franchise. The result of this measure, which will assuredly ere long be passed, will be that the government will consist of nearly all the men, the governed only of the women. I believe the extension of the franchise to be just and constitutional; I do not deprecate it, but I confess that unless this vertical extension is accompanied by a lateral one, I look forward to it with alarm. I think that the necessarily large masses of wholly uneducated electors that it will bring in require counter-balancing by the introduction of a class that will include more of education, responsibility, and cultivated morality; and I cannot but feel that the entrusting of the dearest, most delicate and most domestic interests of this latter class to those which include so many much less fit than themselves to judge of them, is a very serious prospect for women.*

It is commonly said that the interests of women are sufficiently represented in those of men. On many points no doubt they are so—but there are points on which the interests of men and women are, or seem to be, in conflict, and these have been hitherto decided in favour of men. Their interests do not really conflict; but when the laws that regulate the relations of two parties are made by one of them only, they will be found to embody the views of only that party, and much that is, in practice, harsh and inequitable, will be the result. “The laws of England,” Mr. Gladstone remarked “have in many points been uniformly unfair to women.” Though this unfairness is shown chiefly in the laws respecting wives and mothers, there are laws, as those of inheritance, which are unfavourable to all

* The well organised efforts which have been lately made to increase the Irish vote by putting on the voting register a larger proportion of Irish lodgers and small householders in the Metropolitan boroughs and elsewhere, will, without the necessity of waiting for further legislation, have the effect of extending the franchise to large numbers of uneducated electors.

women, postponing the succession of daughters to that of all the sons and their descendants. But I do not think, though hardships often result from this, that women are given to complaint about it. They are not ambitious to be the richest of their family, but all the more they ask not to be obstructed in honourably gaining their livelihood, and to have a wider field for independent exertion allowed them.

The strongest of these points are the laws affecting wives and mothers. Our marriage-law, which has been called, by one who is no friend to our cause, “the most barbarous in Europe” hands over the woman in person and property absolutely to her husband’s power. By Common Law the wife possesses nothing of her own. This monstrous injustice dates from the reign of Henry VIII. It was made possible, however, in some measure to evade this law by the help of the Court of Chancery which invented for the use of the richer classes a contrivance called “settlements,” whereby through special arrangements made before marriage the use of her own property could be secured to the wife, and the capital of such property was put out of the power of herself or her husband to dispose of by the institution of trustees. But wherever these special arrangements had not been made, the wife was helplessly dependent as before, and as the object of the Court was not at all to guard woman’s rights but to protect the interests of property, the unjust and barbarous principle remained the law of the land. With great difficulty, and after long resistance, some further modifications have been obtained in a state of things generally acknowledged to be monstrous and unjust, by the Married Women’s Property Act of 1870, which secured to wives the control of their own earnings, and the right to property inherited from an intestate. But this law, mutilated as it was by its opponents, is so imperfect and unintelligible, that on the whole, women are little better off than before; and the unsatisfactory device of “settlements” is still nearly all that they can resort to, expensive and troublesome as it is, often unknown to women whose ignorance of technical law is not surprising, but is a real hindrance to self-defence, and, as I said before, available only for especially privileged classes.

A husband is not liable for his wife's support while she is living with him beyond a plain bare maintenance, that is just so far as to keep her off the parish; but this law is hard to enforce, he can evade it by a petty fine, and parish relief is generally refused when it is known that the husband *can* maintain her; so that the wife may, and sometimes does, starve for want of necessaries under her husband's roof. And this law of maintenance has been made equally binding on the wife if he has squandered his means and she has either property or earnings of her own. That, in spite of the theory that the husband maintains the wife, which I have seen alleged against women's rights,* very large numbers of men live in idleness on their wives' earnings, is but too well known to those whose experience lies among the working classes.

Again, a man may, if he chooses, leave all his property away from his wife; she has no rights that can avail against his testamentary dispositions. If he dies intestate, the widow has but a half or a third, even though the whole property may have come originally from her, and the mass of it goes to the next of kin, perhaps an entire stranger.

Next, as to control over the wife's person. By the theory of the common law it is absolute, though of course some checks are provided against the abuse of it. But the husband can compel her to live with him, however bad his conduct, however wretched the place he would confine her to. He can reclaim her by force if she have left him; nay, even if he has deserted her for twenty years, leaving her all that time to maintain herself and her children.† In all these cases she is wholly in his power, unless she can prove that his violence causes her to go in fear of her life.‡ As for

* Mr. Goldwin Smith says "It must be remembered that the man remains responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children." Not legally—as many a starved wife and child know, whose "natural protector" is spending the money, which perhaps she has earned, at the public house.

† These instances are taken from decisions by police magistrates.

‡ I am told by a lawyer that a wife is not entitled to this release from a husband even in case of ill-usage if he is subject to *delirium tremens*;

those terrible cases which we now alas! so repeatedly see in the public papers of savage cruelty towards weak and helpless women, of murder by brutal husbands upon wives, I am unwilling to dwell upon them, shocked as our eyes and hearts daily are by their miserable details. But have not the laws encouraged such unmanly violence and tyranny by teaching men that their wives are their property? Do not these laws, that good men would abhor to make use of, seem meant as a warrant to bad men for ill-doing; and is the punishment inflicted by law anything like adequate to the offence? And has not the tone of conversation, of the public press, of the House of Legislature itself, been too often unfavourable to a serious consideration of the matter? Has it not been regarded as rather a funny subject than otherwise? Has not literature forgotten itself into a defence of the men who kick, pound, mangle, and massacre their wives? And when some good-hearted man brings forward in the house a motion for strengthening the inadequate legal protection for women, is he not sure to be met with jocularities, and the subject dropped as something too unimportant to proceed with?*

But perhaps the wrong that women feel most is the state of the law with respect to their children. The child is by law the father's alone; the mother has no legal right to it. He may take it from her and give it to the care of any one he will; the comparative fitness of the respective parties for the charge makes no difference. A late modification of the law (passed in 1873) enables the mother by an expensive and troublesome process—a suit in the Court of Chancery—to obtain the care of the child *if the Court see fit to award it*; but the principle of the father's paramount rights remains the same.† In a late terrible case in Scotland where a bad

because to constitute cruelty *will* and *intention* must be proved, and where this malady exists there can be neither.

* There has no doubt recently been legislative action concerning offences against the person; but this was immediately inspired by cases in which the violence had extended to men. The *Pall Mall Gazette* observed that the kicking to death of wives was often caused by the wives' own extreme ill conduct, "but now that *men* also," &c., &c.

† The first limitation of the law which recognises the father as the

father took from the mother an infant a few months old no redress could be had by Scotch law, and the Lord-Advocate opposed in Parliament any change in that law, on the ground that it was in principle the same as that of England.

Again, the mother is not by law the natural guardian of her child; the father can, living or by will, appoint any guardian he chooses; she, under no circumstances, can appoint one. We all know how this tells in cases where the parents are of different religions; if the father dies first, he can by will decide what religion the child is to be brought up in; nay, if he leaves no such directions the law still presumes the child is to be of the father's creed, and the relations may train it accordingly in spite of the mother's wishes. Can we wonder that mothers have been known to fly the country and hide themselves that their children may remain their own?

Now, in suffering this state of things to stand, I do not accuse men of wanton injustice; they have accepted the time-honoured institutions they have found, and, in true British character, are in no hurry to alter them—that is all. But to those who aver that women's interests are sufficiently cared for in a legislature of men, nay better than they could be by women themselves, I must needs point out that this state of the law is more or less acknowledged as wrong by almost every one, and that some few just minded and resolute men have, year after year, brought forward bills to remedy it; and that, year after year, the House is counted out, or the order of the day voted, or the bill thrown out, or so altered as to be spoilt and ineffective. The Act of 1870 for amending the law as to married women's property, imperfect as it is, took thirty years to get passed, and an attempt to enlarge and simplify it, by putting the law on a basis of equal justice, has just been rejected in the House of Lords.* “There is no reason,” says Mr. Goldwin Smith,

only parent was enacted in 1833, empowering the Court of Chancery, on special application, to grant to the mother the care of her child, up to *seven* years only! The age is now extended to 16, but this remedy is to be secured only by the precarious process just named.

* As a specimen of the arguments that are found to tell against us, I may mention the suggestion that a married woman, if she had her

“why Parliament should not do justice in any practical question as to women's rights that may be brought before them.” There is no reason, but that women's practical interests are not always the same as men's, and in the cases where they are not, of course the represented portion of the nation will be more attended to than the unrepresented. This is quite natural; it is, and has always been thus, in like cases. We all know how the unrepresented classes are apt to be legislated for. Such considerations are the very staple of the argument for enfranchising working men. In fact from the pressure of other business deemed more immediately important it is most unlikely that members will even make themselves acquainted with the claims and wants of women. “Wrongs will be redressed,” says Mr. Bright, “when our legislators know of them;” but it is part of our complaint that they do not know of them.

Against members in general, as I have said, I wish to bring no charge. But with respect to those opponents who most vehemently rebut our plea for equal rights, it is a strong point on our side that none of these have, as far as I am aware, ever attempted to remedy any even of admitted abuses, nor shown a sign of sympathy with the sufferers, nor have, in short, ever come forward in any matter in which women are concerned, except to resist their appeal, and sometimes even with scorn and contumely. The very contrary is the case with those true Liberals and sound-hearted Conservatives who are helping us now.

Having thus stated the nature of our claim and some of the grievances that we desire to see remedied, I must now inquire what are the objections brought against it. Waiving those that I think have been answered in my previous statements, most of them may be summed up in what I may call the *ad fœminam* argument, as thus:—“All that you say as to unenfranchised classes and Con-

property in her own power, might leave her husband and set up in a shop or a business with a man whom she called her cousin for a partner. This argument, or whatever it may be called, seems to have a peculiar charm for our legislators, as it was repeated from a debate of some years ago in the Commons, where it met with equal success.

stitutional rights would apply to men, but not to women, on account of their sex." If you ask why, you are generally told that women are not fit to vote. To this perhaps a few words furnish a conclusive answer—women are held fit to possess property, and the possession of property is the only fitness required for the vote. But if we press for particulars, we are met by the great Nature-argument; we are told of the peculiarities of our nature, our conditions, our duties, and our character; that is, in other words, our physical and mental inferiority, our home sphere, and our political tendencies. I will endeavour to encounter each of these arguments in turn.

Now I do not, of course, deny the natural differences between men and women. I do not deny that certain works, especially those of which the sole, or chief qualification is physical strength, will best belong to men. That is so obvious, that there is no fear of such works being transferred to women, and we need not legislate to keep them in men's hands. I humbly think that Nature, so fondly referred to by our antagonists, has marked, and will always keep marked, certain broad general distinctions, and we shall realise much better what *are* the natural limits, when artificial restrictions are removed. Nor am I arguing that women can do all that men do; but I ask that what no one denies that they can do, they should not by law be hindered from doing.

But one would like to know when it is so glibly said that Nature is opposed to this or that, what is meant by Nature. Is it ancient usage or established convention, the law or custom of our country, training, social position, the speaker's own particular fancy or prejudice, or what? And when Nature has been defined, one would like to have defined what particular actions are, or are not, against that aforesaid Nature. It seems that for a woman to manage property, carry on large businesses, be a farmer, a merchant, a parish-overseer, a clerk in various capacities, a municipal elector, or member of a School Board, or even a Sovereign, is not against Nature, but to give a vote for a Member of Parliament is. I once heard that great, comprehensive,

tremendous statement, uttered loudly and emphatically at a great public meeting by a worthy gentleman—I cite him only as typical—that "the female suffrage was against the laws of God and Nature." But if it be not against the laws of God and Nature for a woman to exercise the direct, simple, sometimes absolute power given by a seat on the throne as she has done "from time immemorial," to use the favourite phrase of one of our opponents, can it be impious and unnatural for a woman to have an infinitesimal share in regulating the machinery of the State which controls us all? She will not make laws, she will merely help to choose the men who will help to make laws for us. Our opponents say that this is a demand for women to govern men, but as this Bill would only add to the electoral body by less than a seventh, they must know very well that there is no possibility of that.

"I hate women who meddle with politics," said Napoleon to a witty French lady. Napoleon, we know, strongly maintained that nature forbade women to have anything to do with politics. "Ah, General," she replied, "you men sometimes have a fancy for cutting off our heads, and we women would like to know what it is for." She might well have said, too, that women might have something to say to State Councils that sent thousands and thousands of those they loved best to be massacred. Ours is not so extreme a case, but we feel that politics means legislation, and that legislation enters into questions in which we have a right and a necessity to be interested. We cannot separate domestic politics from social conditions of life. If then we are told that we have nothing to do with politics, we can but answer that politics have a great deal to do with us.

As for that mental inferiority imputed to our sex—the mind hopelessly closed to logic, the incapability of taking large views, the want of a sense of justice, are these considered an inherent peculiarity belonging to sex or not? If they are, it would be idle to suppose that any woman ever did, or could do, political work, or any large general work, at all; the point is settled irrevocably, in spite of all historical and present examples to the contrary; and

all the women who have shone in various departments of thought, science, and action, must be dismissed as monstrosities. But if it only means that by general experience there are more men found qualified for such work than women, then it is but a question of more or less, and as there is not a logical, nor any kind of intellectual, franchise for men, we may dismiss this argument as irrelevant. And it will also be open to question whether this supposed inferiority of ours, as difficult to prove as it is easy to affirm, is not the fruit of present, long-continued, but removable conditions. We ask that Legislation may cease, by positive restrictions, to make it impossible for us to judge of or to modify, those conditions.

The second argument drawn from our sex is that well-known one called by Mr. Jacob Bright, the "spherical argument." He reasoned excellently that we could not practically draw a hard and fast line between men's and women's spheres, they intermingle in the business of life, there is much occupation, many interests, much work necessarily in common. This phrase of "women's sphere" is the most indefinite of phrases, often the most inconsistent with facts. It varies with every age and every country. In India, for instance, we see it carried out with the most rigorous exactitude according to the men's notion, and the result is, that in the working classes women have all the toil and drudgery; in the upper classes they have the home-sphere in perfection—that is, utter confinement and seclusion.

With respect to the home as the woman's natural sphere, there is a semblance of truth in it which the fact belies. At least, that sphere is by no means her domain, for as wife and mother she has, as we have seen, no legal power, hardly any legal rights. Nor am I aware that our "women's sphere" friends mean anything more than that she is to be the chief working subordinate, by no means even an equal authority in it. So that this distinction seems to result in man's keeping the supremacy in every sphere to himself. But granting this "home" to be our sphere—as to many a woman it is a safe and happy one—our antagonists have failed to show how

the giving of a vote every four or five years, or even taking an interest in politics as much, let us say, as men commonly do, would take a woman out of her sphere, or prevent her fulfilling its duties. Moreover, since to a large and increasing number of women this sphere is denied, the restriction amounts for them to the exclusion from any. Mr. Goldwin Smith says that our business is now to distinguish between men's and women's spheres. Surely, this process has been going on with more or less rigour since the world began; in the face of the fact I have mentioned, and many others, it might perhaps now be useful to ascertain what is their common ground. No doubt, the home duties must be, and always will be, performed, but it is a misfortune, not a glory, if a woman finds it necessary to bound all her thoughts and cares to it; that is, to a very narrow range of personal interests. But every argument founded on the home importance of woman, as the educator of men, and her moral and social influence as man's companion, points to the necessity of her having a sense of wider responsibilities. She cannot educate men who are to be citizens without some knowledge of what citizenship is, or some feeling of citizenship herself.

I come now to the third class of alleged disqualifications of woman, her moral character, and her political tendencies. I have sometimes sat to hear Bills of Indictment drawn against women, to which it is almost a sufficient answer to say that a political dogma that rests on the depreciation of half the human race stands self-convicted of fallacy. And besides, our opponents contradict themselves, accusing woman alike of too much imagination and a want of it, of tenacity and fickleness, of cheese-paring economy and reckless expenditure, of selfishness, and unreasoning sympathy. Between all these I think we may strike a balance and conclude that her faults and virtues are those of human nature in general. But granting the favourite charge that she is more emotional and impulsive than man, what then? Can the more or less of qualities common to the race make the one half of a nation fit to be represented, the other not? Is the Irishman disqualified for a vote, because he is more impulsive than the

Englishman? And may not this variety in the proportion of qualities be an advantage rather than otherwise? May there not be a danger from the exclusive preponderance of a certain set of tendencies, and may not the infusion of a new moral element sometimes strengthen the higher considerations which might be in danger of being postponed to merely commercial, or other self-regarding interests? Women have no sense of justice, it is said, and will vote according to their feelings; is that worse than voting according to the sense of drink or to sensibility to a bribe? Will an occasional triumph of sentiment, as a moral feeling is generally called, in the region of politics be more fatal than the triumph of self-interest of the lowest kind?

But then there are the political tendencies of women, and here again our antagonists contradict each other; for some allege our political apathy and want of public spirit, and others our furious reactionary fanaticism. The metaphysicians have, in fact, stepped forward with certain philosophical theories, evolved, I think, from their own inner consciousness, and proving chiefly the desire to justify a foregone conclusion. The language of these theorists implies that man is, properly speaking, all human nature, with all his faculties perfectly balanced, and woman an imperfect anomalous accessory, a bundle of instincts always foolish, and mostly mischievous. I need not say that the opposite theory regards the two sexes with their, not contrary tendencies, but different proportions of the same, as making up human nature, and presenting such a unity in diversity as, co-operating in the world's work, must produce the finest results. But let us see to what conclusions the first mentioned theory, boldly pushed to its extremes in the hands of one of these philosophers, leads him. According to him *all* women are as *one* woman with no variety in thought, feeling, or opinion, and all—I am quoting his admired words—"by a deep and permanent cause, the sentiment inherent in the female temperament," at once Tory and reactionary, and also revolutionary and anarchic, and disposed to loosen the marriage ties. This abstract woman, who is like no concrete woman that I ever saw or heard of, has, it

seems "no love of liberty or law," desiring only the personal government which her weakness needs; therefore, all women will, as soon as the vote is granted them, band together to oppose those personal governors, and against *their* will and in defiance of *them* troop to the poll to "demolish free institutions," and "put an end to all franchises whatever."*

I imagine we shall, most of us, be a little startled at finding ourselves all classed together as one Conservative, priest-ridden, idiotic animal, who, if a modicum of power be granted it, will rise up an insane firebrand to "overturn the institutions on which the hopes of the world rest." But I venture to think that even if the mass of female voters were to be so incredibly silly as he gloomily pictures them, men would manage to out-vote them. Ours is not a nation in which rampant folly on vital political questions is allowed to have it all its own way. However that may be, I think the general common sense will dismiss the whole grand rhetorical hypothesis as founded on an enormous assumption which no facts have yet justified. I believe, and I think most women, and men who are really acquainted with women, will agree with me, that women vary as men vary, that they are moulded and modified by the same diversified influences as affect men, birth, education, family-belongings, social atmosphere; and that, these variations apart, Englishwomen are of the same race as Englishmen, and partake of the same strong national character. So that, on the whole, Magna Charta is not likely to be repealed by the female descendants of those who won it for us.†

Finally, what these metaphysicians and rhetoricians seem to forget is that to the large majority of women—

* My readers must not think I am exaggerating. I have given the statement almost entirely in Mr. Goldwin Smith's own words. His article is full of equally astounding assertions as to historic or existent facts; but I have not space here to point them out. Nor is it necessary, for that piece of rhetoric is, I imagine, nearly forgotten. But the above theory may, and does, reappear in various shapes.

† The results of the School Board elections have curiously falsified Mr. Smith's vaticinations. The *Spectator* attributes to the disappointment of the reactionaries the increased acrimony shown by the Tory party in the House against Women's Suffrage.

voters the claims of practical life will be much more present than political visions and abstract principles; that their votes will represent not only a sex, but members of classes with the interests belonging thereto, landowners, farmers, traders, shopwomen, and hand-workers, persons who are likely to be quite content with the general institutions of their land when they do not press too hardy and directly on their own moral and material well-being, which free institutions are much less likely to do than arbitrary ones.

Others of our opponents, as I have said, dwell on our incapability of sympathising with great causes, our natural apathy about politics, and, at the same time, our stagnant Toryism. This, one might say, is adding insult to injury. We are excluded from all practical share in politics, we are taught that they are not our concern, our "sphere" as it is called, we are brought up in perfect ignorance of them, and then we are reproached for our indifference to them! I might rather wonder that we care as much for politics as we do. It needs but for an intelligent man to be in the habit of talking in his family on such matters, for the simplest and most unassuming women to take an interest in them. But—want of sympathy with great national causes! Have there then been no patriotic women in England's history? Do not our hearts beat for our country, for its welfare and its greatness, for its defenders, for their sufferings, their perils, and their glory, just as strongly as any man's? I do not think many men who have themselves great causes at heart will echo such a complaint.

As for the indictment of universal Toryism, if it be true that there are more Conservatives among women than among men, this cannot to the true Liberal be a just reason for their exclusion. What business have we to make or maintain laws to exclude the political party whose views we dislike? Try and educate them rather to a better view of things is what we should say about an excluded class of men; and if our Bill pass, I dare say my liberal friends will look to this in future in their own families.* But it is no part of my argument to

* It is obvious that till a practical test of the political tendencies

decry this phase of political opinion or this habit of political thought. It may well have its tender, its generous, its useful side. What I am concerned with is to show that it is with women, as with men, a phase dependent on their social and intellectual conditions, not on the "inherent temperament of sex." It would be more fair to say that in politics women ordinarily adopt the opinion of the men around them than that all women have but one opinion amongst them. If this leads generally to Toryism, we can only say that on Constitutional principles the party that has a majority in the nation has a right to a majority in the House. But conversation, books, journals, joined to all the quickening influences of varied society, are rapidly giving women the power of forming their own opinions; and it is a certain fact that for the most part the highly-gifted and enlightened women who, in their own spheres, lead public opinion, are thorough Liberals.

Even should a Conservative Government, in giving a vote to women, temporarily strengthen their own cause, we shall not be alarmed, believing, as we do, in those general permanent laws, which necessitate progress, yet restrain political excess, maintain, with us, in the long run, a due balance of forces, and have always rendered it impossible for even the most extreme partisans, when in the ascendant, to introduce a real and lasting reaction.

There is one more argument that I must notice which has been rather in favour with literary journals. It is this—that the basis of government is physical force, that is, personal strength, and therefore women being physically the weaker are unfitted for the franchise. This is alarming, for physical weakness, combined with legal inequality, seems to ensure not so much protection

of women is arrived at by admitting them to record their votes, such generalisation is incapable of proof, but remains in the region of assertion and speculation only—as, for instance, when the Liberal representative of a Welsh county said that, though he *had been told* that in Wales women were mostly Liberal, he *had been told* also that in England they were all Conservatives. The contrary assertion has lately been made by many Conservative gentlemen in London, who *have been told* that women would generally be Liberals.

as oppression. But what is meant by physical force being the basis of government? I have always thought that government was designed to *supersede* physical force, that civilization meant the reign of law instead of that of brute-strength. Public opinion, moral restrictions, mental power and organisation, make up now the forces on which government rests, compared to which bodily force is simply nothing. This would be going back to savagedom, indeed. Doubtless, before communities were formed, the man who could knock the other down would have most power. But, as soon as people began to live in an orderly way together, it was the strongest headed, not the strongest handed, man who became chief of the tribe. The titles of our first rulers, the eorls and ealdormen, imply not that they were the most muscular, but the oldest, and, therefore, the wisest, and our Witenagemot ("assembly of wise men") was formed on the same principle. Physical force is one of the instruments kept in reserve by government, and the government may be that of a woman or a weak old man, and be none the less secure. Our Cabinet ministers are not chosen from the men who can knock each other down. Depend upon it, it is something more than muscle that keeps society together, or we are living on the brink of a convulsion. If all the muscle of the nation were pitted against the brain, no doubt the women would go down, but so too would all the men of intellect. But I do not fear any such divorce between brain and muscle. The classes who most represent the latter have quite enough of the former to know that the law is still stronger than they; and they respect it accordingly.

And, after all, what connexion has this theory of physical force with Women's Suffrage? with the vote given by a small fraction of them, legally and constitutionally, in an orderly and settled state of things? Does it mean only that none are to be represented but those who can take by force what they want, or defend by force what others attack? This would exclude from the suffrage all sickly men, and most men above 60. But the embodiment of physical force, soldiers, sailors, and police, have no vote. It would be just as fair to

say that women ought not to have property, because, if men wanted to take it from them, they could not defend it by force.

But the philosophers have invented some curious imaginary cases to support this theory. They say that, if women have the vote, they will be sure to attempt to pass some absurd law. That they will force candidates to pledge themselves to it, the House of Commons to pass it, the Ministry to sanction it. That the physical force of the nation will rise in revolt to overturn the Government, and thus all Government will be rendered impossible. This prediction of skill in political organisation and combination beyond that of men, to be shown by the sex asserted to be least interested in and most incompetent for politics, and the assumption that, if half the nation are lunatics the other half must be imbeciles, I think, we may dismiss, in Miss Fenwick Miller's words, as "speculation run mad."

Perhaps I ought to take some notice of the speech made against us last year by our most distinguished opponent, Mr. John Bright. It will not require much notice, for I cannot think that he was speaking his best, or that his arguments would have much effect, except on minds previously biassed. He dismissed, however, the political objections, which he considered groundless, and rested his case on the "sentimental" argument. He dwelt on doubts and uncertainties as to what might follow from such a beginning. Surely, this is not the way in which he would regard concessions made to men. If the concessions are, in themselves, just and reasonable, he would trust to the same sense of justice and reason which caused them to be granted to prevent concessions which should be neither just nor reasonable.

In fact, the only two distinct objections that Mr. Bright brought forward were—first, that this demand is based on hostility to men, and will cause still more hostility; secondly, that electioneering is too vile a business for women to have anything to do with. As to the charge of hostility, it amazes me. We ask that we may help in the choice of men to maintain a masculine Government. We are not demanding the vote that we may elect women instead of, and in opposition

to, men. Hostility! Why, all we ask is to be gained from and through men, and men are helping us now—husbands and wives are working side by side. Is not the hostility shown rather more in the refusal than in the demand?

But Mr. Bright thinks that, as soon as men have shown their generosity, their justice, in raising women to a level with themselves, the women will be armed against the men, and there will be discord and enmity everywhere. To paint this discord in sufficiently alarming colours, he has to travel far beyond the four corners of the Bill. He pictures a household with the father and mother voting different ways, and the brothers and sisters quarrelling in consequence. Does he really mean that we are to legislate to prevent there being a difference of opinion between the men and women in one family, or, rather, to prevent women from expressing a different opinion from the men? At present, assuredly, the men and women in a household can differ about politics, and about things which interest them far more deeply than politics—religion, for instance—without quarrelling. What, then, is there in this vote—given at an interval of years, and done with—to change human nature so entirely? Love depends on the thousand daily incidents of life, not on the abstract opinions of people who, in nine cases out of ten, have no strong interest in such matters. If a man is a kind and just husband, he need not fear his wife's estrangement because he votes Whig and she votes, or would, if she had the power, vote Tory. Mr. Bright thinks the fact of our legislators having mothers, wives and daughters must prevent their ever being unfair to women. Yet, he will not allow that women's having fathers, brothers and sons will prevent their arming themselves against men.

But Mr. Bright's second objection—that against women having anything to do with the processes of choosing a member—raises more serious considerations. If such grossness, violence, and corruption are, as he says, inherent in the present political system, it becomes a question whether Representative Government is a thing that ought to continue, or whether *men* are fit to con-

duct it? I need not say that *I* do not admit either alternative at all; but, in taking for granted that the whole thing is necessarily so bad that even a man must feel shame in having had anything to do with it, Mr. Bright makes the most damaging admission I ever heard from the lips of a Liberal. But have we not found, to the credit both of men and women, that, on social occasions, whether of business or pleasure, the presence and participation of women have helped to soften, purify, regulate. Will it not be the case here? It is allowed that, since the ballot, the election day no longer presents the objectionable scenes that it once did. May we not hope that the previous process *need* not be such as it will disgrace a woman to have to do with? Let us never, no, not for a moment, acquiesce tranquilly in the necessity of evil accompanying the performance of any work, public or private. Let the desire and effort that women should concur in this work be a pledge of efforts equally strong to lift it above all that can tarnish or debase it.

The other speeches against us in the debate of 1876 do not call for much notice. The arguments were not new nor very profound, and were mostly such as, I think, have been sufficiently answered in the foregoing pages. One of these speakers, indeed, said that, when the majority of women wished for the vote it could not be refused them. But how are honourable gentlemen to discover that majority? The almost impossible task is set before women of *letting it be known* that the vote is wished for, without *showing* that they wish for it. No such paradoxical test was applied to *men* when it was decided that it was fit and just that the great majority of them should have the suffrage, whether they wish for it or no. But, in our case, petitions are scouted as no test; all agitation is regarded as the work of a few restless women, meetings and speeches are ridiculed; the many women of culture, thought, and feeling, of social energy and devoted benevolence, who desire it, are passed over as unknown, or put aside as exceptional, or branded as masculine. This last assertion has not, I believe, been made by any men whom we have reason to respect, nor will it, I

hope, deter us. The causes that move us in this matter lie deeper than such men's words and thoughts can fathom. And if to have a warm interest in great national and public concerns, and to wish to help in them with our best work, is to be masculine, then let us be masculine, and be proud of being so. No virtue ought to be monopolised by either sex.

The debate of last session presented no such distinguished opponent as Mr. Bright, and, as we have said, the state of mind of the House was not favourable to any calm and serious discussion of the claim. But of the speeches that were made, and the articles in the press that followed, all had this in common, that they ignored the Bill before them and its provisions, to dwell upon something that it did not contemplate. In fact, they could make out no case whatever if they did not do so. So they "rose upon a wind of prophecy," making general alarming assertions, which involved the three well-known assumptions—1st, that women would form the absolute and great majority of the voters; 2nd, that women, having, instead of human nature, a peculiar feminine nature, would always act as one woman, and opposed to men; 3rd, that political arrangements can change nature itself.

The fears that may be entertained by good-hearted and reasonable men of a deterioration in that which they love and admire, though we may think them erroneous, are entitled to respect; but we cannot yield a like deference to that noisy majority which made one ask whether we were governed by brains or by strength of lungs, and suggested the painful doubt that "masculine" and "manly" were not always convertible terms.

But there was somewhat more of novelty in some of the newspaper arguments on the subject, and I propose to examine those of two of them, the *Spectator* and the *Times*. That of the *Spectator* is indeed the old one of physical force, but now formulated into a very distinct political principle. The writer in this journal, who appears as our regular opponent, at any rate never drops the character of a man of culture and a gentleman; I desire therefore to answer him as seriously and cogently as I can. I will first quote his argument: "Women can

only obtain the franchise by persuading men to give it them . . . and so long as men choose to refuse their demand, they have no means of enforcing it. This of itself constitutes, at all events, an initial difference between the cases of men and of women who are denied it. The nearer Parliament comes to a proportionate representation of the forces which, if there were no Parliament, would govern the country, the nearer it will approach to a perfect machine for its own purpose. . . . When the middle class was refused the vote they demanded, they could threaten a march from Birmingham to Westminster. When the artisans were refused the vote they demanded, they could demolish the Hyde Park railings." It is assumed as usual, of course, that the women electors will be the majority, and that their vote will be given *en masse*, not divided like men's, and he further illustrates his point by a case which he assumes will be frequent, if not normal, in which it will be opposed to that of the majority of men's.

Put shortly, the above statement means that the paramount claim of any interests whatever to the attention of the Legislature is founded—not on force of reason, nor on the justice of the claim, nor on a numerical majority, nor on anything but the possibility of violence. The argument, then, leads to this or nothing—that no political class of measures may exist, save such as the classes disposed to violence (if such there be) may tolerate. On this showing, the government of England is the rule of a Parliament tempered by fear of mob-violence. Our political condition, such as it would be if there were no Parliament, which pathological condition the *Spectator* tells us is to regulate the actual representation of forces within it, would be, of course, either personal and despotic rule, or anarchy caused by the predominance of the brute-force element, an element which I thought Parliament was instituted, not "proportionately," that is preponderantly, to represent, but to control. Carry out the above argument, and it follows that we must live under a mob-tyranny. For, of course, the working classes—I name them because it is of them that it is assumed that they would menace violence—could threaten a demonstration when they believe their interests assailed, whether they have

a vote or not; and in these cases, says the *Spectator*, "it is wise to yield rather than have a state of permanent civil war." Thus, if the lower classes were to demand Universal or Manhood Suffrage, they must have it because they can use force to insist on it. The *Spectator* admits that in that case we shall have a worse House of Commons, indeed he thinks it already worse in proportion to the lowering of the vote, but that it must be done because Parliament must "accurately represent the forces out of doors."*

I should have said that the allowing matters to come to such a pass as to necessitate hasty concessions to popular demands, in order to prevent civil war, exhibited not government in its normal action, but the absence of any real government at all. That our Constitutional system is so framed as to exclude any such alternative, is shown by the fact that the lower stratum of society have not exercised this power of rule by intimidation even in days when they really had just cause of complaint. Had those demands of the people, which the *Spectator* has instanced as successful, not been just and reasonable, it was the duty of the Government to resist them, to resist, if necessary, lawless mob force with organised and law-sanctioned force. It was not because the people threatened to march from Birmingham to London or broke Hyde Park railings, but because those demands were just, and, being just, were backed up by a great force of opinion in the educated and influential classes that the Government felt they could not take the responsibility of refusing them. This principle, as embodied in our practice, will I think sufficiently guarantee the safety of a Constitutional system of which women's votes should form a part.

But the *Spectator* writer gives us a test, which he seems to consider crucial, of the mischievous working of female participation in politics. Here is the great Eastern Question, and the national feeling about it. All women, it is asserted, would vote for the use of force

* May I suggest that certainly one element, that of the "roughs," was very "accurately represented" by the majority in the debate I have been speaking of.

in aid of the oppressed Christians—most men would be for neutrality, and thus a dead-lock or a riot, or, at the very best, a simple nullification of the women's vote must ensue. "For (he asks) do we suppose that in such a case the men would quietly submit to be forced to war by the women, the men who fill our armies and navies, and pay the taxes?" Does not this able writer forget that women too pay taxes, or have the same interest in the payment of them as men, that our armies and navies are voluntarily filled, and that *they* are not the classes that we find most averse to war? But, in short, it is utterly idle to talk of a direct opposition in this matter, or anylike matter, between men and women; there is no such sharp division of opinion as it is, and not the remotest desire on any woman's part to go to war on one side or the other. Does he suppose that while the great mass of the nation is saying, "Let us keep out of war," a chorus of feminine trebles will rise in the midst to cry, "No, let us rush into it!"

But supposing that in any disputed question the small contingent of the women's votes should help to turn the scale, and this could only be if the party were a very considerable one already—what then? Is a good measure nullified because women may concur with men in passing it? Is a bad one less dangerous because men only have had the passing of it? And what is this more than the usual course of constitutional action as now regulated? Does it not constantly occur that the views of one class of voters will help to determine the preponderance of some line of policy? Have not the illiterates and the public-house customers in great measure returned this Tory House of Commons? It is true that the *Spectator* writer must in consistency approve of this, because *they* are the classes from which violence is possible; women belong to the classes which have neither the will nor the power to make a disturbance—they belong to the propertied, the pacific, the educated classes; therefore, they must not have a vote. But does not this apply to classes of men just as well as to women? Might we not on this ground eliminate clergymen, old men, and sickly men? We can make a class of them at once for purposes of disqualification.

Clergymen, especially, might be supposed likely to vote as a class, and not in accordance with working men, and are not likely to support their opinion by violence; yet we do not fear Constitutional ruin from their vote. Nor surely are our working classes such wild animals as to trample down law and society whenever they do not get their way, and crush the women to begin with, as the *Times* kindly assures us they will. Before this happens, England will be no longer England, and whether men or women have a vote, will then little matter.

The *Times*' article is too long and declamatory, and, I must say, too little to the direct purpose to quote; briefly, its assumption is that we always are, or are going to be, in a violent state of conflict, of either external war, "blood and iron," or of internal fury, stormy meetings, and the like, when a rough vote, not a gentle one, is wanted, and women must be put aside altogether as having nothing to do with the matter. This, of course, is an argument concocted to suit merely the present moment, and could not have even the semblance of force at any other. Such a state of things (if it ever exists) must, one would think, be quite exceptional in our age, in our country, under our system of government, amidst our well-organised community. The very principle of the Constitution is to give all interests free play. We were once told (as I have shown) by the *Times* itself that property must be represented; now we are told that the vote should be not for property, but for bodily force. We had hoped that in our present stage of civilisation brain as well as force would have its influence, that old men, feeble students, men of peace, might give their votes safely, and yield their best help to their country's councils. But, no! it is absurd to take into account anything but passion and violence and brute force. This, then, is the age of "Sturm und Drang" with a vengeance!

The *Times* further says, "Here are men wrestling in rude arenas, in stormy passion, in daily and nightly excitement, and women in domestic calm, quietly and theoretically revolving the questions which are arousing the deepest passions and interests of men." And it asks,

"Are both these classes to have votes alike?" and adds, "We submit that such a division of labour is preposterously unfair." Might we not paint the picture a little otherwise, as thus—"Here are men rioting, raving, and roaring in public-houses and the like, in strong irrational excitement; and here are women feeling, thinking, and suffering at home on matters which are of equally deep and vital interest to *them*; and is it a fair division of labour that they should have no part in the question but to suffer, while the roarers and ravers are to decide?" It seems to me that if women can think and feel earnestly on these subjects without going into a passion or a public-house, they have, so far, a better claim to be heard.

We know, indeed, very well that the noisy brawlers do not represent the real governing forces, least of all on occasions of critical importance. But the *Times* has, it appears, a particular objection, on occasions like the present, to what it calls, "gentle philosophical votes." It is new to hear women's political characteristics thus described, we have generally heard complaints of their preferring sentiment to reason, and of the danger of "hysterical" politics; but it seems we are to be hit hard on every side. Parties, it appears, are now furiously divided, some savagely disposed for war and bloodshed, others as fiercely bent on neutrality, for it is assumed that no men are, or ought to be, calm on this subject. Why we are to be especially given up to physical force on an occasion like this, which, as the *Times* justly observes, is "a matter for statesmen, not armies, to decide," I really do not know. We read of a Queen Elizabeth, who, like a statesman as she was, kept the balance between peace and war in far more perilous times.

But I am not the least disposed to admit that we are, or are going to be, in such a state of violent agitation and of discord between men and women, from expectation of a war which will drive all our peaceful civilians into the field, and turn the whole body of women into nuisances to be carted away. I see nothing in this, any more than in our normal state, that will make the vote of an orderly taxpaying law-obeying part of the community other than useful and proper.

The last point that I have to mention on the whole subject might as fitly have come elsewhere; it may be urged by others (as it is) as an objection to our claim, it may be urged by us as a social grievance. We are, it is said, not educated enough for the franchise. But what is the standard for a man? Not to be able to write his name, or even to read it when written, but to understand the mark made for it. That is all the education required for a male elector. Compared with this, the female standard will be that of high cultivation. No doubt women might be better educated (as well as men) but if in truth we are less fit than the humblest artisan, whose doing is it but that of the political and social legislation which has fixed our status for us, just as formerly the want of education of the lower orders, as they were termed, was the work of those higher orders who had undertaken to manage everything for them? The importance of education and of providing the means for it, whether for general culture or special training, has been recognised by public opinion for men, but not for women, otherwise than of the most imperfect and superficial kind. But women are not content with this, and are trying their best to improve it. They are struggling with immense difficulties—difficulties from that trades' unionism which shuts them out from established general institutions, from the means of special training, from the use of endowments lavishly applied for the other sex, difficulties from the indifference of the State, and still more from the indifference of the public. Yet, unhelped, at least* at first, save by the private exertions of some good and wise men, women have struggled on, showing alike in those who are working for others and those who are working to educate themselves, some of the most valuable qualities that could be applied to its own work by the State, such as will at least surely enable them to understand what they are doing when giving a vote.

I think the history of the long-continued, earnest,

* It is with pleasure that we notice the liberality of various public educational bodies in offering their advantages, as has recently been done, to women-students.

piteous struggles of women for an education which, for many, means absolutely bread to eat, which for all means usefulness, refinement, elevation, happiness, will justify me in saying, that *not till women are of some political value will their education be regarded as a matter of national importance.*

THE arguments that I have now dealt with singly, may, I think, be summed up together as the expression of a not unnatural, though unreasoning prejudice, shaped either into a robust denial of facts, or a contradiction to that common sense which is applied readily enough to other subjects, or a chain of purely speculative and fanciful hypotheses. But there is one argument that has been less touched on than any other, which yet is more worthy of reply as having a wider scope and being built on more rational premises. It may be said—Mr. Bright, indeed, has said it—that a nation has a right to choose how it shall be governed, whether by one man, or by few, or by many. But the nation *has* chosen, long ago, and most decisively and permanently, that it shall be governed, not by one man, or by few, or even by many, but by itself—that is by *all*, as it understands the word *all*, which is, in fact, all who, as it is said, have a stake in the country; it remains then only to decide how that government by all shall best be organised. But the objectors, those who wish to regard all institutions as yet on their trial, will argue that the condition to be first sought in a system of government is the selection of the best powers in the nation for the purpose of governing, that the representative system has in its very nature a tendency to make such a discovery and selection difficult, and to expand itself beyond its nucleus of the fittest, and that the larger the non-selective admission of popular elements is made, the less effective is the governing power; and that the exclusion of women as a body is to be justified on this principle.

To which we answer first, that a still greater and more vital principle underlies all our ideas of government, and that is the liberty of the governed, which appears to be essentially connected with that expansion from which the exclusion of half the nation is a mere anomalous departure.

Secondly, that if our system had been designedly framed on the principle of the selection for government of the best powers in the nation, which includes of course the rejection of the worst, and the exclusion of women had been decided on as part of that method, whether as a legitimate deduction from the premises, or on proof of unfitness from experiment made, there would at least be consistency in this view. But, in point of fact, as I have said, the object of our constitutional system was not to construct a machine for securing the best and choicest instruments of rule so much as to ensure to the ruled a share in the work with the rulers. And as no such principle of selection or construction was present at the first formation of national representation, nor in the further modelling and extension of it; as the exclusion of women has been an undesigned and accidental feature of the same, derived neither from reasoned conclusion nor from trial made, and inconsistent with its real first principle, the representation of property; as not exclusion but expansion has been the law of its growth, in accordance with all other national conditions—this exclusion of *one* element together with the ever-increasing admission of others still less select, to which the quality of the government resulting from their choice must more or less correspond, does not tend to the improvement of the representation, but does tend to the depression and depreciation of the one class that is thus marked as inferior to all classes of men, and so far to the unsatisfactoriness of the legislative result, and to the injury of national freedom.

Granting the inherent imperfections of a representative form of government, it is certain that it is the only one that the nation will recognise, that the result of all progress has been to strengthen and expand it, and that if the tendency of such expansion towards a democracy is regarded as dangerous, the exclusion of the only remaining element which would not be democratic is not more politic than it is just, any more than is the deliberate rejection of social and civil powers which undoubtedly exist, from the field where they would have their highest as well as most defined and best limited exercise.

To go back briefly on the whole subject. These terrors expressed as to women's being in any way mixed up with men's affairs and with public business, all start from a point of view which we are passing away from. In fact, the barriers that once enclosed women are falling spontaneously and inevitably on every side, and what they *can* do, they will and must be allowed to do. When the ground has been conquered in so many other directions, when women have proved themselves worthy comrades of men in intellectual work; when they have a thought, a will, often a voice in large movements, beneficent organisations, social reforms, it really seems to be a kind of old-fashioned pedantry to refuse them this one sign of equality with men before the law—this proof that they too have a part in all that makes for a nation's greatness and prosperity.

And now to draw to a close. We have been told of women's indifference to politics, and especially to the possession of a vote. We hear of the "few women who desire it." I do not know that those who say so have taken any pains to ascertain whether they are few or many; I have already given some proofs that they are not a small number, and that they are growing.* I believe that those who think them few, and affirm that they find the "best women" against it, have inquired—if they have inquired at all—only amongst the strictly drawing-room class, the ladies at ease, with every comfort and enjoyment, and knowing perhaps but little, at any rate taking no account, of the classes who have none of their advantages. Without disputing their merits, I should say they are the women who have in general thought least upon the subject. I find indifference co-extensive with ignorance, and obstruction the result of indifference. I find that the two classes whose opinion ought to have most value on the subject are most in favour of it. These are, first the women of cultivated thought and practical usefulness, who have given their attention and

* Here, indeed, I might quote Mr. Mill, who says: "If only one woman in twenty thousand used the suffrage, to be declared capable of it would be a boon to all women."

their powers of work to women's needs, and to public and social questions as connected with them; secondly, the women who from their social position suffer most from that man-made law of which the object has been to enforce the rights of men at the expense of theirs. For this is not a "ladies'" question, it is a "women's" question, and I and many others know how the working order of women feel their practical grievances, and how they would hail any change that promised to amend them. And I am sure that those who are now indifferent, because uninformed, on the subject, will feel with me when they realise what is wanted, and what help can be given.

How can we help them? There are legitimate womanly ways by which women who have no desire, perhaps no power, to do what men call "descending into the arena," can further this movement for the benefit of their sex. They can sign petitions—this is the constitutional method provided whereby individuals and classes can, without any kind of agitation, violence, or publicity, make the Legislature acquainted with their wishes. Again, they may use their social influence in a way no one thinks unfeminine—they may persuade; I do not by persuasion mean coaxing, but appealing with our hearts in our words to men's reason, and best feelings. Let us remember the wife of Croke, one of the judges on Hampden's famous trial for his refusal to pay ship money. He would have yielded to fear, and given judgment for the King, but she adjured him not to sacrifice his conscience for fear of injury to his family, saying that she was content to suffer any misery with him rather than that he should violate his integrity. What she was in those fiery times that tried the metal of all hearts, let us be whenever occasion may arise—that is, helpers of others in the path of devotion to duty.

I conjure then all those, men and women alike, who have not thought much on this subject before, to think of it earnestly now. I conjure those who are already working to work on without discouragement, confident of the result. Let us think of the great causes that have been won by sheer hard struggling year by year,

begun by one or two high-hearted men, carried on by a determined band, secured at last by the voice and sanction of the nation; all won by the same process that we are now pursuing—steady, peaceful, constitutional effort. The Abolition of the Slave Trade, perhaps the purest and noblest cause ever striven for, was a work in which women aided men; the passionate humanity which dictated their efforts was common to both. Again, the first Reform Bill was a people's success; this cause was fought for with more partisan violence from the strong class feeling which the struggle excited. But what was notable in it was that such an extension of the suffrage as the creation of a £10 borough franchise, and a £50 rent county franchise was thought at the time so revolutionary as to endanger our ancient Constitution, yet it proved so insufficient as to be changed in thirty-five years for our present rate-paying, and £12 tenant's franchise. But the most perfect example of a legitimate and successful agitation for a political object was that of the Repeal of the Corn Laws, an act which gave bread to starving millions. All these great causes were triumphantly and gloriously won, and the secret of the success was the intense, glowing, inspiring zeal of those who believed in them. Let us have faith and fervour like them.

I believe the heart of the country is with us; but after walking among these safe, smooth social fields, we have to knock at the iron gates and pass through the thorny paths of the two Houses of Legislature; and there we may again be baffled for the time, nay most probably shall be. But till we have conquered we must not relax our efforts. I shall be content, as one of our supporters has said, "to die in harness," certain as I am—as certain as that the sun will rise to-morrow—that the progress of enlightenment, liberty, and justice, will not long continue partial and one-sided, that ignorance, frivolity, and unreasoning submission will cease to be the portion of one sex and the delight of the other, and that this subjection of half the race will, like other barbarisms, melt away into the darkness of the past.

ARABELLA SHORE.

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“Taxation without Representation is Tyranny.”

*(Article republished by the Hammersmith Society for Women's Suffrage),
from the "Leicester Pioneer," August 19th, 1905.*

EVERY class of society, and every interest—trades, professions, temperance, trade unions, labour, etc., appears more determined, more single-minded in its efforts to obtain Parliamentary representation than the class which outnumbers all of them put together, and includes most of them (that great division of the community called women), does to claim its equality in citizenship by insisting on electoral rights. Great problems are being discussed every day with an ultimate view to legislation which primarily concern women and children. The absurdity of relegating to masculine discussion and legislation such questions as municipal milk supply, the establishment of public crèches, the feeding of infants generally, the labour question as regards married women, and their place in the general economy, would be obvious and undeniable were it not that men, and even a large proportion of women, are blinded by the force of old, but out-worn custom.

Had women, and married women especially, only possessed a vote on the existing electoral basis, I feel convinced that the discovery now just being made by the medical profession and the nation, viz.: That the persistent strain on the attention of small children, even in educative games, in the enforced obedience of sitting still, and in following a routine at a very tender age is injurious, would have been brought to the front and rectified years ago!

The consequence of all this cramming has been to dull the brain, ruin the eyesight, enfeeble the constitution, and increase the amount of infectious disease among children. The mother has been allowed no right of private judgment—but compelled practically in all cases to furnish a medical certificate, for which, in many of the small ailments incident to infancy, there was absolutely no necessity, and which she could ill afford.

Care thus bestowed on a child's early symptoms, as lassitude, irritability, headache, etc., may mean the warding off of an acute illness, and the mother ought to be the arbiter. Legislation in this matter has been hard and unjust to the more thoughtful and devoted mothers, because it has been constructed chiefly to coerce those whose indifference to the welfare and health of their children was above the average. This, however, is hardly the way to uphold and encourage parental responsibility and solicitude. The ill-effects of this compulsory system at so early an age are now staring the nation in the face, and yet it seems as though we are likely to have other enactments as baleful in their ultimate effects as those they will supersede.

Naturally and inevitably, this must be the result if the voice of only one-half of the community is heard on these questions. Now, the point that concerns us as women is, how can this urgently needed reform—*Women's Suffrage*—be most speedily brought about? For years it has seemed as though women were on the point of obtaining their political rights, when it has been relegated to some future date by a derisive manœuvre in Parliament, or by neglect and contempt. But the nation, of which we are half, can afford to neglect this question no longer, and to laugh it into oblivion the masculine half shall not dare; for if we women are wise we, through our suffrage societies, shall say to them—"You ask us to spend our time and energy in teaching the most ignorant among women their duties as mothers, to instruct them in the feeding of infants, in hygiene, in a better knowledge of their responsibilities as citizens, as wives, etc. We believe, however, that the causes of this ignorance are so complex that their solution demands the united efforts of brain and judgment of both sexes, and while we, as women, agree with you as to the present sad conditions of life, its physical and moral deterioration, etc., we shall, without doubt, be at issue with you on many points—both as to its primary causes and its most effectual remedies.

If you call upon us, as women, to aid you, staggered as you are by your own half-hearted legislation in the past, we will gladly do so *on our own terms*, not on yours. Place us first on equal conditions of citizenship with yourselves (without any disqualification as to sex), and we believe that the united effort of men and women to inaugurate a better era for all classes will then take the right direction towards its fulfilment.

Physical improvement, wider mental and spiritual outlook, these great reforms must come by the political and social comradeship of men and women; but as long as women remain in a state of subserviency before the law, this desirable consummation cannot be achieved.

We are women before we are Conservatives, Liberals, or Socialists, and we will give political assistance to no candidate of any party who will not pledge himself definitely to vote for Women's Suffrage."

Passive resistance has been tried now, and has succeeded in bringing forward many useful reforms, and women, as well as men, have been found willing to submit to fines and distraint of goods on the Education question.

Does it not seem strange that on an issue, the beneficent results of which would eventually be felt in every class, and almost in every home in England, women householders in every part of the country have not yet formed themselves into a Strike Organization to obtain their rights on the present electoral basis, and have not yet refused, *en masse*, to pay rates and taxes until they have obtained them?

Considering the immense wealth some women possess in their own right, and the publicity necessarily resulting from distraints of such magnitude and in such numbers, the derision would speedily fall on those who, from prejudice and masculine arrogance, have so long deprived themselves of the co-operation of women on equal terms.

In feudal times *women* were the chief administrators—the châtelaines, while their male relatives spent years in foreign countries on crusades or on pilgrimages. Their position involved authority, administrative capacity, and decision of a very high order, and women have not altogether lost these inherent qualities.

In these days the domestic affairs of the city and the nation are but an extension of the administrative functions of a feudal châtelaine, and in shutting women out from direct participation in this work the male half of the community has become so distracted with the outcome of its own futile efforts to cope alone with these problems, that it is calling frantically for some most fantastic, drastic, and unnatural remedies.

But mark—the arrogance remains as yet—legislation to compel women to do this, and to avoid that! This is the masculine idea of a solution; but it is too Patriarchal in character to be worthy of serious consideration in the present age. Let us, therefore, persistently remind them of a better

one, and one infinitely more appropriate to the present stage of evolutionary progress. Applying the beautiful and prophetic words of Tennyson to a true comradeship between men and women for great national and social purposes, let us ask them to call us to our rightful participation in administrative and legislative work in his words:—

“Henceforth thou hast a helper, we, that know
The woman’s cause is man’s: they rise or sink
Together, dwarf’d or god-like, bond or free:
For she that out of Lethe scales with man
The shining steps of Nature, shares with man
His nights, his days, moves with him to one goal,
Stays all the fair young planet in her hands—
If she be small, slight-natured, miserable,
How shall men grow?”

Ah! how indeed? But the final solution lies rather in the poet’s words than in the temporary expedients devised by a Physical Degeneration Commission, and, as women, we reply:—*Work no more alone!*

“Our place is much: as far as in us lies
We *both* will serve them both in aiding her—
Will clear away the parasitic forms
That seem to keep her up but drag her down—
Will leave her space to burgeon out of all
Within her—let her make herself her own
To give or keep, to live and learn and be
All that not harms distinctive womanhood.
For woman is not undevelop’t man,
But diverse:
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;
The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;

And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time,
Sit side by side, full-summ’d in all their powers,
Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
Self-reverent each, and reverencing each,
Distinct in individualities,
But like each other ev’n as those who love.
Then comes the statlier Eden back to men;
Then reign the world’s great bridals, chaste and calm:
Then springs the crowning race of humankind.
May these things be!”

That they still remain an ideal, instead of a reality, is due to the fact that men persistently block the pathway to their fulfilment.

EDITH K. ADDERLY.

W.S.C.

AN HISTORICAL RETROSPECT.

The qualifications entitling voters to be registered for Parliamentary elections in Great Britain at the present time fall broadly into four groups—Freeholders, Freemen, Landowners, Occupiers. The development of these groups shows the exclusion of women to be not an ancient usage but a modern innovation.

To take the groups in their order :—

(1) FREEHOLDERS.—The earliest statutes regulating the election of Knights of the Shire (7 Henry IV., c. 15) expressly mentions *suitors* as persons qualified to be electors, suitors being freemen who owed suit to the County Court. Many instances occur both of women attending these courts, and also of women themselves holding courts.

The next statute on the subject (10 Henry IV., c. 2) uses the word *People* (*gentz demourant et reseantz*) dwelling in the county and having freehold of forty shillings.

The 7th and 8th William IV., c. 25, uses the words "all *freeholders* there and then present." The Act 18 George II., c. 18, says no *person* shall vote without having a freehold estate of forty shillings.

(2) FREEMEN.—By 3 Geo. III., c. 15, *persons* claiming as freemen to vote must have been admitted to the freedom of the city twelve months before they can be admitted to vote. The qualifications which admitted to the freedom of cities varied greatly from city to city, but nearly all were as applicable to women as to men, before the Municipal Corporation Act of 1835 reduced all to a rigid uniformity and express limitation to *male persons*.

Thus in York it was *every child* born after the father had been admitted to freedom of the city, and in Cardiff

* Reprinted from *Englishwoman's Review* of April 15th, 1892.

and Carmarthen every person who had served an apprenticeship of seven years to a freeman.

In Shrewsbury, in Haverfordwest, and other places, members were returned *by inhabitants paying scot and lot*.

The Corporation of Leicester went out of their way in 1661 to record their opinion that it "was not thought fitt that any women be hereafter made free of this corporacon."

In Dublin many women have had the freedom of the city, as readers of this journal will remember (see REVIEW of November, 1889, and January, 1892).

(3) LEASEHOLDERS AND COPYHOLDERS.—The Reform Act of 1832, in extending the franchise to £10 lease and copyholders, did so to *male persons* only, this being the first occasion in which this phrase appears on the statute book in regard to electoral qualifications. "Suitors," "people," "persons," "freeholders," "freemen," all were words of general application. "Male persons" was of a distinctly limited application; the old electors might have been women; the new electors could only be men.

(4) OCCUPIERS.—The Act of 1867, by which household suffrage was extended in boroughs, used the word *man*. Was this to have the wider or the narrower interpretation? The failure of Mr. John Stuart Mill's effort to have "person" substituted for "man" left the question still undecided, especially in the light of the Act for shortening Acts of Parliament, which lays down that where the contrary is not expressly stated, words importing the masculine include the feminine.

In hope that the wider interpretation would be admitted, 5460 women applied to have their names placed on the registers in 1868. The revising barristers took divers views of the position, and a test case, *Chorlton v. Lings*, was brought before the Court of Common Pleas in November of that year.

Mr. Justice Bovill ruled that there had been too long usage to the contrary.

The agitation for women's suffrage dates from that time.

The position of women before the electoral law of Great Britain has therefore gone through four stages:—

(a) The stage when women used the right of voting where circumstances put it in their way—a period coinciding generally with the Plantagenet and Tudor dynasties.

(b) The stage which set in with the Stuarts, and which might be described as the period of disqualification by discouragement.

(c) Then follows that of disqualification by enactment—that is to say, the period from the first Reform Act of 1832 to that of 1867.

(d) Finally, the period of constitutional agitation for enfranchisement.

The period embraced by the first stage affords many instances of important public duties and responsibilities devolving on women, including often the despatching of military contingents to the king, the defence of castles, the control of gallows. Such duties make greater demands on the powers of capable citizens than the return of a "parliament man," even when that "parliament man" is returned by the sole vote of the lady of the manor, as in the oft-quoted case of Dame Dorothy Pakington. This was a period which culminated with the period of highest culture, whether for men or women, ever attained in former periods of our history.

The second stage set in with the Stuarts, and the struggle between King James I. and Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset, Montgomery and Pembroke, is typical of the change of tone towards women. Nicholaa de la Haye was entreated by the king to continue in the office of Sheriff of Lincoln. Ela of Salisbury was appointed Sheriff of Wilts year after year—but Anne Clifford had to do battle with the king for rights which were hers by ancient inheritance. She acted fully up to her motto "maintain your loyalty, preserve your rights," and withstood alike the attacks of Cromwell on her castles, and the efforts of Charles II. to impose an unwelcome member on her constituency.

But she stands alone. Education deteriorated rapidly in those days of social strife and unrest for both men and women, and it was longer for women in rallying again. This second stage, in fact, em-

braces the period when education was at its lowest ebb. The third falls at a time when many functions hitherto treated as private privileges were passing into the region of public duties. It came at the close of the long period of educational depression which had not tended to prepare women for new responsibilities.

But the period of agitation has coincided with a very marked change, the efforts of the last twenty-five years have brought the education of women to a height never attained in England before.

Moreover, ancient usage has been reverted to in all matters of local legislation. Their disfranchisement has been mainly due to change in the responsibilities attendant on property, not to change in the attributes of women. And not to change in their attributes, but to recognition that responsibilities cannot be withheld from any large portion of the community without detriment to all, will their future enfranchisement be due.

GENERAL ELECTION, 1900.

WHY should six million Occupiers and Owners have Votes and one million Occupiers and Owners not have Votes merely because they are women?

In every respect their responsibilities to the State are the same. Why then should they be treated differently by the State?

The present General Election admittedly turns chiefly on the War. It will not be denied that the women of Great Britain have shown themselves as patriotic, as willing to take their share in the anxieties and burdens of the War as the men, and it is difficult to see why those of them who have the same Parliamentary qualifications as men should not now be allowed to express their opinion on it in the only really effective way—by the Vote.

Some may say, "No, women have not taken active part in the War, they have not fought, and therefore they have no right now to take part in the nation's council."

But what percentage of men have taken active part in the War? At most 250,000, out of 6,000,000—1 out of every 24! According to this theory only soldiers should vote, and the 5,750,000 electors of Great Britain should be disfranchised. This theory will not commend itself to the electors.

Also, although women do not serve their country by fighting for it to the death they serve it and die for it in another way. Every year thousands of women die for it in the undeniably necessary work of keeping up and increasing its population; while a still larger number are injured for life and their health wrecked.

It is not, I think, sufficiently realised that the risks to life and health of the mothers of Great Britain are greater than those of her soldiers. Taking any century or half century, far more women die for their country in giving it 'life' than its soldiers die in dealing death to its enemies. So that as regards the claim of "service to the nation," the mother's claim is fully

equal to that of the soldier; and although the majority of mothers would be debarred from the suffrage during their husband's life—seeing that they are not “occupiers,” and so have not the requisite qualification—this does not apply to widows. During the last year very many of those who have fallen in the War, or been injured for life, are the sons of widows. Yet these widows have no vote in this Election.

Lastly, women occupiers and owners, whether widows or spinsters, have had, and will have, to pay for the War precisely the same as men. On the recognised principle that there should be no taxation without representation, *either these women should have a vote or else be exempted from taxation.* The Chancellor of the Exchequer is hardly likely to approve of the latter course, but if women must take their share of paying why should they not take their share in voting?

As to “unwomanliness” and “women keeping in their proper place,” it seems to be thought quite right and suitable that women should attend Election Meetings and canvass—Candidates and Election Committees never seem to have any doubt on this point—and why is it not equally right and suitable that they should carry out their work for a candidate to its conclusion by the simple and surely not unseemly act of putting a mark on a piece of paper and dropping it into the polling box!

One can only hope that the day will come when men will realise these things, and be willing not only to give women political work, but to give them political votes.

M. TAYLOR.

Chipchase, Oct., 1900.

On Feb. 3rd, 1897, the second reading of a Women's Suffrage Bill was carried by a majority of 71.

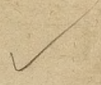
| | For the Bill. | .. | .. | Against the Bill. |
|--------------------|---------------|-----|----|-------------------|
| Liberals .. | 69 | .. | .. | 37 |
| Irish Nationalists | 18 | .. | .. | 11 |
| Conservatives | 115 | .. | .. | 91 |
| Unionists .. | 26 | .. | .. | 18 |
| | <hr/> | | | <hr/> |
| | 228 | | | 157 |
| Majority in Favour | .. | 71. | | |

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PAMPHLET

WOMAN'S CLAIM.

(Reprinted from "The Contemporary Review," for February, 1881.)

By EMILY PFEIFFER.

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WOMAN'S CLAIM.

HITHERTO, when the women to whom the larger interests of Society are dear, have expressed their desire for an extension of the suffrage in their own direction they have very commonly been met by the assurance that they belonged to an insignificant minority, the sex being on the whole indifferent, if not averse to, the active assumption of citizenship. The overflowing meetings which have taken place successively at Manchester, in London, and elsewhere, must at this stage of the discussion go far to silence objections founded on a premise which every passing year is rendering more erroneous. But, whatever might be the show of hands if the issue were polled throughout the country, it is not so much the amount as the quality of adherents which determines the success of a movement, and it would not be impossible to show that the greater part of all the force of intellect and character known by public proof to exist among Englishwomen, is warmly pledged to this woman's cause.

It may be conceded then as a fact, that the desire on the part of the daughters of England to be no longer excluded from participation in one of the rights which her sons hold dear, is a genuine and increasing one; and in face of the manifest mental and moral worth of its chief advocates, the assertion—a favourite retreat of nonplussed disputants—that the “best women” are still hostile to the change, must be acknowledged to be likewise untenable. I will not darken counsel by affecting to misunderstand what is meant in this connection by the “best women.” They are the home-loving and tender creatures to whom fate has been good, and who find their highest joy—no very difficult strain, as it may be thought—in the performance of the duties of wifeness and motherhood, undeniably the most accordant to Nature of any that can plenary a woman's lot, and at the same time so bodily and spiritually engrossing,

that those who well fulfil them may be forgiven if they tend to somewhat narrow the view and contract the sympathies. But whether the outlook of these fortunate sisters may happen to be narrow or wide, it is probable that the larger-hearted advocates of women's right to make their political judgments regarded, would think little of yielding the place of honour, in the estimate of the selfish or unthinking, to the happy band from whose ranks it is possible that chance or a more fastidious taste have exiled themselves. A circle which includes a large contingent of unpaid workers who are helping forward the best interests of humanity in many fields, and whose representative woman may be taken to be Florence Nightingale, will in any case be felt to be sufficiently select.

The men whose pleasure it is to affirm that "good women" are in want of nothing, are far however from disclaiming the testimony to the same effect of beings who cannot be called "good," without putting an undue strain upon language, and who have of women neither the pitiful heart nor the helpful hand, but only the weakness and arrested development. These are the careless sisters of the millions who "work and weep," for working and weeping are only separately apportioned in a ballad, or in the quasi-poetical atmosphere which stagnates in places about masculine thought; these are the "sitters at ease," whose lives are given to self-pleasing as an end, and to flattering the humours of the men of whom they are the complement, as a means; who are callous to misery which they deem not likely to affect themselves, and have no aspiration higher than the false ideal which is the negative of manly vices. It is in the nature of such factions to be loud and prominent, and so to create a false notion of their numbers and weight; but happily for our hopes and for the prospects of humanity, those of the sex who, while neglecting their nearest ties, are utterly without what in the cant of science is now known as the "tribal conscience," are a minority, unworthy to be counted in the sum of opinion on a question of this nature and extent.

It may be taken, then, as a fact to be dealt with, and one which is presenting itself with increasing urgency, that a vast number of those who represent the noblest and tenderest womanhood among us, are dissatisfied with what has come to be the injustice of their position in view of the new social developments which have brought with them new needs. They are dissatisfied, that while they have no choice but to obey the natural law of development, the arbitrary laws under which they live remain rigid in their regard. It is no great thing that is required to put the lives of women in harmony with their altered conditions. The claim that widows and spinsters, when independent holders of property, should exercise the right of voting for Members of Parliament, carries so much of reason on its face, that it is difficult to see on what ground it could be withstood, other than that of a panic fear of results against which it might be supposed that Nature had sufficiently provided. This demand for the possession of the suffrage by widows and spinsters was the whole of the plea advanced at the meetings referred to, — a plea not

simply put forward for the nonce, as we are sometimes warned, but one which there is reason to think honestly represents the extent of the claim as made by the majority of its female advocates. That widows and spinsters, as women, and possible wives, are in a better position for judging of the wants of women, whether single or married, than men, who must always view them chiefly in relation to themselves, few I think will contest. It is not asserted that the arrangement which would restrict the suffrage to single women householders would be a perfect one, but only that it appears to be the best which the nature of things permits of, and it may be presumed that a certain intuitive sense of fitness, together with a feeling of the sacredness of ideals possessed largely by women, would help them to cut the Gordian knot of a logic more tough than that presented by the limitations which marriage would be suffered to impose upon them.

Marriage is something more than a partnership—it is ideally a union; and if in the imperfection of all human relations, it fails in part, sometimes fails wholly, to fulfil its promise, it remains, fiction or truth, the lever which beyond all others has been effective in raising the moral nature of man to the height at which the sacrifice it enforces, can alone maintain it. Whatever may be the diversity of opinion in the domestic interior, however much the "No," pertinent or impertinent, may enliven the sameness of marital discourse, it will be felt I think as seemly, that while the marriage tie remains in force, no authenticated record of disagreement should go forth from the home to the world. But the sphere of a woman is so enlarged by marriage, her dignity so increased by motherhood, that it is little likely this renunciation of one of the rights of citizenship on accepting a partnership for life, would be accounted so deep a hardship as objectors would have us believe. The ear of the husband is found by most wives to be very conveniently within reach, and if the quickened interest in political questions which the change would inevitably spread among women, bond and free, should furnish another subject of possible variance, the same may be said of each one of those interests, intellectual or moral, which separate the cultivated women of our own clime and age from the odalisque and the squaw. That the too-tardily effected, and still very imperfect regulations in regard to the property of wives, imply a possible separation of interests incompatible with perfect union, is self-evident, but all our dealings are with an imperfect order of things, of which it is our difficult endeavour to make the best. This imagined union can, in Protestant countries, be openly dissevered, and the bitterest wrong has resulted in cases where the rupture of personal bonds has been confessed, while the legal tie maintaining the community of property—by which is meant its absorption by the man—has been held intact. When injustice, gross as that which can even now creep in under existing laws, has been rendered impossible, not by an invidious special act of the woman purporting to be married, or of her friends, but by the

providence of a protecting law—no more than an honest confession will have been made, that we are seeking to provide against possible flaws in work which has to be built up of doubtful material. It is no part of the duty of society, in the abstract, to enforce upon its members by external means, the undeviating cultus of its purest ideals; the piety which exalts them must be the growth of the individual conscience.

Women are still sometimes roundly told that they have no grievances, and asked what it is they can want which it lies within the competence of the suffrage to give them. Like Shylock, "I will not answer that." There is little to be gained by going over that ground of old wrongs which has often led to bitter question. I will not even more than point in passing at the burning injustice which can wrest from the woman's grasp the child who, bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, is the fruit of her labour and sorrow. It is, or ought to be, sufficient that women are awaking to a consciousness that their interests are unrepresented, and suffer in consequence; that they feel themselves aggrieved by their position—illogically maintained in the face of altered conditions—of a separate caste; and that they demand to join their judgment to the opinions of men on questions of social policy, and to add their experience to those same opinions on matters with which it is their special function to deal. To this end they seek to give weight to their views in the authorized fashion; they claim to count as an element in the constituencies with which members of the Lower House have to reckon. There are rocks ahead, no less than evils behind and abreast of us, and the dangers which threaten society in the shaking of the old faith, the loss of the old sanctions of conduct, and the overturning of the old ideals, are dangers which must press with something more than equal force upon its weaker half. If women must labour, and run risks with men, they demand to have something of their security, or at least to have free hands for the fight. They do not wish to struggle in bonds or to fall helpless into any pit which may open. They are not likely to exhibit a dangerous impatience, such as could be supposed to imperil the vessel of State, even if the share of power demanded by them were to be more than that fractional one of which there is now question. Their natural position in the scheme of things may be taken for a guarantee that the impact of their influence upon political questions would be consolidating rather than destructive. But if they presumably will not hurry on the wheels of progress, it is something that they may be expected to help in keeping them upon the rails. It is reasonably certain that the interests of marriage, for instance, would be more jealously guarded by women, single or widowed, than they would be by men; and is it too much to say that on the *maintenance of that institution rest the higher hopes of the race?* Life has this in common with Art: that the continent of a supreme law, to which voluntary obedience is rendered, is essential to its most perfect development. Time was when the praise of marriage would have been superfluous as the praise of sun-light; now it seems not

wholly irrelevant to point out in what its essence consists, and what its observance has done for us. It has its source in the highest capacities of our nature, love and faith, of which last it is on the man's side the most signal human expression. The heirs to a man's worldly possessions and to the treasure of his affections, the beings for whom he works and strives, and for whose abundance he is contented often to go bare, he takes as his own upon the trust reposed in the woman of his choice. That this sacred trust is on the whole so rarely betrayed, that the marriage bond is so widely respected as to cause the sense of risk to pass practically out of view, is a circumstance which is adding, slowly and surely as the generations succeed each other, to the sum of that faith by which man as man must live. Let the elected partnership once lose its nobly sacrificial and sacramental character, let the caprice of man or woman claim to be its own law, the discordance of habit or opinion felt on the satiety of passion its own dispensation, let the man be free to shake off a yoke that irks, and the woman be emancipated from the guardianship of herself as the shrine of his dearest hopes, and what becomes of the strength of individual will, increased by struggle and conquest, which has been lifting us higher and higher above the unregulated instincts of the brute? If the woman of the future is to be held, and rightly held, accountable primarily to herself for the preservation of her own truth, and if the notion that dishonour can come to any separate soul through other than his own act should be exploded, it can never be forgotten that the companion of man is the priestess of a temple whose desecration is his ruin. No State is known to have risen to greatness, that has not had "the family" working to its own increase, and diffusing itself as a vital organic element within it, and the family can only exist with the definition necessary to its effective action, through the state of marriage. The woman alone will not suffice for its head; without the husband the circle of family is incomplete, and without the family there can be no order in human relations, no permanence in human affections, no strength of self-restraint or forbearance—in a word, no virtue. The nomad of social institutions would spread disorder as a plague. As for love, the great regenerator, love which is

"Half dead to think that he could die,"

it is easy to conceive the sorry figure that he would be likely to make in any such time-bargain in place of marriage as that which finds advocates among certain moralists. In such a case there would be no lover's vows to move even the laughter of Jove; at which I think the earth no less than the heaven would be sadder. When the time shall come that we have cast away the marriage pledge to progress, it is presumable that we shall have commenced our downward course, and be on our way back to the ascidian, and through that to some wholly molluscous creature preparatory to the final extinction. It can hardly be doubted that the sentiment of love is deepened and exalted by the voluntary sacrifice brought to it by lovers in marriage. What is here

contended is, that a human pair, in placing this seal upon love and faith, taken in its moment of efflorescence, are unconsciously drawn into the current of that stream which sets towards progress, and are making, unknown to themselves, an offering of individual liberty in the interests of the race. That a philosopher here and there, his vital energies having chiefly run to brain, should find rest by his own fireside with the companion of his experiment in life and their offspring, proves nothing for the probable permanence of unlegalized relations among the masses, with whom erratic fancy might be expected to be rather stimulated than controlled by culture, and who would in any case not be living under the check—stronger than law itself—of a thesis to uphold.

All women must deeply feel the plague-spot on our social system, for which, according to the moralists cited, the abolition of marriage is the remedy; it is a grief and shame to the best of them; but it is too vile a thing to be cured by *dispersion*. A French writer has said: "The virtue of woman is the finest invention of man." The thing is indeed so good, and men owe so much of the firmness of their moral fibre (by inheritance) to the particular power of self-restraint which goes under the name, that they would be entitled to high credit if it were of their making. Regarding it, however, not in the light of invention but discovery, we may hope that before humanity finally deflects from its upward course, it will be found that there exists a due capacity for its evolution in men; and every social movement crediting the authority of women would naturally tend to encourage the spread of such a growth.

It is possible that the men who have so long elected to be the visible providence of the other sex, have done what they could in its behalf; but it is difficult to estimate human needs wholly from the outside, and having always been legislated for as creatures apart, our common humanity has failed our "keepers" as a serviceable guide to our requirements.

Women are dissatisfied not only with what has been done, and with what has been left undone for them, they are also dissatisfied that they, toilers and sufferers, should be left to the self-dependence of labour and sorrow without a voice in the Government to which they are accountable. Their right to labour on other fields than the barren patch into which they were until lately crowded, has been tardily conceded; they now demand to have a word to say in the making and administering of the laws by which the fruits of labour are protected. It is not well that there should be this widening breach, this growing sense of hardship.

If there is no class of men possessing to the full what they stand in need of, or with whom changing circumstances are not perpetually calling into play new requirements which demand to be met by new expedients, the conditions and necessities of women are even more fluctuating, and they feel that the time is come when light should be shed upon these intricate problems from within. They inherit faculties trained by house-

hold and educational cares, and know themselves fitted for the exercise of the function they demand to share. It is not a matter which calls for the employment of the comparative scale which men in our day seem so eager to apply to the endowments of their female companions. There is no earthly need that an intending voter should give proof of high dramatic or musical genius. It may be that the creative energy is less strong in women than in men, but that is quite beside the point at issue, and carries with it no implication that the female understanding is less proper than the male for nourishing the germs of thought, for forming a nidus for the ideas everywhere present in the air, and for presenting them clothed in shapes well fitted to act upon the material forces around us. As a matter of fact worth much theorizing, the women now employed in offices of trust, whether on the School Board or elsewhere, are proving themselves good administrators, steady workers, and as sober of judgment as their male coadjutors.

The evils of a complicated social system are great, and the difficulty of dealing with them sore. It may well be that such contingent of help as women could furnish, if they were more fully free to do so, would have a very inadequate effect in mitigating human ill. But many of those who are not called upon to bear the brunt of ills in their own persons, feel the burthen of them as pressing upon others; and it is waste of motive power, as it is pain and wrong to the modern woman, whose cultivated sympathy is often alive in every nerve to the shames and sorrows of society, to deny her right to put her untried strength to the wheel. If there be anything on which all noble-hearted human beings, whether men or women, are agreed, it is in a vast regret that the alleviation of social suffering, the purgation of social sin, is a work of such slow advance. It is folly in such a case to repudiate the help of willing workers, the folly becomes cruelty when the power to act upon circumstances is denied to those upon whom the suffering presses most hardly, and of whom the payment of sin is demanded with overwhelming interest. But while the women at the front of this movement, women who have long been fighting an unequal battle, and have had their training in a school of trouble and disappointment, are not rash enough to expect miracles from that partial possession of the suffrage by their sex for which they are contending, they are justified in looking for some appreciable result, which may increase with the growing time. If they do not conceive that the wilderness is to blossom as the rose when, in place of overt influence, they have come to the open exercise of a certain modicum of power, it is permitted reasonably to hope that feminine thought, practically directed to politics, may occasionally cast some glimpse of light on subjects which, not commending themselves to masculine attention, have heretofore remained obscure. And there is a further issue which, if more recondite, is of equally sure promise and of even deeper significance. I allude to the effect on character—on that character which the mothers and early teachers of mankind transmit to

their descendants of both sexes, which may be looked for as a result of the recognized expression of woman's thought and will—in a word, from the exercise of the human right of freedom.

Speaking once with an Oriental of high mark, on the position of the women of his people, he said to me: "In India women are all-powerful, even as they are here." I believed and do believe him. The women of India are nimble-witted and acute, or they were no match for their husbands and brothers; and, smooth and subtle as snakes, they fold the limble strength of their degraded souls about every question, which appeals with sufficient force to their passions or interest. Held by men in a condition of abject subjection, deprived by jealous supervision of all moral self-support, the Nemesis of the virtues which have been killed within them appears in the characters of craft and subtlety which they *print upon the race*. It is not too much to say of the women of a nation, that they are the moulds in which the souls of its men are set. Their very moods are reflected in the infant that is born into the world; the young child is surrounded by the mother's mind as by an atmosphere; her judgments are his code, her example his authority. Scarcely out of school, when the passions are in a state of fusion and make the whole being plastic, the youth falls under the operation of this law of life in another shape. The woman who is loved of boy or man, unconsciously prescribes the form of her own worship, and the character of the worshipper is modified, more or less, by the result. Let it never be dreamed that emotional contact can take place between two human beings without leaving a lasting impress on both. The frail creature who is believed to be the object of little else than scorn, is a factor in the sum of circumstances which determines a man's walk, and that which he seems to see in it, to the latest hour of his life. It is thus that society suffers throughout its length and breadth from wrongs which to the superficial thinker may seem to press only upon a part of it.

It will hardly be supposed that I am confounding the condition of women in our Western World with that of their cruelly crippled sisters in the East. The illustration they have furnished to me has been used only to give point to the argument that it is essential to the dignity of human character generally, that all voluntary forces which affect human action shall be duly accredited and openly applied. Nor is it in morals alone that the frank embodiment of opinion is of sound and invigorating effect; it is good also for the sanity of the intellect, that thought and action should suffer no divorce. The mind that is coquetting with questions to which it acknowledges no external tie, is less likely to form just views, than one which knows itself in responsible relation to them. It would seem that at the point of progress we have now reached, there is special need of some new inlet of ideas, stimulating to larger and more healthy interests. In view of our yearly increasing wealth and the perpetual additions which are thereby made to the idle and luxurious

classes, every countercheck to corrupting frivolity is to be hailed as an element of salvation. It is this large amount of female energy run wild, disfranchised of the little active cares which formerly employed it, and having found no substitute for them but the daily round in the treadmill of pleasure, that is spreading a pernicious example at home, and lowering the character of our countrywomen abroad. The affairs of the world, under the name of politics, in which the withdrawal of the disqualifications of sex would give to women a more intelligent interest, may not be greatly more ennobling than those of the household, when they are viewed from the standpoint of party; but questions of wide, impersonal relation are involved in them, which could not always be shut out from the minds even of the narrowest partisans; and this widening of the mental horizon would be among the incalculable consequences of the removal of those arbitrary restrictions, which constitute an infringement of liberty. There can be no call to hymn the praises of freedom to English men or women; the former have always deemed it worthy of their struggle and sacrifice; and, for the latter, whatever virtues they possess are owing to the share they have enjoyed of it. But what was in a way freedom to women under the old order, is bondage now; and if even more women than men, standing in a position which should render them responsible, are wasting life and leisure on pursuits wholly selfish and trivial, it is that wealth has loosened the claims of former duties, before liberty has given authority to the new. It is thus clear that the continued refusal to women of their demands for a more active citizenship, is the denial to them of a sacred human right to perfect and harmonious development.

A great deal has been said, is still being said, about the alteration of the relations of the sexes which might be expected to result from any extension of the franchise in the manner demanded. I own I find it difficult to respond to these fears with becoming seriousness. If there be any one thing of which Nature is careful, she is careful of her types, and while that "likeness in unlikeness" subsists, which is at the base of physical attraction, there is little fear of sexual relations being either reversed or annulled. So long as the maternal function continues tenderly to fashion the hearts of women, so long as the voices of men retain their resonance, and until their bodies lose their superior power of action and endurance, and their capacity for food and sleep, so long will there be little doubt that the saying of our neighbours, "*La barbe impose*," will remain substantially correct. These quasi-material causes might be out of place in a system where abstract justice answered to a rigid logic, but in this world of incalculable movements, of checks and counterchecks, they present themselves as something more than the "windage" for which in all reasoning we are bound to allow. It would seem that the alarmists above-mentioned are reckoning without that great primal force which binds together men and women, and for which

the higher developments of reason are for ever forging stronger if more spiritual links. I would bid them take courage in remembering the comparative stability of the operations of Nature, judged by the shortness of the days of man; in any case, to plant a quiet hope in the largeness of those grants of time demanded for the changes she is supposed to effect. If men and women are finally either to grow into a dull resemblance or become inimical to each other, it will not presumably happen until the planet which they jointly inhabit has advanced far upon the process of cooling down; a contingency too remote for adjustment in regard to it, to come within the province of state-craft.

I am loth to accept as truly meant on the part of the men even most opposed to liberal views on this matter, the inconsiderate dictum that the possession of equal rights by those who can never be gifted with equal strength, should be held to exclude them from all chivalrous service and manly observance. If certain of those who have been the pioneers of this movement have used the rough and ready methods of speech and action which are perhaps proper to the nature of the work they have had to do in its beginnings, it affords no argument that those who enter upon tranquil possession of the good for which these others fought, would need to abandon any graces or gentlenesses which belong—let me say—to *contented* womanhood. But—

“A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty.”

And, be it said, by the way, the poet who has best held the mirror to the nature he has left us to interpret for ourselves, has given us, in the play wherein these lines occur, a picture of the lying subservience resulting from acquiescence in despotism, which would furnish a keener sting than could be found in any words of mine, to some of the foregoing remarks.

Women are demanding a fair field wherein to labour, and they make no claim for favour so far; but life is not all made up of labour and sorrow, and even labour and sorrow do not exclude mutual help.

Let it never be said that the daughters of Albion have had to choose between justice and mercy; the alternative would be hard, but the election could not be long doubtful. The grace which one sex arrogates to itself the right of according to the other, while its exercise has in all time been partial and self-regarding, has become, in relation to the exigencies of modern female life, little better than a sop to Cerberus. It is justice, simple, and, as is now scarcely denied, obvious justice, which the *femme sole* of our modern society, and through her womanhood at large, in such a degree as natural laws render expedient, is seeking to secure.

There was a time when physical force ruled the world, when law was feeble, and only the strong hand could make itself respected. A woman

then who had got no man to marry her was forced to seek the refuge of the cloister; married or immured, in either case she was externally cared for and protected, as was needful in her unfitness to barbarous conditions; and in either case she gave herself wholly, and was swallowed up, whether of the Church or her liege lord, in return for shelter, suit, or service. It was an agreement, and when fulfilled according to the letter, it left no ground for complaint.

The laws which were made or redressed from time to time, were shaped in accordance with the demands of the ruling sex. That one of their chattels, which from the beginning has possessed a sad faculty of feeling, and was learning by degrees to think, was taken no heed of by the State, but left, with the rest of a man's personal property, entirely at his own discretion. And, perhaps on the whole, the possession of an object, if it happen to be of value to the holder, may be taken as a fair guarantee for its receiving a reasonable amount of care. But now a day has come when, if the “seven women” of the prophet would not “take hold on one man,” some of them must be resigned to belong only to themselves, and prepared to stand up and fight the battle of life alone. That they are to a certain extent handicapped by Nature in this struggle of opposing interests is not, cannot be, denied; but no one, I think, will say that any plea for undue allowance is put forward on this account by the brave women who are already in the arena. On the contrary, their demand is only that the terms of conflict shall be something like equalized where that is possible; and this is precisely the justice that is denied them. The rate-paying, law-abiding, property-holding, professional, or working woman, is suffered to have no voice in the regulation of the taxes or the laws under which she must live or die; and if she would influence them at all, must have recourse to the nearest man—possibly her butler, coachman, gardener, or the labourer in her fields—as the stalking-horse of her own unrecognized personality. It is no wonder if the moment has at length arrived when society, having outgrown the gross appetites which placed its physically weaker half in a state of dependent tutelage, women are showing themselves impatient of the persistence of limitations which, beneficial in their time and season, have now become as oppressive as they are unmeaning, and insulting to rational intelligence.

“There is a divinity which shapes our ends.”

Had it so continued that every woman in these isles could have “dropped into the jaws” of some one man, and so “ceased” as a social unit, it is highly probable that no word would have been heard among us of any further suffrage. But necessity has presented itself to the women of our generation with talons and beak more formidable than those of the eagle who drives the young one from the nest. They have not sought the shelterless strife with opposing prejudices

and interests, but have been forced into it by the incontrovertible law which pushes the tribes of men over barren continents, and out upon stormy seas. It is *Hunger*, the mighty *Maker*, which is urging our women upon new paths, and driving them upon a way which they would not, to the fulfilment of a destiny which they know not. With this force behind them it is impossible that they should turn back, impossible that those before them should resist their impulsion. They have been crowded by their own numbers out of the penfold in which their activity was enclosed, and forced to seek the equivalent of their labour in an ever-widening sphere. In making the experiment of their fitness for untried work, they have had to face odium and abundant ridicule from those whose approval they hold dear. Their efforts to train themselves for higher and more remunerative labour have encountered the opposition of a jealously-guarded monopoly; and the claim for citizenship now formulated—though enforced independence has rendered it a right—may be met, seeing that it lacks the element of material force which still enters largely into human affairs, on many sides with indifference, and on some with scorn. It would not be thus if there existed a threat behind it. Meetings of men of any class, upon the scale of the women's meetings which have lately assembled, would be held sufficiently representative of their mind and will to enforce respect for their demands. But the stream of tendency which sets in the way of women's advance is irresistible, and the vital rational principles incorporated in her claim could in the end win alone in the struggle with material resistance—

"The soul of things is strong:
A seedling's heaving heart has moved a stone."

The march of civilization is one sure, if slow, progression from the rule of the strongest to the equal right divine, and it will not stop short of its legitimate end. But with ends, as ends, we have nothing to do; our progress is step by step, our only guide the awakening conscience of humanity. It were vain to deny that seemingly moderate and wholly reasonable as is the demand now put forward, such exercise of reason would be a new and strange thing in the history of the already old world, and that some degree of faith in right is needed to enable men to commit themselves confidently to the unknown. We may win much, we must lose something, by this as by every other change; but change is a law of life, and this one has long been gathering force to make itself obeyed. Neither men nor women can finally resist the momentum of circumstances, but women at least could be made to suffer unduly by the presence of prolonged opposition.

I will not deal to my countrymen such scant measure of the justice often invoked, as to doubt that there are generous souls among them with whom the appeal of reason and feeling, gains more than it loses by

the knowledge that it emanates from a region wherein the power to enforce it brutally, has no existence. It would only be entirely worthy of the men whose fathers have fought and died for liberty on many fields, to share the precious heirloom on the basis of moral right, with companions who could never wrest it from their unwilling grasp, or, prizing it however truly, baptize it with their blood in contact with such opponents. The place of a people in the scale of human development is determined by the condition of its women: it would be a meet crown to a long career of freedom, if the country of which it is the chosen home, should be the first among the nations to yield that which no one of them in the end may be able to withhold.

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 will be determined by the condition of its women; it would be a
 great crown to a long career of freedom if the country of which it is
 the chosen home, should by the first among the nations yield that
 which no one of them in the end may be able to withhold.

THE
ADULT SUFFRAGE
CONTROVERSY.

The Women's Enfranchisement Bill reads as follows:—"In all Acts relating to the qualification and registration of voters or persons entitled or claiming to be registered, and to vote in the election of members of Parliament, wherever words occur which import the masculine gender, the same shall be held to include women for all purposes connected with, and having reference to the right to be registered as voters, and to vote in such election; any law or usage to the contrary notwithstanding."

The opponents of this measure claim that it is a "Limited Bill," and as such unworthy of the support of the democracy. It is certainly not an "unlimited" Bill: if it were, there is not the slightest probability that it would become an Act. It will do what it purports to do, i.e., remove sex-disability for elective purposes; and by so doing will place direct political power in the hands of between one and two million women. That done, those women thus possess the lever by which they can move other things at their will, for adult suffragists must not suppose that this Bill is final. It is a first step only toward the ideal of equal rights for all. But it is the only step which can possibly be taken with a Conservative Government in power.

Opponents of the Bill also state that it is a "class" measure. Such an allegation is an abuse of language as applied to a measure granting the Parliamentary vote to women on the same terms as to men. Is the present electoral basis, through which more power rests in the hands of the working classes than they care to use, a "class" basis? Or is it that women are so much regarded as a class apart that the electoral basis, which men have chosen for themselves, must be altered before women are allowed the suffrage? The present qualifications may not be ideal, but by their means men have gained wide political liberty and power. Let us look into the qualifications, and see how women would be affected by them. For some time past it has been freely and repeatedly said that very few working women would be enfranchised under the Bill. In order to find out the real facts, investigations were made in various places, and the proportion of working women who would be enfranchised in the districts examined is about 90 per cent. By going into the qualifications seriatim, it will easily be seen that the proportion is such as one might reasonably expect.

I.—OWNERS OF PROPERTY.

One consequence of exclusively male legislation is that almost all property is kept in the hands of men. The laws of entail primogeniture, etc., take care of that. In the rare instances where women inherit property it is because there is no man to inherit it. And when a woman does possess property, it is by inheritance it comes. It is not that she has gained it by fraudulent speculation, or by depriving the workers of their due reward, or by the other doubtful ways in which property may be acquired. These facts should be remembered in regard to the very small number of women (as compared to men) who would be qualified as property owners.

II.—OCCUPIERS OF HOUSES AND BUSINESS PREMISES.

Under this qualification a very large percentage of lower middle-class and working women would be enfranchised. There are many boroughs in the country where the voting power would be doubled were women of these classes allowed to vote for members of Parliament, as they do in local affairs.

III.—LODGERS.

Under this heading also a very large number of women would be enfranchised. There are thousands of women earning their own living who could qualify under the lodger franchise, were there any motive for doing so. But it is entirely incorrect to assert that the upholders of this Bill "base their claim mainly" on the Lodger Franchise. It is a matter of common knowledge to everyone who has done any canvassing that an enormous number of women would be enfranchised as householders and occupiers of business premises.

IV.—SERVICE VOTERS.

This qualification applies to a comparatively small number, even of men, and would not affect many women. But those affected by it would certainly belong to the working classes.

V.—UNIVERSITY GRADUATES.

The number enfranchised under this heading would be small—probably about 1,000. But they belong almost exclusively to two classes—women doctors and teachers. And it is necessary to emphasise in the strongest manner the fact that all those who render service to the community (and who render worthier service than the women belonging to those two professions?) are workers, whether they work with brain or with hand. The attempt to confine the term "Labour" to the ranks of manual workers only is most illogical and narrow. Are there no brains in the forces

of Labour? or do those forces consist of hands alone? The Labour movement is a movement toward justice, and justice is just as necessary for one sort of worker as for another. Nothing but mischief can arise from trying to foster distrust between workers by setting those who work with their hands in a class apart, and alienating other workers from them, thus playing into the hands of the drones and idlers. The latter form the only class who have any interest in prolonging unjust social and economic conditions.

But apart from the fact that the Bill under discussion would enfranchise a preponderating proportion of those women commonly called working women, and that it would also enfranchise many who belong just as truly to the ranks of the workers, it has a claim to support from all fair-minded persons—more especially those who like to be considered progressive. This claim is based incontrovertibly on the fact, that it would add to the electorate between one and two million belonging to a class totally unrepresented until now. Is this so little worth while as to be beneath the notice of reformers? It is an accepted canon of criticism to criticise a thing for what it is, or for what it does. But the opponents of the Bill do not seem to recognise this, and find fault because it does not undertake to change the basis of representation. The removal of sex-disqualification is at least as important a matter as the change of the electoral basis; and no woman, whatever class she belongs to socially, ought to shut her eyes to that. The inclusion of women within the electorate on the same terms as men will remove a long-felt and crying injustice. It will establish their position as citizens. The inclusion of even a limited number of women will remove the brand of political inferiority from all women, because then all women will be potential voters. Not in the narrow sense that a woman will be able to cast a vote as a spinster or as a widow. But in the truer sense, that it will then be possible for any woman to vote, as it now is for any man to do so. The vote is such a powerful weapon that its potential possession is almost as important as its actual. For instance, when a Parliamentary candidate addresses an audience he does not know how many of his hearers are voters. But he knows that it is the men present whom he expects to represent, and he need not greatly concern himself to which particular men he should address himself. Just so, when sex-disability is removed, a Parliamentary representative will represent the women as well as the men, even if he should not represent all the women in his division. The important point for women to remember is: No woman is now represented, and it is better for all women that some should be able to vote, than none at all.

The attitude of women who permit themselves and their interests to be "side-tracked" indefinitely, because some of those to be enfranchised belong to the upper and middle class would be ridiculous, were it not so dangerous. It is dangerous because such persons seem to be able to persuade themselves and others, not well accustomed to use their reasoning powers, that the disabilities of class are greater than the disabilities of sex. But the vote of

the male democracy is a power which has never been used as it might, or ought, for the removal of class disabilities. Both class and sex-disabilities rest upon working women, but they are powerless toward removing either at present. Yet because they cannot get everything at once they are advised to accept nothing! There is hardly a legal enactment on the Statute Book, affecting the relations of men and women, or affecting the status of women as members of the community, which is just to women. It is scarcely possible that it should be otherwise, because those who are unrepresented have no means of getting their point of view recognised. Those who are not heard are very likely to be forgotten.

Not even the most ardent advocates of the Bill "think the vote is the panacea for all industrial ills." In the North of England the strongest supporters of Women's Suffrage, have also the strongest practical belief in trade organisation, which they labour to make as powerful and widespread as possible. But looking beyond the limits of their own trade unions, they see that men do not find trade unionism suffice. In addition to the powerful machinery of their unions, they have their votes for Parliament. And in order to make those votes still more effective, they have accepted the principle of the direct representation of labour. The very Labour Representation Committee itself is an absolute proof of the fact that men unionists do not consider trade unionism sufficient. They know that the organised power of the vote is necessary, too, in order to bring about proper industrial conditions. And women suffragists have enough intelligence to profit by the experience of men.

Again, the statement of some opponents of the Bill, that if it pass working women "would be disfranchised because they are poor," is a complete misuse of language. At present all working women are disfranchised, not because they are poor, but because they are women. Is it honest to try to persuade them that they would be worse off, if some of their number were enfranchised, than they are now, when all are disfranchised? Extraordinary reasoning, surely! Suppose at each contemplated change in the electorate in the past men had allowed themselves to be led away in such a manner. Suppose in 1867, when the Representation of the People Act was passed, that those going to profit under it were urged not to accept its benefits, because a large and equally deserving body of citizens was still left out. Would the men have been silly enough to listen to such advice? Not they! They took all they got, and by the use of the freedom thus acquired they made it possible to further extend the franchise in 1884.

Let women follow their example. Let them use all their energies, and capture all possible forces, so as to obtain admission to the franchise on the same terms as men. If they succeed in this they will then (and only then) not only be able to redress their own grievances, but to change the basis of representation.

ISABELLA ROWLETTE.

N.B. The following, together with the Annual Report herewith enclosed, furnish the Statement to Subscribers for the quarter ending March 31st, 1889.

WOMEN AND THE VOTE.

CENTRAL NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

The Annual General Meeting of Subscribers to the Central National Society for Women's Suffrage was held at the Westminster Town Hall, on Thursday morning, March 21st, 1889, Sir R. Temple, Bart., G.C.S.I., M.P., in the chair. The Report and Financial statement were received and adopted and other business transacted. (*See the Annual Report*).

MEETING AT THE PRINCE'S HALL.

A public meeting was held in the evening at Prince's Hall, Piccadilly, Mr. Woodall, M.P., in the chair. Among those present were:—

Sir Wilfrid Lawson, M.P., Sir Albert Rollit, LL.D., M.P., W. S. B. M'Laren, Esq., M.P., Sydney Gedge, Esq., M.P., A. Lafone, Esq., M.P., Miss Jane Cobden, Mrs. Ormiston Chant, Mrs. Fenwick-Miller, Mrs. Wynford Philipps, The Rev. Brooke Lambert, Jacob Bright, Esq., M.P., Mrs. Miller and Miss Kirkland (Edinburgh), The Rev. R. B. Gray (Warden of Bradfield College, Berks), Mrs. H. B. Reid (Birmingham), Mrs. Cowen, Mrs. Hinde (Nottingham), Mrs. Bateson (Cambridge), Mrs. Stone (Bristol), H. Wigham, Esq. (Dublin), Mrs. A. Sidgwick and Mrs. Birkbeck Hill (Oxford), The Rev. Canon Haddock, Mrs. Ransom, Miss Sturges, Miss Rogers, (Bedford), Mrs. Smithson (York), Miss E. Lupton (Bradford), Mrs. Stanton Blatch (Basingstoke), Mrs. Massingberd (Great Grimsby), Mrs. J. Phillips (Liverpool), Mrs. Sheldon-Amos, Miss Florence Balgarnie, A. W. Bennett, Esq., Mrs. Bidder, Mrs. Busk, B.Sc., Hon. Mrs. W. N. Bruce, Mrs. Percy Bunting, Mrs. Ashton-Dilke, Mrs. Charles Hancock, Mrs. John Hollond, Charles H. Hopwood, Esq., Q.C., Mrs. J. Hullah, Mrs. Larkcom-Jacobs, Mrs. M. B. Lucas, Dr. Kate Mitchell, Mrs. Frank Morrison, Mrs. Eva M'Laren, Mrs. F. Pennington, Mrs. Broadley Reid, Mrs. Rushbrook, M.D., Mrs. Pearsall Smith, Miss Gittins (Leicester), Dr. and Mrs. Pankhurst, (Manchester).

Mr. WOODALL, who was received with prolonged cheers, called upon Miss Balgarnie, who had some communications to make to the meeting.

Miss BALGARNIE said letters had been received from Mr. Stansfeld, who was suffering from a severe throat affection; from Sir W. T. Robertson; from Dr. Clifford; Mr. Steinthal, who was to have attended as a delegate from Manchester; and the York Women's Suffrage Society had telegraphed that they heartily desired the success of the meeting to-night.

The CHAIRMAN said:—Among the many questions which have grown immensely in public favour in recent times few are showing more remarkable progress than that which calls us here to-night. The part women are taking in social, political and public life has taken hold on the public mind. As recently as 1867 John Stuart Mill—(cheers)—with the characteristic courage of his philosophic mind almost startled the House of Commons by proposing women should have equal privileges with men. The proposal was received almost with horror and commonly treated with derision. If you will mark the various gradations through which the question has gone, if you watch the position women have taken in the direction of great public reforms and works of utility, we find that nothing of the horror remains, and that we are relieved from the old forms of derision. Parliament, though not called together by the votes of those whom Mill would have enfranchised, has added measures to the Statute Book which have given us some things on which we congratulate ourselves. When Mr. Forster proposed the Education Act he had the courage to propose that women householders should be enabled to vote as well as their male neighbours, and also that they should be equally eligible with men to serve on the School Board. There are few things on which we can congratulate ourselves more than on the great services rendered in public life by women who have given time and service to that great cause. The same Parliament in dealing with the mode of electing our municipal councillors conferred the franchise on women. Within the last session of Parliament the House in creating our great County Parliament, with general and marked unanimity, gave like privileges to male and female householders of the country. I might refer to the fact that women may serve on Boards of Guardians as well as elect Guardians, and so important have been their services on such Boards that where not directly elected, the Local Government Board has recognised their value by nominating women as members. To night, however, it is important that we should address ourselves directly to the point at issue, and guard ourselves against any complications of the right to elect with the right to serve. Our contention, upon which we are unanimous, is that embodied in the Resolution which will be submitted to you, and which you will be asked to affirm, namely, that the Franchise should be extended to women, on the same conditions as it is or may be granted to men. We desire in regard to all these common sense conditions of citizenship that the disability of sex should disappear, a point which has been conceded in principle and in practical effect in regard to all the other forms of local franchises. We are nothing in England without anomalies, and whatever the intention of Parliament, Common Law says in regard to the election of Town Councillors, and similar matters, that married women who pay rates are, in the present condition of the Law of Coverture, incapable of voting. I have to ask your indulgence with regard to the Bill with the responsibility of which I am charged in Parliament, I ask your sympathy with an unfortunate man, trying to do his duty, and beset with difficulties in every direction. (Cheers.) Short of an actual division, which it is impossible to take on abstract questions, it is not an easy task for a Member of Parliament to ascertain definitely the views of those whose votes he desires to secure. What one aims to effect is the greatest good of the greatest number. Numbers of those who are pledged to support the principle of woman's suffrage in the abstract say that nothing will induce them to listen to proposals which pass a slight on married women. (Cheers.) On the other hand there are those whom nothing will induce to vote for the enfranchisement of married women; they are strong in regard to two principles; one is, that the number of married women paying rates is very small; the other, that rich men would be enabled to enfranchise their wives, which would tell unfairly against the poorer classes. (Hear, hear.) I only mention this by way of illustration. Now let me go to another branch of the question we are here to discuss. The

late Sir Stafford Northcote was one of the truest friends of our cause. (Cheers.) He required as a condition of his support to the amendment of 1884 that the enfranchisement should be limited to rate-paying householders. Mr. Goschen (hooting and a few counter cheers) suggested as an objection that the measure would enfranchise Spiers and Pond's barmaids. Now, we should speak with the greatest consideration of women exposed to dangers from which men are exempt, besides I think the barmaid is quite as good as the inane masher—(cheers)—about whose right to vote no one raises a question. I mean to be straight and open, for I know that upon this platform there are those who hold different views about the tactics we have in view. I have an open mind, and would hear with respect and attention the views of those who would set aside the proviso excluding married women. On the second reading I shall ask for a vote on the great cardinal principle on which our proposals are founded. When the House goes into Committee on the Bill it will only be fair that those who vote on the principle of the Bill shall be free to enlarge the measure as is most expedient, and I ask your leave to reserve for myself discretion so as to gain the greatest amount of enfranchisement possible. After long years of struggle, conducted by many who have greatly desired this end, and who have not been spared to see it, I believe we are now in sight of the accomplishment of our purpose. (Cheers.) I have secured April 17th for the second reading of the Bill. We Liberals (cheers) are very desirous for the dissolution of Parliament—(cheers)—and the direct effect of an addition of one in eight to the electorate will be to compel a dissolution. The Conservatives are confident that the women's vote will go to them. Thus both parties are agreed that the measure will be a benefit to each. The question of how women will vote can have no part in the consideration of a meeting like this—(cheers.)—Our claim being founded on justice and equality. (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

Mr. W. S. B. M'LAREN, M.P., who was cordially received, said: I had hoped Mr. Stansfeld would have moved this resolution, but he is unfortunately laid up with a sore throat, therefore I am here to move, in his place, "That in the opinion of this Meeting the Parliamentary franchise should be extended to Women on the same conditions as it is, or may be granted to men." This simple proposition is the fundamental doctrine of this Society, the basis which was framed by John Stuart Mill and which has never been departed from. I am here to ask you to affirm this doctrine which I am sure will commend itself, not only to those in this hall, but to many outside. I shall follow Mr. Woodall's example and not argue the abstract principle. The time has gone by for that: the burden of proof now rests with our opponents. I wish to call your attention to the ridiculous and absurd position of those who are continually urging women to take part in politics and yet refusing them the right to vote. A short time ago, at a meeting in this hall, a member of Parliament came down in a panic and begged the women to help him in his election. All the women, he said, were on his opponent's side. Well, the women responded—(cheers)—and I believe they worked well on both sides. But consider the absurdity of women doing anything of the kind when they are not entitled to give a vote. I hope that no woman will canvass for me until she can give a vote for herself. Still more absurd is it for candidates to ask women to help them and not strive for their enfranchisement. Women are putting themselves into a false position by working thus. Their only care should be for their own enfranchisement. They should unite together and say to members of Parliament: "if you keep us outside, we will have nothing to do with your party strifes; we decline to assist you." But when there is one candidate in favour of Women's Suffrage and another against it, the women should vote for the one in favour. The question is, Why are not all united on this question? You have some friends in Parliament so true to your interests that even

if they were to be unseated by giving their votes in your favour they would still do all they could to enfranchise women. As to our Conservative opponents in the House I cannot speak as to their motives, but with regard to those of the Liberal party who oppose us, one reason is the base and low reason—the fear of losing their seats. Liberals are always supposed to have some principle with regard to the enfranchisement of the people, but now they are falling into the sin of their opponents. Mr. Gladstone—(cheers)—said once, in a debate in the House, that it was a sin for men to be influenced in this question by a regard to its effect on the voting. (Cheers.) It is suicidal for Liberals to oppose the enfranchisement of women and so drive them into the arms of the Conservatives. They will bring down on their heads the retribution they deserve. The question should be debated solely on the justice of the case. I hope that in the course of the next few weeks we may find out who on either side are false to our cause. If every lady here would write to the member for her division or any member whom she can influence and urge him to support the Bill they would be doing good service. If we can put a little wholesome pressure on our weaker brethren in the House we may look forward at an early date to success. (Cheers.)

Mrs. WYNFORD PHILIPPS seconded the resolution. She said:—It must have given pleasure to all friends of the movement to hear what the principal condition of the Bill is. We are not here to discuss it from a party point of view. It is not an advantage to women or to men, but to humanity, that half our nation shall be free. (Cheers.) Yet, I rejoice that it is a party question, for Conservatives will support the measure because they think women will vote for law and order, and Liberals because women belong to the party of peace and social reform. A great leader has said that the real point is whether most importance be attached to the conservators or the innovators. When we look at the exquisite women who lived in the past, we do not wonder that men should wish to retain the ideal they held up, but when we now see intellect and mental training added to their other charms, we do not marvel at men desiring the new ideal. Why, it may be asked, do we leave the old conditions? The answer is, that for ideal men and women we have no need to legislate, but for the ordinary ones, who can not do justice to themselves and to the world if you hedge them round with legislation. Much has been said of what women's duty is. It is, as much their duty to use their mental gifts as their muscles. I am here to ask you that if you allow men a voice in the making of the laws, you will also give a voice to those other human beings called women, who do the same work and fulfil the same conditions as men. Conservatives say women must stay at home. But look at the homes! Three millions of women are wage earners in England. Let them work, it is said, in some feminine way.

“Band, and gusset and seam
Seam, and gusset and band,
Till the heart is sick and the brain benumbed,
As well as the weary hand.”

was the song of the poor woman stitching heart and soul away. But things are not so bad as this now, because new spheres of work have been opened up in all directions. (Cheers.) Thousands of women are in the Civil Service, and all varieties of trades and professions, and they are affected by the laws, which often deter them from working. Until the passing of Russell Gurney's Act, for instance, they could not take degrees. They are also affected by the questions of peace and war. And yet they are not treated with equality, for the legislature handicaps those who are the weakest. (Cheers.) Walter Besant and other writers of the Ruskin school have striven to show that women should be allowed to work if they must, but that men should do all they can to prevent

the necessity. But the fact remains that women must work. (Cheers.) Work in itself is no calamity. Throughout the ages it has been women's lot to wash the scars of the wounded and minister to the wants of poor humanity. Yet you do not give them the right to prevent those sufferings by law. May we not vote, for example, for the reform of the licensing laws as well as teach temperance? Many of the great institutions of the day owe their foundation and support to women who have done a man's work. John Bright (loud cheers) was opposed to the measure because he said that if the fathers, husbands and brothers did not legislate rightly it was the fault of our national civilization, not of our laws. There is a country now in which women are regarded as having no souls, and here they are classed by the legislature with lunatics, criminals, paupers and children, but we are getting civilized rapidly, and men are going to legislate justly because they are going to give us the vote. People say domestic dissension will result from giving women the franchise, but you cannot make happy married people quarrel by Act of Parliament (cheers), and if married people have differences the quietest way of expressing them is by the ballot. It used to be thought the right thing for a man to carry off his wife's person and do what he liked with it; now he has the right to hold his wife's opinions, and not allow her to hold her own. But if people feel deeply they will vote, speak or fight, and you get a Joan of Arc and other heroines. Now you have the Dames of the Primrose League (cheers) and the ladies of the Women's Liberal Federation (cheers), and a whole Parliament of men making use of their services. We ask you to ratify such influence by law. Injustice is only fully felt when it is done away with. According to an old Bavarian law a husband could chastise his wife moderately. Now, he can chastise her immoderately, cudgel her almost to death, and only get two or three months' imprisonment. (Shame). I will not now speak of married women because the Bill does not include them, but every reason for extending the Franchise to the unmarried applies with intensified force to the married. I support this Bill because when sex is no longer a barrier, the married relation will no longer be a barrier. (Loud cheers).

The CHAIRMAN announced that some friends whose presence was not anticipated had unexpectedly arrived; Sir A. Rollit, who had come at great inconvenience, and Sir Wilfrid Lawson. (Prolonged cheers).

Mrs. CHANT said, I think the most graceful thing that I can do is to be as short as possible. The eloquent speech to which you have just listened has covered a great deal of ground, and it would be bad taste on my part to go over that ground again. Like the previous speaker, I am not here to argue for or against the abstract principle, but to show that we mean business. It is arrant nonsense to ask women to help candidates in their election and not give them the vote. All this talk about women neglecting their homes if they go into politics is mere nonsense. They have been in politics all along, and now we ask to be allowed to step out frankly and say what side we are on and what we want. It is a miserable thing to preach that women are the disciples of law and order and not allow them to help in sending good men to Parliament. It is impossible and unreasonable to expect that immoral men can carry out good legislation, and as a woman who cares greatly about the matter, it is to me a matter of ardent religion that our House of Commons should be a grace and not a disgrace to our country. (Cheers.) With regard to the married women, it is a retrograde step to make marriage a disability. But we owe some gratitude to our supporters in the House, especially to Mr. Woodall, who are striving for us, and should not therefore press now all we hope for in the future. Therefore I shall vote for the resolution to extend the franchise to women. As to politics causing discord at home between married people, why if they want to quarrel they will find something better to quarrel about—(laughter)—and if there is anything that takes away from the irritation that creates domestic rubs it is having some large

outside interests. We women are on the side of higher education, on the side not only of housing, but homing the poor—(cheers)—and it is a shame now to gag us. I have just come from one of the most beautiful meetings ever held at the Mansion House—the British Women's Temperance Meeting. It is the first time it has been held at the Mansion House, and under the presidency of the Lord Mayor. We are going forth from that meeting full of enthusiasm and strength for work, and is it not a pity to tell us that we are too feeble to register a vote? Our most difficult elements of obstruction are not men, but some of the women in our midst. Still I hope that the 17th April will bring us joy and gladness and that we may win the race over our sisters in America. They are working so hard there, you cannot know how hard, and it is not that I want to triumph over them, but because, belonging to the parent country, I feel that it is our duty to set them an example to strengthen their hands. (Cheers.)

Sir A. ROLLER said, Theologians tell us of works of supererogation, and after the speeches we have heard I think of myself rather as a theologian than a politician. No more convincing speeches could be made than those which the ladies have. A humorist has said there were four kinds of boxes—the cartridge box, the jewel box, the ballot box and the bandbox; and the bandbox is evidently the best of all. (Cheers and laughter.) I am here to support Mr. Woodall, and am happy to put aside all party questions. It would be a mistake to confine the cause within the narrow rut of party politics. We are uniting law with equity—two things which men have put asunder, and it is our object to do justice to that gentler sex so largely represented here to night. It has been my lot at times to be a municipal candidate, I have found that the ladies contributed largely to my success, and I never heard that those who voted for me abandoned their home duties. If we do what is just, beneficial effects must follow, and I should like to point out that in all the relations of life the claim can justifiably be met. There is no condition of life in which women do not fulfil their duties with great advantage to themselves and other people. Take education, for instance, how splendid is the work they do for our sex in our earliest years! In many other spheres they do a great deal of hard work in an admirable manner. There are 20,000 women farmers, and whether in Ireland or England, the land question is one of the most prominent subjects of our politics, and one largely affecting women. Is it right that those who employ labour should have no voice in making the labourers' homes happier and better? Social problems will be solved better by bringing the intellect of women to bear upon them. What is the foundation of the right to vote? It is founded on citizenship and the possession of a house, and we cannot refuse it justly to women who fulfil its obligations, while the nation will gain great benefit and moral strength by such extension of voting power. I hope we shall sink minor differences and that we shall be happy to congratulate ourselves on the accomplishment of a great reform. (Cheers.)

The Chairman said no name commanded more respectful attention than that of Mr. Jacob Bright, whom he now called upon.

Mr. JACOB BRIGHT, who was received with cheers, said: I am come to offer a few words in defence of those who began this agitation on a sound principle and have adhered to it all through, and propose to move a rider to the resolution in the following terms: "And we therefore disapprove of the proviso in the Bill which would exclude married women from the privileges of the Franchise." If I were alone in this sentiment I should not have taken the trouble to come here, but I find that there are many sincere minds much perplexed and pained. We come here to move a resolution strictly in accordance with our principles. We go to the House of Commons to press on a Bill in violation of those principles. Let us look at the Bill before the House, what does it do? It declares that the vast majority of adult women should not

have among them a single one capable of giving a vote. We know something of married and unmarried women, and if it had to be determined which class stands in the greater need of the vote, I should say the married women. They are subject to bad laws and disabilities which unmarried women are free from like men; they have larger responsibilities, a greater stake in the country, and are more out in the world. What is the justification for denying them the vote? It is said that no Bill ever presented to the House would enfranchise married women, because of the effect of Common Law, made at a time when married women were in a totally different position. Is that a reason why the friends of the Suffrage should, by statute, make another obstacle greater than that of Common Law? If by statute it is made impossible for married women to vote it will be more difficult to remove the disability than if it existed merely in Common Law. It is now sought to enfranchise a minority by a humiliating process. We are told that if we will only accept a mutilated Bill we may have the Suffrage in a few weeks or months. Well, for my part, I would rather wait ten years than get it on those terms. (Hear, hear.) If, instead of getting that Bill through we fought on for ten years more with a sound principle, it would be a great educational process for the people, and lift up womanhood. The Franchise will have a double effect; there will be the direct advantage of the vote at the poll, and it will confer increased dignity and influence on the class who give it. Are we going to subject to indignity three-fourths of the women of England? If the Bill passes in its present form, something will have to be added to the questions usually asked of the voter. There will have to be added the question, "Are you married?" and if the answer is yes, the women will be sent home again, while the unmarried wife, the mistress, will be qualified. Reference has been made to John Stuart Mill, the father of the movement. He lost his seat, but I secured mine and was asked to bring in the Bill and had charge of it for several sessions. (Cheers.) I consulted Mill about it and he advised us to insist that no more burdens or obstacles should be placed in the way of married women. Of course, I followed that advice. The House of Commons, we are told, is greatly alarmed at the prospect of married women having the vote—and we might carry this Bill sooner than a sounder and juster one. But the country at large—of which the House is not independent—is unanimous in favour of the sounder principle when fully explained. Political agitations have always succeeded by adhering to principle, never weakening themselves by abandoning what was deemed true. Deviation from principle is deteriorating to the mind: there are ladies I have known long working in this movement who not only are ready to accept the Bill as it stands, but give all sorts of reasons why married women should be excluded. I shall be glad to see this Society adhere to sound principle, and the more you ask the more you will get. (Cheers.)

Mrs. FENWICK-MILLER in supporting Mr. Jacob Bright's rider said:—"It is a gratifying and easy task to rise and ask at a woman's suffrage meeting for justice to all women. We should not allow ourselves to be led aside from the principle by dazzling prospects of success to be obtained by going backward from our original principle. I have the satisfaction of telling you that by a majority of nearly three to one, precisely the amendment which is now before you was carried at this morning's Annual General Meeting. You are asked now to ratify the conclusions come to by the subscribers. It is a great privilege that Mr. Jacob Bright should lead us now, as he led us before, when it was difficult to lead. I have spoken on women's suffrage platforms since I was seventeen, and the difference between public feeling on the question then and now can hardly be conceived except by those who have gone through the time and been in the movement. There is not one argument which does not apply to qualified married women equally with spinsters and widows. Yet now the

societies which are supposed to take away the disabilities of women are willing to put in a clause for disqualifying some women. It is said common law excludes married women. It does not. I have taken many married women, with businesses of their own, to the poll to vote for me at School Board elections. All that is asked is that we should be true to our principles. We ask for the suffrage on the same terms as it is or might be granted to men, and as bachelors are not objected to spinsters should not be. The proviso against which we protest is an infringement of principle; it places disabilities on women, instead of removing them. What we object to is that women should be working only for a partial Bill, and that after twenty years of agitation we are asking that a disqualification shall be placed on us. The best way to lead on to success is to adhere to principle, and carry your banner straight forward, to ask for the utmost, and not to place a slur on the largest and most influential and important part of the community. Every argument applies more to married than to unmarried women. The only course is to ask for the vote for all married women who pay rates and taxes on the same terms on which it is given to men.

Mr. SYDNEY GEDGE, M.P., rose to speak to the rider. He said: I take a different point of view from some of the speakers. I appear before this meeting as a Conservative, and I believe that women when they get the vote will vote Conservative, but I do not support them on that ground. (Laughter). I do not think that anyone has a right to the Franchise, but there is no logic in extending it to men and not to women. I want to know why marriage is a disqualification. It is not so in my sex. (Laughter and Cheers.) If it takes away independence of thought in one sex it does so in the other. It is said that if married women have the right to vote it will introduce discord at home. Now I think it much more likely to produce discord for a woman to have strong political feeling and not to be able to give expression to it, than if she is able to go quietly off in the happy conviction that she can nullify all her husband is doing. (Laughter and Cheers.) The Chairman tells us that if the Bill is carried we must have a dissolution. Well, I am not afraid of a dissolution—(laughter)—either for myself or my country. There is an old adage, that it is better to keep in the saddle than to jump off your horse for the sake of showing how cleverly you can get on again, and on that principle I prefer the majority we have at present, of a hundred, to the two hundred we should probably get in the event of a dissolution, or the three hundred, if the women secured the vote. (Laughter). We may carry the Bill safely this year, and then we shall see at the bye-elections how pleasantly the women will vote. (Laughter). But we must pay some regard to the objections put forward. Firstly, it is said that force rules and the majority are the stronger; but that argument is passed now. Riches are the great force in war. Secondly, we are told that women only regard the good looks of the candidate and will vote for the handsomest man. (Laughter). The right hon. gentleman here related an amusing anecdote at his own expense to disprove this argument, and concluded by saying, that he should support the second reading in the House with the proviso that they might be at liberty to strike out the clause they objected to.

The CHAIRMAN then said: If the rider were submitted as an amendment, it may be ruled out of order as not being an amendment at all, but something additional to the resolution. Although the rider is not in reality hostile, it will have the effect of being so to the present Parliamentary action. Mr. Bright explained that nobody proposes to enfranchise married women because they are married, but only those who have property: also that we propose to decree a disability upon married women. We propose nothing of the kind. We merely declare that we will not interfere with common law. Our Bill will enfranchise

800,000 women householders, and we are asked to keep that Bill back for the sake of the married women householders, who are, in fact, very few.

At this point Dr. PANKHURST rose to give an explanation of the rider before the vote was taken. This, he said, is an historic moment. We propose by this act of emancipation to open a broad path to public life. No compromise is honourable which compromises principle. What Mr. Bright proposes is this: you declare a sound principle! common law says that coverture creates legal incapacity, but do not turn a common law disability into a statutory one. The old common law which allowed a man to beat his wife moderately (*acriter verberari*) once prevailed in England, but morals have since improved. Let us leave the declaration in its raw generality and let the House of Commons or the Courts of Law put in the limit if they will. We shall afterwards find it to have been an honourable moment when we decided to stand by the principle. The resolution, with the rider added, was put, and carried unanimously amid loud cheers.

Sir WILFRID LAWSON moved the second resolution as follows:

“That a Petition be signed on behalf of this Meeting praying the House of Commons to pass a Measure which shall include all duly qualified women.”

The hon. member then referred to the fact that a Queen had successfully ruled over this country for fifty years, and that now we had ladies in a far more important position than that of Queen: we had a lady Alderman, and what could be greater than an Alderman? (Laughter and cheers). It was said they could not decide great questions, but surely they were able to judge which was the bigger fool of two candidates. (Laughter). There was the old argument that the ruling powers exercised power fairly for the good of all. But that came to nothing in practice. Were the men, again, such paragons of virtue, and was the state of the world perfect? It was said women could not fight, but neither could the hon. baronet, yet he was not deprived of the vote on that account. It was said women were all Tories, but were people not to be free because they thought differently? He hoped and thought women were for temperance, but if he were sure they would all vote for the publican, he would still enfranchise them. He concluded with the wish that women should be called in to work with men for the country they all loved.

Miss JANE COBDEN, C.C., seconded the resolution in a short speech. It is for women to determine, she said, how long they shall be without the vote. Women have been too apathetic in the past. I agree with Mr. McLaren that it is not wise for women to help candidates who are not pledged to support the Suffrage, not only on the abstract principle, but on a division; for I have found that those who will be ready to agree with the principle will not always stand to it when a division comes. It is necessary, therefore, for women to give help at elections to those candidates only who will pledge themselves to vote for us. I am glad to be here also to say, as an unmarried woman, how heartily I approve of extending the Franchise to married women. It is not possible to exclude them with any justice. I beg to second the resolution most cordially. (Cheers.)

The resolution was put and carried unanimously.

Mr. W. M'LAREN having taken the chair, Miss Baggallay, in cordial terms, moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Woodall for presiding, and declared amidst much applause that women owed their Leader, an immense debt of gratitude for all he had done to popularise the movement during the past five years. In moving his Amendment to the Reform Bill of 1884, and confronted by unwonted opposition during the memorable two nights debate on the Women's Franchise question, Mr. Woodall had taken a brave and noble stand which would hand his name down to a grateful posterity. That amendment was in the following terms: “For all purposes connected with and having

reference to the right of voting in the election of Members of Parliament, words in the Representation of the People Acts importing the masculine gender include women." The "coverture proviso" had since been slipped in, by whom and when, no one seemed to know. She ventured most earnestly to hope that Mr. Woodall would embody his original motion in a future Bill. She most heartily moved the vote of thanks (cheers).

Mrs. ASHTON-DILKE said: I rise to formally second the vote of thanks to Mr. Woodall for his very able conduct in the chair. It has been no easy matter to hold the balance fairly, and we are all much indebted to him for his admirable management. Mr. Woodall has rendered splendid services in the past on our behalf, both in the House of Commons and outside and we know that he will continue to aid us in the future. I beg most heartily to second the vote of thanks which has been proposed to him.

Before the resolution could be put Mrs. Scatcherd, of Leeds, rose from the body of the hall and desired that the vote of thanks might include Mr. Jacob Bright.

Mr. W. S. B. M'LAREN, M.P., pointed out that the resolution before the meeting was a vote of thanks to Mr. Woodall and that must be first put, after which Mrs. Scatcherd could move anything she wished.

Mr. M'LAREN then put the resolution which was unanimously carried.

Mr. WOODALL, in thanking the meeting for their cordial reception, said, I remember when the Liberals were striving for household suffrage there were those among them who desired to get manhood suffrage. We hope that by the firm assertion of the wider principle to give force to the movement and get the largest measure of enfranchisement possible to obtain. (Cheers.)

Mrs. SCATCHERD then rose again and said that she wished to propose a very hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Jacob Bright who had earned the deep gratitude of thousands, especially in the North of England, in Scotland and in Ireland. Mr. Bright was one of the earliest supporters of the movement and had throughout performed his task with bravery.

Mrs. MACILQUHAM, Poor Law Guardian of Cheltenham, seconded the resolution which was carried and the meeting separated. Almost the entire audience remained to the close, although the proceedings had occupied more than three hours.

MEETING OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The following resolution was passed at the first meeting of the newly elected Committee of the Central National Society, which met on Wednesday, March 27th.—

"The Executive Committee of the Central National Society for Women's Suffrage, while sympathising with the Resolution passed at their Annual Meeting on Thursday, March 21st, adverse to the "Coverture Clause" in the Parliamentary Franchise (Extension to Women) Bill, do hereby express their loyal and unabated confidence in their esteemed leader, Mr. W. Woodall, M.P., and their intention of supporting his Bill.

"They would tender to him a most hearty vote of thanks for his unremitting efforts during the past five years, for the admirable tact he has displayed, for his persistent and whole-hearted endeavour, and for all he has done to popularise the question both within and without the House of Commons. They record with especial gratitude the brave stand he made for the equality of the sexes, by his amendment to the Reform Bill of 1884; by reason of which action a new and quickened impetus was given to the movement.

"While thanking Mr. Woodall for all he has done in the past, they look forward with confidence to the part he will take in the future, keeping, nevertheless, ever in view the ultimate aim for which their Society was founded in 1872, viz., the Extension of the Parliamentary Franchise to Women on the same conditions as it is or may be granted to men."

WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE TRACTS. NO. 2.

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN.

A SPEECH

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS,

IN THE

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GRACE GREENWOOD, D.C.

EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN.

THE Convention resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole on the report of the Committee on the Right of Suffrage and the Qualifications to hold Office; Mr. ALVORD of Onondaga in the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN announced the question to be on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Cayuga (Mr. C. C. DWIGHT).

Mr. CURTIS offered the following amendment:—

“In the first section, strike out the word ‘male;’ and wherever in that section the word ‘he’ occurs, add ‘or she;’ and wherever the word ‘his’ occurs, add ‘or her.’”

Mr. CURTIS.—In proposing a change so new to our political practice, but so harmonious with the spirit and principles of our government, it is only just that I should attempt to show that it is neither repugnant to reason nor hurtful to the State. Yet I confess some embarrassment; for, while the essential reason of the proposition seems to me to be clearly defined, the objection to it is vague and shadowy. From the formal opening of the general discussion of the question in this country, by the Convention at Seneca Falls, in 1848, down to the present moment, the opposition to the suggestion, so far as I am acquainted with it, has been only the repetition of a traditional prejudice, or the protest of mere sentimentality; and to cope with these is like wrestling with a malaria, or arguing with the east wind. I do not know, indeed, why the Committee have changed the phrase “male inhabitant or citizen,” which is uniformly used in a constitutional clause limiting the elective franchise. Under the circumstances, the word “man” is obscure, and undoubtedly includes women as much as the word “mankind.” But the intention of the clause is evident, and the report of the Committee makes it indisputable. Had they been willing to say directly what they say indirectly, the eighth line, and what follows, would read,

“ Provided that idiots, lunatics, persons under guardianship, felons, women, and persons convicted of bribery, &c., shall not be entitled to vote.” In their report, the Committee omit to tell us why they politically class the women of New York with idiots and criminals. They assert merely, that the general enfranchisement of women would be a novelty, which is true of every step of political progress, and is therefore a presumption in its favor; and they speak of it in a phrase which is intended to stigmatize it as unwomanly, which is simply an assumption and a prejudice. I wish to know, sir, and I ask in the name of the political justice and consistency of this State, why it is that half of the adult population, as vitally interested in good government as the other half, who own property, manage estates, and pay taxes, who discharge all the duties of good citizens, and are perfectly intelligent and capable, are absolutely deprived of political power, and classed with lunatics and felons. The boy will become a man and a voter; the lunatic may emerge from the cloud, and resume his rights; the idiot, plastic under the tender hand of modern science, may be moulded into the full citizen; the criminal, whose hand still drips with the blood of his country and of liberty, may be pardoned and restored: but no age, no wisdom, no peculiar fitness, no public service, no effort, no desire, can remove from women this enormous and extraordinary disability. Upon what reasonable grounds does it rest? Upon none whatever. It is contrary to natural justice, to the acknowledged and traditional principles of the American government, and to the most enlightened political philosophy. The absolute exclusion of women from political power in this State is simply usurpation. “ In every age and country,” says the historian Gibbon, nearly a hundred years ago, “ the wiser or at least the stronger of the two sexes has usurped the powers of the State, and confined the other to the cares and pleasures of domestic life.”

The historical fact is that the usurping class, as Gibbon calls them, have always regulated the position of women by their own theories and convenience. The barbaric Persian, for instance, punished an insult to the woman with death, not because of her but of himself. She was part of *him*. And the civilized English Blackstone only repeats the barbaric Persian when he says that the wife and husband form but one person—that is the husband. Sir, it would be extremely amusing, if it were not tragical, to trace the consequences of this theory on human society and the unhappy effect upon the progress of civilization of this morbid estimate of the importance of men. Gibbon gives a curious instance of it, and an instance which recalls the spirit of the modern English laws of divorce. There

was a temple in Rome to the Goddess who presided over the peace of marriages. “ But,” says the historian, “ her very name, *Viriplaca*—the appeaser of husbands—shows that repentance and submission were always expected from the wife,”—as if the offence usually came from her. In the “ *Lawe’s resolution of Women’s Rights*,” published in the year 1632, a book which I have not seen, but of which there are copies in the country, the anonymous and quaint author says and with a sly satire: “ It is true that man and woman are one person, but understand in what manner. When a small brooke or little river incorporateth with Rhodanus, Humber or the Thames, the poor rivulet looseth her name: it is carried and re-carried with the new associate: it beareth no sway—it possesseth nothing during coverture. A woman as soon as she is married is called *covert*: in Latine *nupta*—that is, veiled; as it were overclouded and shadowed; she hath lost her streame. I may more truly, farre away, say to a married woman, her new self is her superior; her companion her master. * * See here the reason of that which I touched before—that women have no voice in Parliament; they make no laws; they consent to none; they abrogate none. All of them are understood either married or to be married, and their desires are to their husbands.”

From this theory of ancient society, that woman is absorbed in man, that she is a social inferior and a subordinate part of man, springs the system of laws in regard to women which in every civilized country is now in course of such rapid modification, and it is this theory which so tenaciously lingers as a traditional prejudice in our political customs. But a State which like New York recognizes the equal individual rights of all its members, declaring that none of them shall be disfranchised unless by the law of the land or the judgment of his peers, and which acknowledges women as property-holders and taxable, responsible citizens, has wholly renounced the old Feudal and Pagan theory, and has no right to continue the evil condition which springs from it. The honorable and eloquent gentleman from Onondaga said that he favored every enlargement of the franchise consistent with the safety of the State. Sir, I heartily agree with him, and it was the duty of the committee in proposing to continue the exclusion of women, to show that it is necessary to the welfare and safety of the State that the whole sex shall be disfranchised. It is in vain for the Committee to say that I ask for an enlargement of the franchise and must therefore show the reason. Sir, I show the reason upon which this franchise itself rests, and which, in its very nature, forbids arbitrary exclusion;

and I urge the enfranchisement of women on the ground that whatever political rights men have women have equally.

I have no wish to refine curiously upon the origin of government. If any one insists, with the honorable gentlemen from Broome, that there are no such things as natural political rights, and that no man is born a voter, I will not now stop to argue with him; but as I believe the honorable gentleman from Broome is by profession a physician and surgeon, I will suggest to him that if no man is born a voter, so no man is born a man—for every man is born a baby. But he *is* born with the right of becoming a man without hinderance; and I ask the honorable gentleman, as an American citizen and political philosopher, whether, if every man is not born a voter, he is not born with the right of becoming a voter upon equal terms with other men? What else is the meaning of the phrase which I find in the *New-York Tribune* of Monday, and have so often found there: "The radical basis of government is equal rights for all citizens."

There are, as I think we shall all admit, some kinds of natural rights. This summer air that breathes benignant around our national anniversary, is vocal with the traditional eloquence with which those rights were asserted by our fathers. From all the burning words of the time, I quote those of Alexander Hamilton of New York, in reply, as my honorable friend the Chairman of the Committee will remember, to the Tory farmer of Westchester: "The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or dusty records. They are written as with a sunbeam in the whole volume of human nature by the hand of the Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power." In the next year, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia summed up the political faith of our fathers in the Great Declaration. Its words vibrate through the history of those days. As the lyre of Amphion raised the walls of the city, so they are the music which sing course after course of the ascending structure of American civilization into its place. Our fathers stood indeed upon technical and legal grounds when the contest with Great Britain began, but as tyranny encroached they rose naturally into the sphere of fundamental truths as into a purer air. Driven by storms beyond sight of land, the sailor steers by the stars; and our fathers, compelled to explore the whole subject of social rights and duties, derived their government from what they called self-evident truths. Despite the brilliant and vehement eloquence of Mr. Choate, they did *not* deal in glittering generalities, and the Declaration of Independence was *not* the pas-

sionate manifesto of a revolutionary war, but the calm and simple statement of a new political philosophy and practice.

The rights which they declared to be inalienable are indeed what are usually called natural, as distinguished from political rights, but they are not limited by sex. A woman has the same right to her life, liberty and property that a man has, and she has consequently the same right to an equality of protection that he has; and this, as I understand it, is what is meant by the phrase, the right of suffrage. If I have a natural right to that hand, I have an equal natural right to every thing that secures to me its use, provided it does not harm the equal right of another; and if I have a natural right to my life and liberty, I have the same right to every thing that protects that life and liberty which any other man enjoys. I should like my honorable friend, the Chairman of this Committee, to show me any right which God gave him which he also gave to me, for which God gave him a claim to any defence which he has not given to me. And I ask the same question for every woman in this State. Have they less natural right to life, liberty and property than my honorable friend the Chairman of the Committee—and is it not, to quote the words of his report, an extremely "defensible theory," that he cannot justly deprive the least of those women of any protection of those rights which he claims for himself? No, sir, the natural, or what we call civil right, and its political defence, go together. This was the impregnable logic of the revolution. Lord Gower sneered in Parliament at the American Colonists a century ago as Mr. Robert Lowe sneers at the English Reformers to-day: "Let the Americans talk about their natural and divine rights. * * * * I am for enforcing these measures." Dr. Johnson bellowed across the Atlantic, "Taxation, no Tyranny." James Otis spoke for America, for common sense, and for eternal justice, in saying, "No good reason, however, can be given in any country, why every man of a sound mind should not have his vote in the election of a representative. If a man has but little property to protect and defend, yet his life and liberty are things of some importance." And long before James Otis, Lord Somers said to a committee of the House of Commons, that the possession of the vote is the only true security which an Englishman has for the possession of his life and property.

Every person, then, is born with an equal claim to every kind of protection of his natural rights which any other person enjoys. The practical question, therefore, is how shall this protection be best attained? and this is the question of government, which, according to the Declaration, is established for the security of these rights.

The British theory was that they could better be secured by an intelligent few than by the ignorant and passionate multitude. Goldsmith expressed it in singing : —

“ For just experience shows in every soil,
That those who think must govern those who toil.”

But nobody denies that the government of the best is the best government ; the only question is how to find the best, and common sense replies : —

“ The good, 'tis true, are heaven's peculiar care ;
But who but heaven shall show us who they are ? ”

Our fathers answered the question of the best and surest protection of natural right by their famous phrase, “ the consent of the governed.” That is to say, since every man is born with equal natural rights, he is entitled to an equal protection of them with all other men ; and since government is that protection, right reason and experience alike demand that every person shall have a voice in the government upon perfectly equal and practicable terms — that is, upon terms which are not necessarily and absolutely insurmountable by any part of the people.

Now these terms cannot rightfully be arbitrary. But the argument of the honorable gentleman from Schenectady, whose lucid and dignified discourse needs no praise of mine, and the arguments of others who have derived government from society, seemed to assume that the political people may exclude and include at their pleasure ; that they may establish purely arbitrary tests, such as height, or weight, or color, or sex. This was substantially the squatter sovereignty of Mr. Douglas, who held that the male white majority of the settlers in a territory might deprive a colored minority of all their rights whatever ; and he declared that they had the right to do it. The same right that this Convention has to hang me at this moment to that chandelier, but no other right. Brute force, sir, may do any thing ; but we are speaking of rights, and of rights under this government, and I deny that the people of the State of New York can rightfully, that is, according to right reason and the principles of this government derived from it, *permanently* exclude any class of persons or any person whatever from a voice in the government, unless it can be clearly established that their participation in political power would be dangerous to the State ; and, therefore, the honorable gentleman from King's was logically correct in opposing the enfranchisement of the colored population, upon the ground that they

were an inferior race, of limited intelligence, a kind of Chimpanzee at best. I think, however, sir, the honorable and scholarly gentleman — even he — will admit, that at Fort Pillow, at Milliken's Bend, at Fort Wagner, the Chimpanzees did uncommonly well ; yes, sir, as gloriously and immortally as our own fathers at Bunker Hill and Saratoga. “ There ought to be no Pariahs,” says John Stuart Mill, “ in a full grown and civilized nation ; no persons disqualified except through their own default. * * Every one is degraded, whether aware of it or not, when other people, without consulting him, take upon themselves unlimited power to regulate his destiny.” “ No arrangement of the suffrage, therefore, can be permanently satisfactory in which any person or class is peremptorily excluded ; in which the electoral privilege is not open to all persons of full age who desire it.” (Rep. G., p. 167.) And Thomas Hare, one of the acutest of living political thinkers, says that in all cases where a woman fulfils the qualification which is imposed upon a man, “ there is no sound reason for excluding her from the parliamentary franchise. The exclusion is probably a remnant of the feudal law, and is not in harmony with the other civil institutions of the country. There would be great propriety in celebrating a reign which has been productive of so much moral benefit by the abolition of an anomaly which is so entirely without any justifiable foundation.” (Hare, p. 280.)

The Chairman of the Committee asked Miss Anthony, the other evening, whether, if suffrage were a natural right, it could be denied to children. Her answer seemed to me perfectly satisfactory. She said simply, “ All that we ask is an equal and not an arbitrary regulation. If *you* have the right, *we* have it.” The honorable Chairman would hardly deny that to regulate the exercise of a right according to obvious reason and experience is one thing, to deny it absolutely and forever is another. And this is the safe practical rule of our government, as James Madison expressed it, that “ it be derived from the great body of the people, not from an inconsiderable portion or favored class of it.” When Mr. Gladstone, in his famous speech that startled England, said, in effect, that no one could be justly excluded from the franchise, except upon grounds of personal unfitness or public danger, he merely echoed the sentiment of Joseph Warren, which is gradually seen to be the wisest and most practical political philosophy : “ I would have such a government as should give every man the greatest liberty to do what he chooses, consistent with restraining him from doing any injury to another.” Is not that the kind of government, sir, which we wish to propose

for this State? And if every person in New York has a natural right to life, liberty, and property, and a co-existent claim to a share in the government which defends them, regulated only by perfectly equitable conditions, what are the practical grounds upon which it is proposed to continue the absolute and hopeless disfranchisement of half the adult population?

It is alleged that women are already represented by men. Where are they so represented? and when was the choice made? If I am told that they are virtually represented, I reply, with James Otis, that "no such phrase as virtual representation is known in law or Constitution. It is altogether a subtlety and illusion, wholly unfounded and absurd." I repeat, if they are represented, when was the choice made? Nobody pretends that they have ever been consulted. It is a mere assumption to the effect that the interest and affection of men will lead them to just and wise legislation for women as well as for themselves. But this is merely the old appeal for the political power of a class. It is just what the British parliament said to the colonies a hundred years ago. "We are all under the same government," they said: "our interests are identical; we are all Britons; Britannia rules the wave; God save the King! and down with sedition and Sons of Liberty!" The colonies chafed and indignantly protested, because the assumption that therefore fair laws were made was not true; because they were discovering for themselves what every nation has discovered—the truth that shakes England to-day, and brings Disraeli and the Tory party to their knees, and has already brought this country to blood—that there is no class of citizens, and no single citizen, who can safely be intrusted with the permanent and exclusive possession of political power. "There is no instance on record," says Buckle, in his history of civilization in England, "of any class possessing power without abusing it." It is as true of men as a class as it is of an hereditary nobility, or of a class of property-holders. Men are not wise enough, nor generous enough, nor pure enough, to legislate fairly for women. The laws of the most civilized nations depress and degrade women. The legislation is in favor of the legislating class. In the celebrated debate upon the Marriage Amendment Act in England, Mr. Gladstone said that "when the gospel came into the world woman was elevated to an equality with her stronger companion." Yet, at the very time he was speaking, the English law of divorce, made by men to regulate their domestic relations with women, was denounced by the law lords themselves as "disgusting and demoralizing" in its operation. "barbarous,"

"indecent," "a disgrace to the country," and "shocking to the sense of right." Now, if the equality of which Mr. Gladstone spoke had been political as well as sentimental, does he or any statesman suppose that the law of divorce would have been what it then was, or that the law of England to-day would give all the earnings of a married woman to her husband, or that of France forbid a woman to receive any gift without her husband's permission?

We ask women to confide in us, as having the same interests with them. Did any despot ever say any thing else? And, if it be safe or proper for any intelligent part of the people to relinquish exclusive political power to any class, I ask the Committee, Who proposed that women should be compelled to do this? To what class, however rich, or intelligent, or honest, they would themselves surrender *their* power? and what they would do if any class attempted to usurp that power? They know, as we all know, as our own experience has taught us, that the only security of natural right is the ballot. They know, and the instinct of the whole loyal land knows, that, when we had abolished slavery, the emancipation could be completed and secured only by the ballot in the hands of the emancipated class. Civil rights were a mere mocking name until political power gave them substance. A year ago, Gov. Orr of South Carolina told us that the rights of the freedmen were safest in the hands of their old masters. "Will you walk into my parlor, said the spider to the fly?" New Orleans, Memphis, and countless and constant crimes, showed what that safety was. Then, hesitating no longer, the nation handed the ballot to the freedmen, and said, "Protect yourselves!" And now Gov. Orr says that the part of wisdom for South Carolina is to cut loose from all parties, and make a cordial alliance with the colored citizens. Gov. Orr knows that a man with civil rights merely is a blank cartridge. Give him the ballot, and you add a bullet, and make him effective. In that section of the country, seething with old hatreds and wounded pride, and a social system upheaved from the foundation, no other measure could have done for real pacification in a century what the mere promise of the ballot has done in a year. The one formidable peril in the whole subject of reconstruction has been the chance that Congress would continue in the Southern States the political power in the hands of a class, as the report of the Committee proposes that we shall do in New York.

If I am asked what do women want the ballot for, I answer the question with another, What do men want it for? Why do the

British workmen at this moment so urgently demand it? Look into the British laws regulating labor, and you will see why. They want the ballot because the laws affecting labor and capital are made by the capitalist class alone and are therefore unjust. I do not forget the progressive legislation of New York in regard to the rights of women. The Property Bill of 1860, and its supplement, according to "The New-York Tribune," redeemed five thousand women from pauperism. In the next year, Illinois put women in the same position with men, as far as property rights and remedies are concerned. I mention these facts with pleasure, as I read that Louis Napoleon will, under certain conditions, permit the French people to say what they think. But, if such reforms are desirable, they would certainly have been sooner and more wisely effected could women have been a positive political power. Upon this point one honorable gentleman asked Mrs Stanton whether the laws both for men and women were not constantly improving, and whether, therefore, it was not unfair to attribute the character of the laws about women to the fact that men made them. The reply is very evident. If women alone made the laws, legislation for both men and women would undoubtedly be progressive. Does the honorable gentleman think, therefore, that women only should make the laws?

It is not true, Mr. Chairman, that, in the ordinary and honorable sense of the words, women are represented. Laws are made for them by another class, and upon the theories which that class, without the fear of political opposition, may choose to entertain, and in direct violation of the principles upon which, in their own case, they tenaciously insist. I live, sir, in the county of Richmond. It has a population of some 27,000 persons. They own property, and manage it. They are taxed, and pay their taxes; and they fulfil the duties of citizens with average fidelity. But if the Committee had introduced a clause into the section they propose to this effect, "Provided that idiots, lunatics, persons under guardianship, felons, inhabitants of the county of Richmond, and persons convicted of bribery, shall not be entitled to vote," they would not have proposed a more monstrous injustice, nor a grosser inconsistency with every fundamental right and American principle, than in the clause they recommend; and in that case, sir, what do you suppose would have been my reception had I returned to my friends and neighbors, and had said to them, "The Convention thinks that you are virtually represented by the voters of Westchester and Chautauqua"?

Mr. Chairman, I have no superstition about the ballot. I do

not suppose it would immediately right all the wrongs of women, any more than it has righted all those of men. But what political agency has righted so many? Here are thousands of miserable men all around us; but they have every path opened to them. They have their advocates; they have their votes; they make the laws, and, at last and at worst, they have their strong right hands for defence. And here are thousands of miserable women pricking back death and dishonor with a little needle; and now the sly hand of science is stealing that little needle away. The ballot does not make those men happy nor respectable nor rich nor noble; but they guard it for themselves with sleepless jealousy, because they know it is the golden gate to every opportunity: and precisely the *kind* of advantage it gives to one sex, it would give to the other. It would arm it with the most powerful weapon known to political society; it would maintain the natural balance of the sexes in human affairs, and secure to each fair play within its sphere.

But, sir, the Committee tell us that the suffrage of women would be a revolutionary innovation; it would disturb the venerable traditions. Well, sir, about the year 1790, women were first recognized as school-teachers in Massachusetts. At that time, the New-England "schoolmarm" (and I use the word with affectionate respect) was a revolutionary innovation. She has been abroad ever since, and has been by no means the least efficient, but always the most modest and unnoticed, of the great civilizing influences in this country. Innovation!—why, sir, when Sir Samuel Romilly proposed to abolish the death-penalty for stealing a handkerchief, the law officers of the Crown said it would endanger the whole criminal law of England. When the bill abolishing the slave-trade passed the House of Lords, Lord St. Vincent rose and stalked out, declaring that he washed his hands of the ruin of the British empire. When the Greenwich pensioners saw the first steamer upon the Thames, they protested that they did not like the steamer, for it was contrary to nature. When, at the close of the reign of Charles II., London had half a million of people, there was a fierce opposition to street-lamps,—such is the hostility of venerable traditions to an increase of light. When Mr. Jefferson learned that New York had explored the route of a canal, he benignly regarded it, in the spirit of our Committee, as, doubtless, "defensible in theory;" for he said that it was "a very fine project, and might be executed a century hence." And, fifty-six years ago, Chancellor Livingston wrote from 'his city, that the proposition of a railroad, shod with iron, to move heavy weights

four miles an hour, was ingenious, perhaps "theoretically defensible;" but, upon the whole, the road would not be so cheap or convenient as a canal. In this country, sir, the venerable traditions are used to being disturbed. America was clearly designed to be a disturber of traditions, and to leave nobler precedents than she found. So, a few months ago, what the Committee call a revolutionary innovation was proposed by giving the ballot to the freedmen in the District of Columbia. The awful results of such a revolution were duly set forth in one of the myriad veto messages of the President of the United States. But they have voted. If anybody proposed to disturb the election, it was certainly not the new voters. The election was perfectly peaceful, and not one of the presidential pangs has been justified. So with this reform. It is new in the extent proposed. It is as new as the harvest after the sowing, and it is as natural. The resumption of rights long denied or withheld never made a social convulsion: that is produced by refusing them. The West-Indian slaves received their liberty, praying upon their knees; and the influence of the enfranchisement of women will glide into society as noiselessly as the dawn increases into day.

Or shall I be told that women, if not numerically counted at the polls, do yet exert an immense influence upon politics, and do not really need the ballot. If this argument was seriously urged, I should suffer my eyes to rove through this chamber and they would show me many honorable gentlemen of reputed political influence. May they, therefore, be properly and justly disfranchised? I ask the honorable Chairman of the Committee, whether he thinks that a citizen should have no vote because he has influence? What gives influence? Ability, intelligence, honesty. Are these to be excluded from the polls? Is it only stupidity, ignorance and rascality which ought to possess political power?

Or will it be said that women do not want the ballot and ought to be asked? And upon what principle ought they to be asked? When natural rights or their means of defence have been immemorably denied to a large class, does humanity, or justice, or good sense require that they should be registered and called to vote upon their own restoration? Why, Mr. Chairman, it might as well be said that Jack the Giant Killer ought to have gravely asked the captives in the ogre's dungeon whether they wished to be released. It must be assumed that men and women wish to enjoy their natural rights, as that the eyes wish light or the lungs an atmosphere. Did we wait for emancipation until the slaves peti-

tioned to be free? No, sir, all our lives had been passed in ingenious and ignominious efforts to sophisticate and stultify ourselves for keeping them chained; and when war gave us a legal right to snap their bonds, we did not ask them whether they preferred to remain slaves. We knew that they were men, and that men by nature walk upright, and if we find them bent and crawling, we know that the posture is unnatural whether they may think so or not. In the case of women we acknowledge that they have the same natural rights as ourselves—we see that they hold property and pay taxes, and we must of necessity suppose that they wish to enjoy every security of those rights that we possess. So when in this State, every year, thousands of boys come of age, we do not solemnly require them to tell us whether they wish to vote. We assume, of course, that they do, and we say to them, "Go, and upon the same terms with the rest of us, vote as you choose." But gentlemen say that they know a great many women who do not wish to vote, who think it is not ladylike, or whatever the proper term may be. Well, sir, I have known many men who habitually abstained from politics because they were so "ungentlemanly," and who thought that no man could touch pitch without defilement. Now what would the honorable gentlemen who know women who do not wish to vote, have thought of a proposition that I should not vote, because my neighbors did not wish to? There may have been slaves who preferred to remain slaves—was that an argument against freedom? Suppose there are a majority of the women of this State who do not wish to vote—is that a reason for depriving *one* woman who is taxed of her equal representation, or one innocent person of the equal protection of his life and liberty?

Shall nothing ever be done by statesmen until wrongs are so intolerable that they take society by the throat? Did it show the wisdom of British Conservatism that it waited to grant the Reform bill of 1832 until England hung upon the edge of civil war? When women and children were worked sixteen hours a day in English factories, did it show practical good sense to delay a "short-time" bill until hundreds of thousands of starving workmen agreed to starve yet more, if need be, to relieve the overwork of their families, and until the most pitiful procession the sun ever shone upon, that of the factory children, just as they left their work, marched through the streets of Manchester, that burst into sobs and tears at the sight? Yet if, in such instances, where there was so plausible an adverse appeal founded upon vested interests and upon the very theory of the government, it was unwise to

wait until a general public outcry imperatively demanded the reform, how wholly needless to delay in this State a measure which is the natural result of our most cherished principles, and which threatens to disturb or injure nothing whatever. The amendment proposes no compulsion like the old New England law, which fined every voter who did not vote. If there are citizens of the State who think it unladylike or ungentlemanlike to take their part in the government, let them stay at home. But do not, I pray you, give them authority to detain wiser and better citizens from their duty.

But I shall be told, in the language of the Report of the Committee, that the proposition is openly at war with the distribution of functions and duties between the sexes. Translated into English, Mr. Chairman, this means that it is unwomanly to vote. Well, sir, I know that at the very mention of the political rights of women, there arises in many minds a dreadful vision of a mighty exodus of the whole female world, in bloomers and spectacles, from the nursery and kitchen to the polls. It seems to be thought that if women practically took part in politics, the home would be left a howling wilderness of cradles, and a chaos of undarned stockings and buttonless shirts. But how is it with men? Do they desert their workshops, their ploughs and offices, to pass their time at the polls? Is it a credit to a *man* to be called a professional politician? The pursuits of men in the world, to which they are directed by the natural aptitude of sex, and to which they must devote their lives, are as foreign from political functions as those of women. To take an extreme case: there is nothing more incompatible with political duties in cooking and taking care of children than there is in digging ditches or making shoes, or in any other necessary employment, while in every superior interest of society growing out of the family, the stake of women is not less than men, and their knowledge is greater. In England, a woman who owns shares in the East-India Company may vote. In this country she may vote as a stockholder upon a railroad from one end of the country to another. But if she sells her stock, and buys a house with the money, she has no voice in the laying out of the road before her door, which her house is taxed to keep and pay for. And why, in the name of good sense, if a responsible human being may vote upon specific industrial projects, may she not vote upon the industrial regulation of the State? There is no more reason that men should assume to decide participation in politics to be unwomanly than that women should decide for men that it is unmanly. It is not our prerogative to keep women feminine. I think, sir,

they may be trusted to defend the delicacy of their own sex. Our success in managing ours has not been so conspicuous that we should urgently desire more labor of the same kind. Nature is quite as wise as we. Whatever their sex incapacitates women from doing they will not do. Whatever duty is consistent with their sex and their relation to society, they will properly demand to do until they are permitted.

The reply to the assertion that participation in political power is unwomanly, and tends to subvert the family relation, is simple and unanswerable. It is that we cannot know what is womanly until we see the folly of insisting that the theories of men settle the question. We know now what the convenience and feelings of men decide to be womanly. We shall know what *is* womanly in the same sense that we know what is manly, only when women have the same equality of development and the same liberty of choice as men. The amendment I offer is merely a prayer that you will remove from women a disability, and secure to them the same freedom of choice that we enjoy. If the instincts of sex, of maternity, of domesticity, are not persuasive enough to keep them in the truest sense women, it is the most serious defect yet discovered in the divine order of nature.

When, therefore, the Committee declare that voting is at war with the distribution of functions between the sexes, what do they mean? Are not women as much interested in good government as men? There is fraud in the Legislature; there is corruption in the Courts; there are hospitals, and tenement-houses, and prisons; there are gambling-houses, and billiard-rooms, and brothels; there are grog-shops at every corner, and I know not what enormous proportion of crime in the State proceeds from them; there are forty thousand drunkards in the State, and their hundreds of thousands of children, — all these things are subjects of legislation, and under the exclusive legislation of men the crime associated with all these things becomes vast and complicated. Have the wives and mothers and sisters of New York less vital interest in them, less practical knowledge of them and their proper treatment, than the husbands and fathers? No man is so insane as to pretend it. Is there then any natural incapacity in women to understand politics? It is not asserted. Are they lacking in the necessary intelligence? But the moment that you erect a standard of intelligence which is sufficient to exclude women as a sex, that moment most of the male sex would be disfranchised. Is it that they ought not to go to public political meetings? But we earnestly invite them. Or that they should not go to the polls? Some polls, I allow, in the larger

cities, are dirty and dangerous places; and those it is the duty of the police to reform. But no decent man wishes to vote in a grog shop, nor to have his head broken while he is doing it, while the mere act of dropping a ballot in a box is about the simplest, shortest, and cleanest that can be done. Last winter Senator Frelinghuysen, repeating, I am sure thoughtlessly, the common rhetoric of the question, spoke of the high and holy mission of women. But if people, with a high and holy mission, may innocently sit bare-necked in hot theatres to be studied through pocket-telescopes until midnight by any one who chooses, how can their high and holy mission be harmed by their quietly dropping a ballot in a box? What is the high and holy mission of any woman but to be the best and most efficient human being possible? To enlarge the sphere of duty and the range of responsibility, where there are adequate power and intelligence, is to heighten, not to lessen, the holiness of life.

But if women vote, they must sit on juries. Why not? Nothing is plainer than that thousands of women who are tried every year as criminals are not tried by their peers. And if a woman is bad enough to commit a heinous crime, must we absurdly assume that women are too good to know that there is such a crime? If they may not sit on juries, certainly they ought not to be witnesses. A note in Howell's State Trials, to which my attention was drawn by one of my distinguished colleagues in the Convention, quotes an ancient work, "Probation by Witnesses," by Sir George Mackenzie, in which he says, "The reason why women are excluded from witnessing must be either that they are subject to too much compassion, and so ought not to be more received in criminal cases than in civil cases; or else the law was unwilling to trouble them, and thought it might learn them too much confidence, and make them subject to too much familiarity with men and strangers, if they were necessitated to vague up and down at all Courts upon all occasions." Hume says this rule was held as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century. But if too much familiarity with men be so pernicious, are men so pure that they alone should make laws for women, and so honorable that they alone should try women for breaking them? It is within a very few years at the Liverpool Assizes in a case involving peculiar evidence, that Mr. Russell said: "The evidence of women is, in some respects, superior to that of men. Their power of judging of minute details is better, and when there are more than two facts and something be wanting, their intuitions supply the deficiency." "And precisely the qualities which fit

them to give evidence," says Mrs. Dall, to whom we owe this fact, "fit them to sift and test it."

But, the objectors continue, would you have women hold office? If they are capable and desirous, why not? They hold office now most acceptably. In my immediate neighborhood, a postmistress has been so faithful an officer for seven years, that when there was a rumor of her removal, it was a matter of public concern. This is a familiar instance in this country. Scott's "Antiquary" shows that a similar service was not unknown in Scotland. In Notes and Queries ten years ago (vol. II., sect. 2, 1856, pp. 83, 204), Alexander Andrews says: "It was by no means unusual for females to serve the office of overseer in small rural parishes," and a communication in the same publication (1st series, vol. II., p. 383) speaks of a curious entry in the Harleian Miscellany (MS. 980, fol. 153): "The Countess of Richmond, mother to Henry VII., was a Justice of the Peace. Mr. Attorney said if it was so, it ought to have been by commission, for which he had made many an hower's search for the record, but could never find it, but he had seen many arbitrations that were made by her. Justice Joanes affirmed that he had often heard from his mother of the Lady Bartlett, mother to the Lord Bartlett, that she was a Justice of the Peace, and did set usually upon the bench with the other Justices in Gloucestershire; that she was made so by Queen Mary, upon her complaint to her of the injuries she sustained by some of that county, and desiring for redress thereof; that as she herself, was Chief-Justice of all England, so this lady might be in her own county, which accordingly the Queen granted. Another example was alleged of one — Rowse, in Suffolk, who usually at the assizes and sessions there held, set upon the bench among the Justices *gladio cineta*." The Countess of Pembroke was hereditary sheriff of Westmoreland, and exercised her office. Henry the Eighth granted a commission of inquiry, under the great seal, to Lady Ann Berkeley, who opened it at Gloucester, and passed sentence under it. Henry Eighth's daughter, Elizabeth Tudor, was Queen of England, in name and in fact, during the most illustrious epoch of English history. Was Elizabeth incompetent? Did Elizabeth unsex herself? Or do you say that she was an exceptional woman? So she was, but no more an exceptional woman than Alfred, Marcus Aurelius or Napoleon were exceptional men. It was held by some of the old English writers that a woman might serve in almost any of the great offices of the Kingdom. And, indeed, if Victoria may deliberate in council with her ministers, why may not any intelligent English woman delib-

erate in Parliament, or any such American woman in Congress?

I mention Elizabeth, Maria Theresa, Catharine, and all the famous Empresses and Queens, not to prove the capacity of women for the most arduous and responsible office, for that is undeniable, but to show the hollowness of the assertion that there is an instinctive objection to the fulfilment of such offices by women. Men who say so do not really think so. The whole history of the voting and office-holding of women shows that whenever men's theories of the relation of property to the political franchise, or of the lineal succession of the government, require that women shall vote or hold office, the objection of impropriety and incapacity wholly disappears. If it be unwomanly for a woman to vote, or to hold office, it is unwomanly for Victoria to be Queen of England. Surely if our neighbors had thought they would be better represented in this Convention by certain women, there is no good reason why they should have been compelled to send us. Why should I or any person be forbidden to select the agent whom we think most competent and truly representative of our will? There is no talent or training required in the making of laws which is peculiar to the male sex. What is needed is intelligence and experience. The rest is routine.

The capacity for making laws is necessarily assumed when women are permitted to hold and manage property and to submit to taxation. How often the woman, widowed or married or single, is the guiding genius of the family — educating the children, directing the estate, originating, counselling, deciding. Is there any thing essentially different in such duties and the powers necessary to perform them from the functions of legislation? In New Jersey the Constitution of 1776 admitted to vote all inhabitants of a certain age, residence and property. In 1797, in an act to regulate elections, the ninth section provides: "Every voter shall openly and in full view deliver his or her ballot, which shall be a single written ticket, containing the names of the persons for whom he or she votes." An old citizen of New Jersey says that "the right was recognized and very little said or thought about it in any way." But in 1807 the suffrage was restricted to white male adult citizens of a certain age, residence and property, and in 1844 the property qualification was abolished. At the hearing before the Committee, the other evening, a gentleman asked whether the change of the qualification excluding women did not show that their voting was found to be inconvenient or undesirable. Not at all. It merely showed that the male property-holders

outvoted the female. It certainly showed nothing as to the right or expediency of the voting of women. Mr. Douglas, as I said, had a theory that the white male adult squatters in a territory might decide whether the colored people in the territory should be enslaved. They might, indeed, so decide, and with adequate power they might enforce their decision. But it proved very little as to the right, the expediency, or the constitutionality of slavery in a territory. The truth is that men deal with the practical question of female suffrage to suit their own purposes. About twenty-five years ago the Canadian government by statute rigorously and in terms forbade women to vote. But in 1850, to subserve a sectarian purpose, they *were* permitted to vote for school trustees. I am ashamed to argue a point so plain. What public affairs need in this State is "conscience," and woman is the conscience of the race. If we in this Convention shall make a wise Constitution, if the Legislatures that follow us in this chamber shall purify the laws and see that they are honorably executed, it will be just in the degree that we shall have accustomed ourselves to the refined moral and mental atmosphere in which women habitually converse.

But would you, seriously, I am asked, would you drag women down into the mire of politics? No, sir, I would have them lift us out of it. The duty of this Convention is to devise means for the improvement of the government of this State. Now the science of government is not an ignoble science, and the practice of politics is not necessarily mean and degrading. If the making and administering of law has become so corrupt as to justify calling politics filthy, and a thing with which no clean hands can meddle without danger, may we not wisely remember, as we begin our work of purification, that politics have been wholly managed by men? How can we purify them? Is there no radical method, no force yet untried, a power not only of skilful checks, which I do not undervalue, but of controlling character? Mr. Chairman, if we sat in this chamber with closed windows until the air became thick and fetid, should we not be fools if we brought in deodorizers — if we sprinkled chloride of lime and burned assafoetida, while we disdained the great purifier? If we would cleanse the foul chamber, let us throw the windows wide open, and the sweet summer air would sweep all impurity away and fill our lungs with fresher life. If we would purge politics let us turn upon them the great stream of the purest human influence we know.

But I hear some one say, if they vote they must do military

duty. Undoubtedly when a nation goes to war it may rightfully claim the service of all its citizens, men and women. But the question of fighting is not the blow merely, but its quality and persistence. The important point is, to make the blow effective. Did any brave Englishman who rode into the jaws of death at Balaklava serve England on the field more truly than Florence Nightingale? That which sustains and serves and repairs the physical force is just as essential as the force itself. Thus the law, in view of the moral service they are supposed to render, excuses clergymen from the field, and in the field it details ten per cent of the army to serve the rest, and they do not carry muskets nor fight. Women, as citizens, have always done, and always will do that work in the public defence for which their sex peculiarly fits them, and men do no more. The care of the young warriors, the nameless and innumerable duties of the hospital and home, are just as essential to the national safety as fighting in the field. A nation of men alone could not carry on a contest any longer than a nation of women. Each would be obliged to divide its forces and delegate half to the duties of the other sex.

But while the physical services of war are equally divided between the sexes, the moral forces are stronger with women. It was the women of the South, we are constantly and doubtless very truly told, who sustained the rebellion, and certainly without the women of the North the government had not been saved. From the first moment to the last, in all the roaring cities, in the remote valleys, in the deep woods, on the country hill-sides, on the open prairie, wherever there were wives, mothers, sisters, lovers, there were the busy fingers which, by day and by night, for four long years, like the great forces of spring-time and harvest, never failed. The mother paused only to bless her sons, eager for the battle; the wife to kiss her children's father, as he went; the sister smiled upon her brother, and prayed for the lover who marched away. Out of how many hundreds of thousands of homes and hearts they went who never returned. But those homes were both the inspiration and the consolation of the field. They nerved the arm that struck for them. When the son and the husband fell in the wild storm of battle, the brave woman-heart broke in silence, but the busy fingers did not falter. When the comely brother and lover were tortured into idiocy and despair, that woman-heart of love kept the man's faith steady, and her unceasing toil repaired his wasted frame. It was not love of the soldier only, great as that was; it was knowledge of the cause. It was that supreme moral force operating through

innumerable channels like the sunshine in nature, without which successful war would have been impossible. There are thousands and thousands of these women who ask for a voice in the government they have so defended. Shall we refuse them?

I appeal again to my honorable friend the Chairman of the Committee. He has made the land ring with his cry of universal suffrage and universal amnesty. Suffrage and amnesty to whom? To those who sought to smother the government in the blood of its noblest citizens, to those who ruined the happy homes and broke the faithful hearts of which I spoke. Sir, I am not condemning his cry. I am not opposing his policy. I have no more thirst for vengeance than he, and quite as anxiously as my honorable friend do I wish to see the harvests of peace waving over the battle-fields. But, sir, here is a New-York mother, who trained her son in fidelity to God and to his country. When that country called, they answered. Mother and son gave, each after his kind, their whole service to defend her. By the sad fate of war the boy is thrown into the ghastly den at Andersonville. Mad with thirst, he crawls in the pitiless sun towards a muddy pool. He reaches the dead-line, and is shot by the guard—murdered for fidelity to his country. "I demand amnesty for that guard, I demand that he shall vote," cries the honorable Chairman of the Committee. I do not say that it is an unwise demand. But I ask him, I ask you, sir, I ask every honorable and patriotic man in this State, upon what conceivable ground of justice, expediency or common sense shall we give the ballot to the New York boy's murderer and refuse it to his mother?

Mr. Chairman, I have thus stated what I conceive to be the essential reasonableness of the amendment which I have offered. It is not good for man to be alone. United with woman in the creation of human society, their rights and interests in its government are identical, nor can the highest and truest development of society be reasonably conceived, so long as one sex assumes to prescribe limits to the scope and functions of the other. The test of civilization is the position of women. Where they are wholly slaves, man is wholly barbarous; and the measure of progress from barbarism to civilization is the recognition of their equal right with man to an unconstrained development. Therefore, when Mr. Mill unrolls his petition in Parliament to secure the political equality of women, it bears the names of those English men and women whose thoughts foretell the course of civilization. The measure which the report of the Committee declares to be radically revolutionary and perilous to the very functions

of sex, is described by the most sagacious of living political philosophers as reasonable, conservative, necessary and inevitable; and he obtains for it seventy-three votes in the same House in which out of about the same whole number of voters Charles James Fox, the idol of the British Whigs, used to be able to rally only forty votes against the policy of Pitt. The dawn in England will soon be day here. Before the American principle of equal rights, barrier after barrier in the path of human progress falls. If we are still far from its full comprehension and further from perfect conformity to its law, it is in that only like the spirit of Christianity, to whose full glory even Christendom but slowly approaches. From the heat and tumult of our politics we can still lift our eyes to the eternal light of that principle; can see that the usurpation of sex is the last form of caste that lingers in our society; that in America the most humane thinker is the most practical man, and the organizer of justice the most sagacious statesman.

MR. CURTIS'S amendment, in Committee of the Whole, received 24 Ayes against 63 Nays; and on the final vote in the Convention, 19 Ayes against 125 Nays.

CONSTITUTION

OF THE

American Woman Suffrage Association.

PREAMBLE.—The undersigned, friends of Woman Suffrage, assembled in delegate convention in Cleveland, O., Nov. 24 and 25, 1869, in response to a call widely signed, and after public notice duly given, believing that a truly representative national organization is needed for the orderly and efficient prosecution of the Woman Suffrage movement in America, which shall embody the deliberate action of the State and local organizations, and shall carry with it their united weight, do hereby form The American Woman Suffrage Association.

ARTICLE I.

NAME.

This Association shall be known as The American Woman Suffrage Association.

ARTICLE II.

OBJECT.

Its object shall be to concentrate the efforts of all the advocates of Woman Suffrage in the United States.

SECTION 1. To form auxiliary State Associations in every State where none such now exist, and to co-operate with those already existing which shall declare themselves auxiliary before the first day of March next; the authority of the auxiliary societies being recognized

in their respective localities, and their plans being promoted by every means in our power.

SEC. 2. To hold an annual meeting of delegates for the transaction of business, and the election of officers for the ensuing year; also, one or more national conventions for the advocacy of Woman Suffrage.

SEC. 3. To publish tracts, documents, and other printed matter, for the supply of State and local societies and individuals, at actual cost.

SEC. 4. To prepare and circulate petitions to State and Territorial Legislatures, to Congress, or to Constitutional Conventions, in behalf of the legal and political equality of women; to employ lecturers and agents; and to take any measures the Executive Committee may think fit, to forward the objects of the Association.

ARTICLE III.

ORGANIZATION.

SECTION 1. The officers of this Association shall be a President, eight Vice-Presidents at large, Chairman of the Executive Committee, Foreign Corresponding Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, two Recording Secretaries, and a Treasurer; all of whom shall be *ex officio* members of the Executive Committee. Also, one Vice-President, and one member of the Executive Committee from each State and Territory, and from the District of Columbia, as afterward provided.

SEC. 2. Every President of an auxiliary State or Territorial Society shall be *ex officio* a Vice-President of this Association.

SEC. 3. Every Chairman of the Executive Committee of an auxiliary State Society shall be *ex officio* a member of the Executive Committee of this Association.

SEC. 4. In cases where no Auxiliary State Association exists, a suitable person may be selected by the annual meeting, or by the Executive Committee, as Vice-President, or member of the Executive Committee from said State, to serve only until the organization of said State Association.

SEC. 5. The Executive Committee may fill all vacancies that may occur prior to the next annual meeting.

SEC. 6. All officers shall be elected annually at an annual meeting of delegates, on the basis of the Congressional representation of the respective States and Territories, except as above provided.

SEC. 7. No distinction on account of sex shall ever be made in the membership, or in the selection of officers of this Society.

SEC. 8. No money shall be paid by the Treasurer, except under such restrictions as the Executive Committee may provide.

SEC. 9. Five members of the Executive Committee, when convened by the Chairman, after fifteen days' written notice previously mailed to each of its members, shall constitute a quorum; but no action thus taken shall be final, until such proceedings shall have been ratified in writing by at least fifteen members of the Committee.

SEC. 10. The Chairman shall convene a meeting whenever requested to do so by five members of the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE IV.

The Association shall have a branch office in every State and Territory, in connection with the office of the auxiliary State Society therein, and shall have a central office at such place as the Executive Committee may determine.

ARTICLE V.

This Constitution may be amended at any annual meeting by a vote of three-fifths of the delegates present therein.

ADDITIONAL CLAUSES.

Any person may become a member of the American Woman Suffrage Association by signing the Constitution, and paying the sum of one dollar annually; or a life-member, by paying the sum of ten dollars, which shall entitle such person to attend the business-meetings of delegates, and participate in their deliberations.

Honorary members may be appointed by the annual meeting, or by the Executive Committee, in consideration of services rendered.

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR 1871.

A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER.

THE WOMAN'S JOURNAL,

Devoted to the interests of WOMAN, to her educational, industrial, legal, and political Equality, and especially to her RIGHT OF SUFFRAGE.

Published every Saturday in Boston.

MARY A. LIVERMORE, EDITOR.

JULIA WARD HOWE, LUCY STONE, HENRY B. BLACKWELL, AND T. W. HIGGINSON, Associate Editors.

OPINION OF THE PRESS.

THE WOMAN'S JOURNAL.—The friends of Woman Suffrage who wish to keep the issue clear from entangling alliances with other reforms, and the endless host of individual whims and vagaries,— who would pursue it with the same singleness of aim that marks the movement in England, and the temperance and other special reforms in this country, have established a weekly paper, "THE WOMAN'S JOURNAL," published in Boston and Chicago, and edited by Mrs. Livermore, Mrs. Lucy Stone, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, Mr. William Lloyd Garrison, and Mr. T. W. Higginson, assisted by accomplished friends of the cause. "THE WOMAN'S JOURNAL" is a fair and attractive paper in appearance; while the variety and spirit of its articles, and the dignity, self-respect, good-humor, and earnestness of its tone, will show how profoundly mistaken are those who suppose that folly and extravagance are necessarily characteristic of the discussion of the question. THE JOURNAL is indispensable to those who would truly understand the character of the movement, and measure its progress.— George William Curtis, in Harper's Weekly.

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