

missioners that the sole local authority in rural districts should be the board of guardians, with the Poor Law medical officer as the sole health officer. They thought, on the contrary, that the area of the union was too small for some purposes; and that the Poor Law medical officers, encumbered as they were with private practice and other onerous duties, could act only as assistants. They therefore advocated the creation in each county of a county board, composed of representatives of the justice, and of each local sanitary authority, whether boards of guardians, local government boards, or the town councils of smaller boroughs; and that these county boards should supervise and control the action of the purely local authorities, and appoint one or more highly trained medical officers of health, with good salaries, required to devote their whole time to the work, and irremovable except by the consent of the central authority. To these officials the Poor Law medical officers should act as paid assistants. In order to provide for the wider watershed districts, and to execute large drainage-works, these county boards should be empowered to unite with each other in appointing joint committees for such purposes. They also advocated the establishment of a system of registration of sickness, which might be accomplished through the agency of the county health officers. Mr. Hastings concluded by expressing his hope that the two influential Associations represented there might find it in their power to support the forthcoming Bill, or that any representations they might hereafter have to make would be received, as he was convinced they would, with candid consideration.

Dr. Stewart, in the unavoidable absence of Dr. Rumsey and Mr. W. H. Michael, said that he represented the British Medical Association, the members of which were substantially agreed as to the absolute necessity of independence in the medical officers of health, for without it, it was vain to expect anything like a satisfactory discharge of their preventive functions. This independence must extend to freedom from the caprice and control of the local authorities; therefore, their appointment must not be subject to the consent of the local authorities. They must be independent of private practice, for their prospects of success in that respect would be damaged by the faithful discharge of their public duties. This involved an adequately large salary; and that could only be obtained from a large area. The duties of a principal health officer require special training, and could not be properly discharged without it. The Poor Law medical officers themselves

THE
WOMAN QUESTION:

PAPERS

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THE
WOMAN QUESTION.

THE FEMALE FRANCHISE.

WHEN vaccination was first introduced into England, the grand objection raised against it was that it would undoubtedly alter human nature, and infuse into the minds of men a brutish and bovine spirit too horrible to contemplate. Tales which made the blood of listeners run cold were in circulation concerning persons who had undergone the unnatural process, and who had forthwith and evermore lowed like cows and butted like oxen. It was clear to the meanest understandings (particularly clear, indeed, to the understandings which were meanest), that Nature never intended any innovation of the kind, and that the most frightful perils always accompanied a change in the order of things as by custom established.

Some years hence the debates in Parliament on Woman Suffrage, such as that which took place last summer, and such as will only too probably take place on the second reading of Mr Jacob Bright's Bill on Wednesday next, will appear to the students who may take the trouble to refer to them exceedingly like the discussions on vaccination in the days of our fathers. The dreadful danger about introducing the political virus into the female constitution obviously is,

that, when they have taken it, women will cease to be women. Already fearful myths abound concerning the existence in England and America of strong-minded creatures who display ox-like obstinacy about their rights, raise their voices in unseemly fashion on platforms, and run their heads against a hundred things much too hard for them to deal with. This is the paramount objection to giving votes to women. Other reasons are sometimes feebly urged, but they are so manifestly futile that nobody minds them much; indeed, the advocates of the measure are wont to set them up like nine-pins for the pleasure of bowling them over. But the alarm about changing women into some yet unknown and dimly-conceived species of animal, developed by Unnatural Selection, and having none of the merits of either sex, and all the worst qualities of both, is the real bugbear which, tacitly or avowedly, determines the controversy.

It is, of course, a high compliment which men pay to women when they consider that any important alteration in them must needs be for the worse. Passing over the critics who in one breath say that women are vain, weak, and empty-headed, and in the next fiercely deny that they need any better education or nobler interests than they have at present, we find that there are plenty of men who honestly think that, as regards their wives and daughters, things are very much as they would have them; and that they have nothing better to do than to "rest and be thankful." In their opinion English women, such as they are under the present *régime*, with all their little loveable defects, and large compensation of high moral qualities, are the best companions they can desire; the

"sweetness and light" of dark and bitter existence. Any change of law which could possibly go deep enough essentially to modify female character they deprecate with the same vehemence wherewith they would meet a proposal from the sky to substitute a comet for the dear old mild-shining moon,—a rather feeble and variable satellite, it is true, but still quite as good a luminary as they can reasonably expect, and endeared by a thousand tender associations, honeyed and otherwise. It is to these opponents, we think, that the friends of Woman Suffrage ought to direct all their efforts of conversion, for they are probably open to conviction; and if one of the speakers in the approaching debate will fairly address himself to reassure them, we believe that such victory as is possible under the circumstances will be obtained. Time is merely wasted in proving, on the one hand, that women are worthy of the franchise, or, on the other, that they sadly need it. To the first argument their enemies reply as some reviewers did to Mrs Stowe's appeal on behalf of the negroes. "If slavery can create such Black Christs as Uncle Tom, then it would be a thousand pities to destroy so beneficent an institution." To the second they answer, that the more women need the franchise, the less, by the hypothesis, can they be fit to exercise it. Good or bad, strong or weak, it is hard to say which way their claims are most satisfactorily rejected.

Will the possession of votes for members of Parliament really turn women into unfeminine monsters? About as much, we think, as vaccination has made us all into Minotaurs. What may be the precise changes introduced into the typical character of women as a larger sphere is opened to them, and

loftier conceptions of justice and public good are superadded to the family interests and personal vanities to which they have been hitherto bound, it is, of course, impossible altogether to foretell. As Mr Jowett says in his introduction to Plato's Republic, "how much of the difference between men and women is due to education and the opinions of mankind, or physically inherited from the habits and opinions of former generations, it is impossible to say." Till experiments are tried on an extended scale and for several generations, no one can offer even a reasonable guess as to the sort of power which the minds of women may develop, or of what amount of muscular strength and endurance their now semi-valetudinarian frames may prove to be capable. But one thing is clear. It is not for those who profess belief in the advantages of liberty, nay, in the beneficence of the divine gift of moral free agency to responsible beings, to take it for granted that the change from subjection to independence, from a narrow circle of duties and interests to a wide one, from the condition of a Jesuit under vow of obedience to that of a free soul owing allegiance to God alone, can be for women at large a change of a hurtful or deteriorating kind. Even to betray the fear that it may be so, is to stultify all our professions of liberal political faith, and all our admissions of the cardinal postulates of enlightened theology. Men and women differ indeed in many ways; and, in our humble opinion, every free development of one or the other only sets in clearer relief whatever is best and most beautiful in the masculine or feminine character. The free man becomes more manly and the free woman more womanly than either could be if crushed into the dead level of servility.

But, however this may be, it is certainly too much to assume that the difference between them is of so topsy-turvy a nature that what is morally best for the man is morally worst for the woman; that the idleness which is the root of all evil for him is the fount of every virtue for her; and that, while his nature only blooms in the sunshine and the free air of heaven, hers, like a fungus, grows best in a cellar in the dark.

That a Government professing to be the most Liberal which England has ever seen should last year have set its foot deliberately on the claims of women to political independence was surely a portentous indication of the hollowness of its pretensions, or at least of the exiguous limitations of its liberality. That Mr Gladstone should this year have shown the singular discourtesy of refusing to receive a deputation of ladies, delegates from the London, Manchester, Edinburgh, and Dublin branches of the National Society for Woman Suffrage, is, in our judgment, the best argument which has yet been furnished to women for persisting in asserting their claims. No body of similar numerical or social importance which could command direct representation in Parliament would be liable to receive such a slight from the great *Liberal Premier*.—*April 29, 1871.*

WOMEN'S ELECTORAL DISABILITIES.

WEDNESDAY'S debate on the Women's Disabilities Bill was remarkable in many ways; but scarcely so instructive as the first leader in the *Times* which, of course, came next morning to strike home the last nail into the coffin of that lost measure. What though Mr Bouverie, Mr Scourfield, Mr Beresford Hope, and Mr James manned their walls, like Chinese Engineers, with the most formidable hobgoblins they could dress up, and Mr Newdegate threatened that the result of giving votes to Protestant Englishwomen would undoubtedly increase the power of the Jesuits? what though the "landmarks of society" were beheld "uprooted" again and again by all these gentlemen, till those venerable objects assumed the characters of trees of liberty, to be set up and set down at a moment's warning? what though all these weary old follies marked the opposition in Parliament to Mr Bright's Bill? It may be truly said that, for the production out of its treasury of things new and old in the way of fallacies, the writer in the *Times* outshone the M.P.'s altogether. The burdens of the State, he gravely tells us, "are not confined to paying taxes; they consist in those exertions by which the prosperity of the State is maintained." Now, admitting for a moment that the "nurture and admonition" of children is a wholly unimportant office in the

Women's Electoral Disabilities. 11

commonwealth, and that all the risks and sufferings incurred by women in the divine task of giving life entitle them to no such recognition or gratitude as the dangers run by men in taking it in the battlefield, let us examine this new theory of constitutional rights expounded by the *Times*.

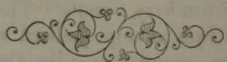
Hitherto we had imagined it was accepted as an axiom that with us taxation and representation were correlatives; and that it was that particular kind of "burden of the State" which consists in paying taxes in hard cash to which we attached the right to have a voice in their expenditure. When the last Reform Bill extended the franchise to thousands of men who could neither read nor write, and to thousands more who were sickly or crippled, and utterly unfit to serve as soldiers, nobody dreamed of observing that "the burdens of the State were not confined to paying taxes," and that those who exercised rights of citizenship should be capable of anything else than of paying them, and voting how they should be applied. But now that women taxpayers are in question, and that a fresh Income Tax adds yet heavier burdens, pressing with peculiar cruelty on the very class which demands the suffrage, the great organ of masculine selfishness suddenly discovers that it is not on taxation at all that representation is based, but on certain "exertions" for the "prosperity" of the State. "As Mr James justly argues," we are told, "the exclusion of women is founded upon the fact that those who are incapable of such exertions are also necessarily incapable of comprehending the questions connected with their public control." Let this delightful argument be applied to the lower class of masculine voters,

and what arrant and insolent Toryism it would seem! Apply it to a dozen women we could name in a breath, and how ludicrous it is! Think of the "necessary incapacity" of educated English ladies generally to "comprehend the questions" which their footmen and chimney-sweeps are, by the principles of the Constitution, supposed to be perfectly qualified to judge! To complete its logic, the *Times* adds a few statements to which its own columns, every week, supply the best possible refutation. Only last week it denounced the disgusting injustice of the law in taking from a widowed mother of blameless character the religious instruction of her little girl, in compliance with the merely supposed wishes of the dead father. This week it now tells us complacently that, in return for the lack of all political rights, "women have an overwhelming influence in those affairs in which they are chief actors; they are as influential in domestic life and in the education of children as men in public life." Again, never a week elapses without the police reports recording some pitiful story of a wife beaten to death by her husband; or left to starve in poverty and disease by the man to whom she has given her all. Hospitals, workhouses, governesses' benevolent institutions, and the Society for the Employment of Women, alike supply stories without end of daughters brought up to helplessness and left penniless; widows who discover at once their widowhood and their ruin; and sisters and mothers who have lent their little capital to their brothers and sons and are left at last, by fraud or extravagance, in utter destitution. And in a world where these tales come every day to fill our ears and sicken our souls, the *Times* sweetly tells

women to be content without any political rights, because, "as matters now stand, men undertake to provide for women a safe and sheltered sphere within which they may develop all the gentle powers of their nature!" *Do they undertake it?* Then let the laws compel them to fulfil their undertaking! Let us have one thing or the other. Let the State secure for every woman "a safe and sheltered sphere," and a freedom from all the burdens for which she has no corresponding privileges; or, let her have equal rights with a man, and have done for ever with the cant of the "safe and sheltered sphere," which to thousands is only a mockery.

We are glad to think that a truer comprehension of the question than is at present possible to the *Times* or Mr Newdegate is rapidly gaining ground in England; and of this Wednesday's debate affords convincing proof. The defeat of the Bill was not really a defeat; it gave the fullest promise of victory in the end, and an end not very remote. The Premier, who a year ago, with eyes as unprejudiced as Mr Newdegate's, saw in the proposal to give the franchise to tax-paying women "the unsettling, not to say uprooting, of the old landmarks of society," discovered on Wednesday that "the question of the recognition of woman's rights is after all a question of degree;" and, just as two years ago he found that Mr John Bright's scheme of justice to Ireland was an excellent thing, so now he is prepared to admit that Mr Jacob Bright may be "the real benefactor of his country." Mr Gladstone's speech showed that he is being educated; and Mr Disraeli's vote, following the speeches of two members of his last Cabinet, Mr Ward Hunt and Lord John Manners, showed that the Conserva-

tives are being educated yet more speedily. Another year or two, perhaps a single year, will suffice for the schooling of our party politicians; and then "the better half of creation," as in mocking gallantry it is called, will have a chance of securing for itself justice and fair-play.—*May 6th, 1871.*



WORDS OF WEIGHT.

THE rapid growth of literature on the "woman question" indicates a prevailing impression that hitherto society has failed to draw from women all the good they are capable of doing, that it leaves their powers insufficiently developed, and that we accordingly find a wide diffusion of misery dogging the steps of wasted energy. The mission of the present day may be said, on the one hand, to "utilise" women; and, on the other side, to give them justice. Those two objects have ever been united, and are, indeed, inseparable. Injustice does much harm to women, but it does more to men—it recoils upon them and depraves their character. For, after all, there is some truth in the paradox that Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates, that it is a greater evil to do injustice than to suffer it. The extravagance and frivolity of women—the favourite topics of small satirists, is simply the reverse side of the medal that they contemplate with ecstasy—their dependence, irresponsibility, and idleness. The position of women is excessively unfavourable to the growth of any virtues except those that flourish among slaves. To a being endowed with reason or forethought, what can be more desolating and demoralising than the reflection that her destiny is not in her own hands, that she is as clay in the

hands of the potter, that caprice or accident, not merit or worth, is the arbiter of her career? Yet such is the ideal position of woman, according to our grandmothers' notions. Standing on the banks of the broad river of human existence, she is not suffered to "paddle her own canoe," but has to wait till some craft, driven by the current, or wearied with its emptiness, invites her on board. To many thousands there is one sure fate: they must stand till their hair turns grey, and learn that the world has no place for them.

To the eye of reason, the so-called "sphere" of woman is the strangest of anomalies and the most absurd of paradoxes. It arose from historical accident, and is consecrated by nothing more imposing than the hoary hand of time. Its real strength lies in the cluster of emotions that always gather round the sexual relation. Opinions are tenacious in proportion to the strength of feeling connected with them, and the area they cover. In both respects, it would follow that the current theories about women's "sphere" would be difficult to remove. The only way to destroy them is by constantly digging at the foundations, and every one who removes a bag of earth may congratulate himself on helping on the good work. One of the sandbanks thrown up in defence of veteran prejudice is the alleged intellectual inferiority of woman. It is interesting to compare this with the Roman and Greek theories about the lawfulness of slavery. In a certain early condition of social life nobody felt the least uneasiness in compelling men or animals to work for him, nor was the savage conscience disturbed by the exercise of considerable violence on those who obeyed with reluc-

tance. But in Greece and Rome a time arrived at which there was enough of uneasiness to prompt a search for soothing beliefs. The Roman theory was characteristic. It was laid down that slaves were originally captives in war (which, in point of fact, was not true, or, at least, not proved), and that, as the conqueror had a right to kill them, if he spared their lives he might lawfully keep them as slaves. The Greeks sought another explanation, and they found it in the natural aptitude of slaves for the servile condition. Just so, the opponents of women's rights allege that subordination, or a certain mild form of servitude, is the natural condition of woman, for no more profound or recondite reason than the fact that such hitherto has been her state. This fallacy is very skilfully ridiculed in the following passage:

Visiting some time ago the vast subterranean cave of Adelsberg, I lingered for some moments beside the famous river which has no outlet into the upper world of lights, but runs its whole course—

"In caverns measureless to man
Down to a tideless sea."

In the river (as all the world knows) dwells the *Proteus Anguineus*, a creature who, by long habitation of darkness, has lost the power of vision, and displays only the rudiments of the organs of sight. The poor animals of this singular species are smooth to the touch and rather colourless, but extremely soft, and on the whole, inoffensive. . . . I could not refrain picturing to myself a few audacious ones among them striving to wriggle out of their styx (through their mill-race, perhaps, or other available medium), while a stern *Spectator* sat on the bank, and pushed them back as far as he was able underground, remarking solemnly, "Le droit dérive de la capacité! You have lived so long in darkness, you stupid fishes, that you cannot use your eyes at all; so do not attempt to push yourselves where you or your fry might possibly learn to use them thereafter. Till you 'show us that you can feel a general interest' in the course of the Danube and the Vistula, you must go back to your underground river."—F. P. COBBE.

The paragraph we have quoted is one out of one thousand one hundred and seventy-six similar quotations from the sayings and writings of many authors on the "woman question," gathered together with extraordinary patience by the author of the anonymous work before us.* The sentences are arranged according to a scheme of reasoning which exhibits, in turn, almost every phase of the question, forming a curious sort of mosaic argument, which to some minds (so strong are the separate bits) will be more effective and durable than a picture painted by a single hand. Putting all the admissions and assertions together, the case for women is completely made out, although many of the authorities are not consistent supporters; the writer who has affirmed that A B is equal to C D, has notoriously stated somewhere else his entire disbelief of the further proposition that C D is equal to E F. Mr Gladstone, for instance, says sweet things in 'Words of Weight' about the claims of women; but when they came to be seriously urged in the House of Commons to the franchise, and in the House of Lords to the ownership of their own property when married, he simply put his foot on them in the first case, and let the Lords have their will in the second. Nor has any measure tending to help them emanated from his Cabinet as a counter-balance to these rebuffs. Indeed, as the book before us quotes, very aptly, from Miss Helen Taylor: "It is very well worthy of note that no Bill for the advantage of women has been brought into Parliament, except by the men who vote for giving them the suffrage."

* *Words of Weight on the Woman Question.* Longmans.

Not the least valuable part of the 'Words of Weight' is the thorough manner in which it deals with all the evils flowing from the low position of women. About one hundred and forty extracts are gathered to illustrate and support the following propositions:

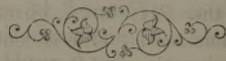
Men are determined to keep women idle, and they monopolise all profitable employments, and leave to women those that are ill-paid, which women have no choice but to accept, and they are therefore slaves, in whose good treatment their taskmasters have no self-interest.

Women are now forced to take employments far less fitted for them than those from which they are excluded. Especially hard is the case of needlewomen, who are ground to the dust and literally worked to death by cruel and callous employers; and on the proceeds of such work as poor girls can get, it is not possible for them to live; while the world looks on, but does not feel compassion. (There is reason to believe that of late the condition of needlewomen has greatly improved.)

The pit which society has provided for friendless girls, it should not pretend to ignore: for prostitution is a canker which gnaws at the heart of society. . . . The chief source of all this misery and vice is the miserable remuneration of women's work. To cure the evil we must remove the causes, while at the same time we endeavour to lessen the effect.

We should have been glad to see a few extracts from 'Plato's Republic' on the position of women. Conservative on many points, Plato was most advanced on this subject. He would assign the same functions to women as to men, so far as they could discharge them, and give them the same education. His observations on the "nature" of women, a phrase that led captive the astute intellect of Aristotle, are very pertinent. "Nature," he says, is used in two senses. Bald men and long-haired men are of different kinds or nature, but it would not be inferred that, if bald men make shoes, long-haired men must be excluded from the cobbler's art. In another sense,

nature means facility of acquiring any knowledge. Now, in some few things, said Plato, women surpassed men, as in making pastry and preserves, but in most things the men are superior. Both sexes have a share of natural gifts, and women ought to be admitted to all pursuits as well as men, though in none would they attain to equal excellence. Women, like men, display predilections for knowledge, for war, or for money-making. Some are fit to be rulers. To give women the education necessary to fit them for these pursuits is not against nature; it is the existing usage which contradicts nature. So he would have the women strip for gymnastics, and the wives of the guardians must take part in war, the lighter task being assigned to them on account of their comparative weakness. In all this Plato saw nothing absurd, for what is useful is noble, what is hurtful is base (*τὸ μὲν ὠφέλιμον καλόν, τὸ δὲ βλαβερὸν αἰσχρόν*). Making allowance for the touch of extravagance that runs through the whole of the 'Republic,' these views, put forward by Plato more than two thousand years ago, are very refreshing; they attest the vitality of truth, and the greatness of the obstacles to its realisation.—*February 25, 1871.*



THE VICE OF CONTENTMENT.

OF all the conventional virtues, none occupies a more prominent place in sermons and copy-books than contentment. We do not know what Mr Tupper says about it, but his illustrious predecessors tell us that a contented mind is a continual feast. To the poor is the same gospel preached, and they are constantly enjoined to be content with the station in which they find themselves. Against so much authority it would be impossible to contend; and it must suffice to show that the favourite virtue of proverb-mongers and divines is not without exception. When Socrates entered on his philosophical mission, encouraged by the oracle of his country, the task he set himself was to destroy the contentment of his fellow-citizens, and to make them thoroughly dissatisfied with their knowledge and opinions. His work was like a gadfly to sting the sleek horse of Athens, and to rouse it from its easy self-satisfaction, to make it conscious of its ignorance by emptying it of all the false images of knowledge.

Contentment, therefore, is a virtue or a vice according to circumstances. One is contented whose ideal of happiness is realised. But this is not anywhere called a virtue. The contentment that is inculcated by moralists, is the breaking down of our ideal

to fit in with our circumstances, and the suppression of desires that either cannot be gratified, or cannot be gratified without a disproportionate expenditure of labour, or the neglect of important duties. If an ideal is merely the reflection of an insatiable vanity, the propriety of attempting to curb it is manifest; as this is the proper case for the ancient maxim, "If you desire to be rich, study not to increase your goods, but to diminish your desires." But in regard to all wholesome and natural desires, one does well never to be contented with what one has, and yet never to be unhappy about it. The motto "*Excelsior*" implies a certain dissatisfaction with what exists, but it need not be very much; a very little discontent in a well-regulated mind may suffice to prevent it from falling into stagnation. One can hardly recommend contentment to our agricultural labourers, with their large families and slender wages. Unless they are stirred up by the demon of discontent, it is hard to see how their position can be improved. Contentment with such a position is the last degradation. A man is never wholly a slave until he becomes content with the loss of his freedom. The lowest stage is to be willing to be a slave.

There are some things, however, we should never be contented with, as bad laws and bad social arrangements. The evil they do is not confined to ourselves. They are a perpetual fountain of mischief. If we leave them untouched, the work of reformation is all the harder for our successors. Self-ease may plead for toleration of abuses, but the voice of duty admits no indulgence. Least of all should any class of persons submit to injustice, or to a low and unworthy conception of their work. Contentment with unjust

treatment is the depth of personal abasement. When once a slave feels pride in his yoke, his subjection and degradation are complete. We may feel sure that no one would ever be reconciled with a low idea of his place in creation, unless some compensation were made to him. It is when the lower part of his nature is bribed that it is possible to subjugate the higher; the cry for freedom is often stifled in "the flesh-pots of Egypt." It thus is often a duty to be discontented, when our inclination leads us the other way. More especially is this the case if it happens that we escape the direct mischievous effects of an institution to which the class we belong to is subject, while many of our comrades groan under it, and silently beseech our help.

Whatever be the reason, contentment has nowhere else been so conspicuous a vice as among women. As a class, whatever the treatment to which they have been subjected, women have never shown an inclination to rebel. In casting our eye back along the pages of history, we find only one class that never troubled the world with insurrections. They have been shut up in their own homes, as in ancient Greece, or in India; they have had to submit to the tyranny of polygamous husbands; they have been made the prey and sport of combatants; but they have never, as a class, attempted to work out their own deliverance. This is why the women in Utah have been found to make a petition for polygamy. They cannot plead the sanctity of immemorial usage in their community, for their polygamy is not a generation old; they cannot excuse themselves by the general practice of the civilised world, for polygamy is confined to very ancient, or very backward, societies.

In spite of the novelty of the usage, the women in Utah, the young and free, as well as those that are "too much married," are not only content with the system of Brigham Young, but are even found among its passionate advocates. This is very striking when we remember how polygamy wounds feminine pride to the very quick, and lacerates the best feelings of women. But the explanation is simple. Polygamy, as such, would find no advocates among the women; if it were to stand on its own merits, as a social institution merely, it would be consumed with their wrath. But it is, so they think, commanded by the Deity; it is a part of their religion, and upon their submission to it depends their everlasting welfare. When a woman finds her husband take a second, or a third wife, she tries to accept it as a heavenly dispensation; and when, as inevitably happens, storms arise, she blames herself or her husband or the other wives, but never dreams of tracing her grievances to the odious institution of polygamy. If she feels inclined to fret, she prays for a better disposition, and comes to regard the dictates of her higher nature as suggestions of the Evil One. Her understanding, once subjugated by a false worship, lends itself to the suppression of her better moral feelings.

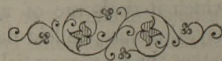
If such facts are borne in mind, there is no difficulty in appreciating the argument, so commonly used against improving the status of women, that they are perfectly satisfied with their condition. Whence does this contentment arise? Certainly not from any provision for their welfare. If Comte's views were adopted, and a pension given by the State to every unmarried woman, we could understand their acquiescence. Perhaps we might think that they lost their

birthright for a mess of pottage, but then they would have the pottage, and that would be something. But we have not yet accepted Comtism, and we hold that women should be dependent, without taking care that they shall always have some one to depend upon. It should not excite surprise if some women, finding in their bitter experience, how frail often is the protection in which they are invited to trust, should think that it would be better if their voices were listened to in the making of laws.

But there is no denying that many women are contented with their subordinate position. Some, like the Mormon women, think that our social usages are of divine obligation, and that the subjection of one-half the species to the other half is a matter of religious duty. Considering the want of scientific instruction in the teaching of boys, and still more of girls, no one can be astonished at the diffusion of such an idea. Those who are ignorant of the history of civilisation cannot be expected to rate some social arrangements at their true value. We know well that the subjection of women is of far other than heavenly origin, and that it is most rigorously enforced among the races that are not most remarkable for high religious principle. The farther back we go, the stronger is the supremacy of men. Savages have the belief in its most severe form. They have an unhesitating conviction that women were made for them as toys or beasts of burden. The highest moral idea of Kant's, that every moral being is an end-in-himself, and not a means or instrument for another, is one of slow growth; and one of which women have, as yet, but partially reaped the benefit.

But there is another class of women, who bear the palm of contentment. In every system there is a large amount of happiness. It will not be denied that the Hindoo conception of marriage, and the practice of marrying children, are very pernicious and degrading to women; but an impartial observer would be obliged to admit that the average amount of domestic happiness was not much less in India than in England. Nay, if we put it to a plébiscite, and asked the women of India whether they would not rather have our system, the answer of the great majority would be an indignant refusal. If it be said they are unenlightened, then what becomes of the argument from their contentment? Does it not show that the mere fact of their being satisfied with a bad system is a reason why, if possible, we should make them discontented with it? So, in this country, a great many women, having found in life as much as they had been taught to expect, are perfectly contented, and, so far, may be left to themselves; but they go farther, and condemn those who are not contented. They do not wish any alteration, because they do not suffer by the existing system. It is a very easy virtue to be content with an institution that smites others and spares yourself. To be content that our neighbour's house should be on fire does not require any heroic stress of principle. To be content with the misery that is only at the next door, and has not reached us, is not very virtuous or magnanimous. Yet of this kind is most of the contentment of women under their present disabilities. A woman who has no money, except what a successful husband liberally gives her, is indignant that women who are exposed to the depredations of mercenary husbands should

ask the protection of the law. Women who find in marriage an easy livelihood are eloquent in their opposition to those unfeminine creatures who, not being able to catch a husband, are anxious to support themselves in what they call "unfeminine" occupations. Those who are lucky under the present system loftily tell us that they are perfectly content "with their sphere." If we subtract from the class of women those who are content because they are personally well off and those who are the victims of perverted religious teaching, we shall find not many left to praise the existing arrangements. Now, it is the duty of those who are well off to be discontented—not with their individual lot, but with a bad system from which many suffer. They ought to shake off the vice of contentment, and help those who are not equally the favourites of fortune.—*January 27, 1872.*



WOMEN AND WAR.

PEOPLE have often wondered why so little respect is shown to members of the dramatic profession. In ancient Rome it was almost infamous—nowadays there is a lingering belief that it is not altogether respectable—to be an actor. The truth appears to be that no class whose object is to minister to our pleasures ever enjoys the highest measure of respect. The higher the pleasure that is given the more will sincere regard be shown, but it will always be tinged with a certain lightness of estimation. On the other hand, the clerical profession always obtains great deference from religious people (an M.P. has been known to fall on his knees in the lobby of the House of Commons before a Bishop), because the interests with which it deals are of momentous importance. It may, therefore, be laid down as a pretty safe general rule that the more essential and important the services rendered by any class to the community, the greater will be the measure of respect accorded to it. To this rule the female sex is no exception.

Among savages, the low estimation in which women are held is due to their small social value. The first state of mankind is generally a war with wild beasts; the next is war with one another. The

savage is, by the necessity of his position, a fighting animal. Women being much weaker than men, and subject to certain drawbacks, are seldom even a good second line of defence. The brunt of the conflict necessarily falls on men. Hence the practice among nearly all savage tribes of killing their female children, and making up the deficiency by stealing wives from communities less warlike. It pays the men better, so to speak, to destroy most of the infant females, and to practise martial exercises whereby they may hope to secure wives when they want them. The very slow increase of population favours such a mode of life. Tribes that live by hunting require immense room, sometimes an allowance of nearly one hundred square miles to each individual. Their surplus population is kept down by fighting. As, however, women are the spoil of the conquerors, they are less reduced in numbers, and a greater proportion of females will reach old age, so that a good many of them may be killed when young, without any danger of inordinately reducing the population. Since women are of small utility to savages, we need not be surprised if they should not be highly esteemed. Sir John Lubbock says an Australian probably cares less for his wife than his dog, and, when he has eaten both, has perhaps a more affectionate recollection of the dog. Lady Morgan says of the semi-civilised man of Australasia: "He marked her (woman) at the hour of her birth for his slave, by breaking the joints of her forefinger; he renewed the covenant of his supremacy in her first youth, by knocking out her front teeth; and when he elected this bond-slave as the object of his passions, he intimated his preference by spitting in her face and forcing her to his den. . . ."

He loaded her shoulders, wounded by his stripes, with weights which his own indolence refused to bear, and speared her to the earth if she resisted the imposition."

As civilisation advances, women are more valued because they are more useful. When the sole object of a man's life is to protect himself from wild beasts and procure a simple dinner, he is not obliged to rely on the assistance of women. But in the pastoral state man has more complex interests; he requires better food, and he begins to see in woman a cook, weaver, and tailor. He might force woman to render him those services, but he would soon find out that kindness was a better way. Hence, although a pastoral people may be very warlike, it will give women an improved, though still very subordinate, position. Yet more favourable to women is the introduction of agriculture, and the multiplication of the arts and wants of life. We find an apt illustration of this state of society among the German tribes that overthrew the Roman Empire. They are spoken of sometimes as barbarians, but the expression is misapplied. They were not rich, they combined in large numbers only for special purposes, and they had no great architecture; but they possessed the essentials of civilised society. They were much what a colony of English settlers would be in a remote continent, if their political instincts were not sufficiently strong to establish a permanent government. Their habits of fighting arose from the constant pressure of a growing population; an irruption of barbarians on the Roman frontiers is the ancient prototype of our peaceful colonisation. It was inevitable, however, that their

warlike habits should be prejudicial to women. The sword was not only the instrument for settling disputes between different tribes, but it was the last appeal in all quarrels. If two men could not agree they had to fight it out. However little such a tribunal might coincide with justice, it had the merit of favouring the influence of natural selection. The hardiest alone could triumph with such a system of judicature. It was a tribunal where women would, as a rule, come off second best. Usually when a woman was wronged, or thought herself so, she was allowed to fight by proxy, if she could get a champion; but sometimes, *per audaciam cordis*, she preferred to avenge herself. Women were, therefore, in a subordinate position, because they were forced to trust to individual men to protect their dearest rights, and even ensure their personal safety. Such a condition was not inconsistent with a great deal of respect, and many of the German tribes held the curious superstition that women had the art of divination or prophecy, so that what power they wanted in this world was in a measure compensated by their greater authority in relation to futurity. Tacitus tells us they seldom undertook any important expedition without consulting their "wise women."

A far greater step in the advancement of women was chivalry. This was an overstrained devotion to women as a reaction from the licentiousness and violence of the feudal period. It exhibits a struggle between the brutalising influence of war and the finer conceptions of the character of women inherited as a mixed tradition from Roman law and German customs. A state of constant warfare, such as we find in the middle ages, would, if unchecked, ulti-

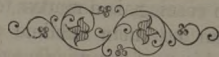
mately have destroyed European civilisation. The horrible treatment to which women were subjected by the victorious soldiery is well known; and such is the essentially degrading character of war, that even at the present day it is thought a merit in disciplined soldiers to abstain from gross outrages on women in the enemy's territory. Chivalry was an attempt to preserve women from the polluting influence of war. Its extravagance, so well ridiculed in 'Don Quixote,' was natural to the period. An age that produced the Crusades was quite equal to the most fantastic devotion to women, albeit the devotion was perhaps more frequently expressed in words than in deeds. At the same time the waters were too troubled for women to swim in; they were necessarily kept in the background. Law, therefore, could hardly venture to impose duties on woman; it sought to find for her the shelter of a male breast. Women were recognised only, or chiefly in an indirect manner, through their husbands or relatives. Inasmuch as law imposed few duties on women, it could not bestow many rights; it dealt, in the first instance, with their natural or acquired protectors. Such is the general and most favourable construction of the principle of the English common law, and we shall not say there was no reason for it.

The scene is now changed. War, once the normal state, is now felt to be a painful and almost unbearable anomaly. The unit of society is not the fighting man; it is the labourer. Industry has supplanted war. The wager of battle has given place to trial by jury; the knight has been superseded by the policeman. The old theory of protection of women is obsolete; because the necessity for it has dis-

appeared. If women are allowed a fair field and no favour, they are quite able to support themselves. The immense majority are self-supporting. It is only in the upper classes that we find women in a state of helpless dependence. The working class has been emancipated from the traditions of feudalism by the stern teaching of necessity: the women have been obliged to work. But the middle class is still in the bondage of feudal notions, and allows itself to be dominated by exploded ideas. The reason is not far to seek. In the dark ages all power and respect were centred in the feudal hierarchy; there were no merchants to outstrip noblemen in splendour; the poor cultivators of the soil were too humble to imitate the great lords of the soil. When, however, wealth began to increase; when lordly proprietors fell into difficulties, and required the help of bankers; when their estates passed into plebeian hands, the new race of proprietors did their best to follow closely in the footsteps of the class into which they had forced themselves. The infection spread lower; the habits and manners of aristocratic society were imitated by wealthy commoners. Thus the idea of "gentleman" and "gentlewoman" was indissolubly connected with the members of a wealthy and idle class. The "gentleman" who hires a horse for Rotten Row in the middle of the day, and does his work inconveniently in the evening, is a martyr to an antiquated prejudice. From no more sublime origin than the half-barbaric fashions of the middle ages do we derive the absurd idea that a lady ought not to work, that her existence is purely ornamental, that her utility consists in being useless.

There is scope for women in industry, although

not in war. Women can work much better than they can fight. Not to employ them in industry is a prodigious waste. But it is more. Women form the great mass of the non-combatant population; their interests are imperilled by any breach of the peace; their whole influence would naturally be unfavourable to war. By emancipating women we should liberate a great peace-loving power, and enormously strengthen the pacific tendency of commerce. If, in addition, women obtained the political influence given to wealth or labour, the security of peace would be increased. In war they have everything to lose, nothing to gain, and the natural tenderness of their dispositions would make them averse to encouraging bellicose passions. Thus if the forces acting upon modern society were allowed free action, they would raise women to a position more dignified and useful than they have ever before enjoyed; at the same time the elevation of women would react on those forces, and help to secure for them an universal sway.—
February 25, 1871.



WOMEN AND WORK.

IN India the ambition of the humblest classes when they become rich enough is to seclude their women in the privacy of the zenanah. Poverty may compel them to send their wives to market, or their daughters to draw water, and thereby to expose them to the rude gaze of men; but, as soon as they can afford it, they give the shelter of what we should call a prison, what they more kindly, and, perhaps, with truth, call a home. Although comparatively only a fraction of the female population of India enjoy the honour of life in the zenanah, yet the example of the upper classes operates as an ideal, which affects the lives of all the women. In like manner, Englishmen generally hold that women should live in the sanctuary of home, as wives, if possible—if not, then as dependents. What “the rude gaze of men” is to a fastidious Hindoo, that to an equally enlightened Englishman is “the rude contact with men.” The picture, in both cases, has, doubtless, a pleasing side. It is so grateful to human nature, especially to male human nature, to exercise authority; and when this authority is represented in the relation of a tender husband to a trusting and obedient wife, we can have no difficulty in appreciating the attractiveness of the picture. Nearly everybody loves power, and nearly

everybody hates tyranny ; the golden mean, a power lovingly used and sweetly submitted to, exercises a well-known effect on the imagination. It is a combination which, uniting one of the strongest instincts of brutes with a sense of justice peculiar to man, is naturally fascinating. The proper destiny of women, we are, therefore, assured, is to be sheltered in homes provided and maintained by men. There may be a few persons, not so provided for, to whom employment ought to be given; but the cases are so entirely exceptional, that we should not ask that the law may be altered or modified on their account; for what, after all, is the convenience of an insignificant minority? It is a hardship for the few who do not find a haven of safety in the domestic ark to be exposed shelterless to the storms of life; and it would, in their interests, be a kindness to open professions to them; but society must suffer the minority to be shipwrecked, if that be necessary, to maintain the condition and feelings most favourable to the ease and security of domestic life. Institutions designed for the benefit of all, and essential to the preservation of society, must not be imperilled for the convenience, or even for the existence, of a few old maids.

One might be tempted to argue that the interests of the majority do not require the sacrifice of the few; and that it is only the slothful self-content of a prosperous condition that makes anybody think so. One might say that surely marriage is, not such an odious institution that women must be driven into it by excluding them from all occupations; and that, even so, the sacrifice of spinsters is too heavy a price to pay. But there is clearer ground. The returns of the census take away the foundation of the popular

theory. The results of the census of 1851 are borne out by the census of 1861, and will be more strikingly confirmed by the census of 1871. One fact alone ought to be decisive. The actual surplus female population is nearly a million; and, even if all our soldiers and sailors were at home, would still amount to three-quarters of a million. Seeing that polygamy is not allowed, even if every man were to marry, there would remain three-quarters of a million to whom the sweets of domestic life are forbidden by an inevitable arithmetical necessity. Nay, more, of unmarried women above the age of twenty, there were, in 1861, upwards of two-and-a-half millions, while the married women numbered a trifle below four millions. If the prevailing social theory be sound, let us know what it means. It requires not the sacrifice of a small minority, although that would be no light matter, but that out of every three women one shall be left in penury and idleness, in order that a system may not be affected which provides for the other two. What, then, is to be said of a theory of the position of women which leaves a third of the population wholly out of account?

There is a figure of speech, taking the part for the whole, against which boys are put on their guard. This is the gigantic fallacy that pervades the discussions on this topic. Writers in the press look at the subject from a middle-class point of view. One small section of the people fills their horizon, and is taken by them for the whole population. The error is natural; but its effects are, nevertheless, painful and ludicrous. Our public instructors spin a web which they imagine is wide enough to cover the whole body politic, but in reality is only big enough to

bandage their eyes. From the shallow speculations built on an imperfect survey of the facts, we may go to the census, and ask how far the domestic theory is applicable to the circumstances of English women. Mr J. D. Milne, in a very careful and excellent work that has just been published,* thus sums up the census returns: "Three millions, or nearly one-half the whole number of women above twenty years of age, have *no* place in non-domestic industry, and remain at home as 'wives' and 'daughters'; one million occupy a secondary place in industry as 'farmers' wives,' 'shop-keepers' wives,' &c.; and the remaining two millions and a-half are engaged in non-domestic occupations on their own account, or are of independent means." To make this fact more impressive, we shall quote the statistics for the census of 1851 and 1861, as referring to women above the age of twenty:

	1851.	1861.
Engaged in independent industry, or possessed of independent means -	2,153,924	2,496,166
Wives and daughters (above 20) of farmers, innkeepers, shopkeepers, shoemakers, or specially returned as such - - - - -	459,115	458,021
Wives, widows, and daughters returned as of no occupation - - - - -	3,227,153	3,632,372
Paupers, &c. - - - - -	158,192	80,156
	5,998,384	6,666,715

Those who, in the face of such facts would, at the dictates of a sentimental theory, still shut the door of useful employment against women, must be capable

* *Industrial Employment of Women in the Middle and Lower Ranks.* By John Duguid Milne, Advocate. Revised Edition. Longmans.

of a sublime inhumanity. Carry out your beautiful and tender conception, insist upon the triumphing of your fine theory, and you sweep two millions of women into the workhouse or into the grave. But we will not attribute to inhumanity what is more easily explained by ignorance; for the lesson to be read in the miserable tables of the census is plain and manifest. It is no longer a question whether women shall be admitted to industrial occupations, and be allowed to earn a living by their own exertions; the only question that can be raised is, from what occupations or professions they should be excluded. To this question, we presume, there can only be one answer. No one will dare to say that women should be admitted to menial, ill-paid drudgery, but that they should be refused entrance to the higher and better paid professions. It is for women themselves to find out the occupations that are most suitable to them; and, just as in the case of men, they must be allowed to find their own level.

In spite, therefore, of the abstract idea so generally prevailing in regard to the proper sphere of women, we find the hard fact that such a theory is only applicable to the situation of one-half of the adult female sex; to the other half it is partially or wholly unsuitable. It does not, however, fail to exercise a profoundly mischievous influence. It cherishes the notion that the only proper or honourable employment for women is maternity, and that, if that fails them, they ought rather to remain in idleness than soil their fingers with work belonging to the sphere of men. The result is that all, or nearly all, who can afford to keep their women idle, do so. By the accidents of life, and the recklessness of heads of families,

it inevitably follows that a large number of those "protected" women are continually thrown on the world without means of subsistence or training likely to be of use to them. But a far larger class will continue in genteel poverty, too proud to work, rightly ashamed, and not absolutely forced, to beg. There is always a greater number of women whose time is of no pecuniary value, and who yet are the better for making a little money. The laws of political economy, and melancholy experience, complete the picture. Those women who do work for their own living find in competition with them other women, who are kept at home, and who are glad to earn a very little. The unskilled labour of women is therefore ill-paid; and those tasks that are easily learned are not sufficiently remunerated. All observers are agreed that in the generality of instances the low wages of women do not arise from the poorness of their work, but from the overcrowding of the market, in consequence of the worthlessness of time to many women.

The evil is fearfully great, and it must be confessed that a remedy is not easily found. According to the census, nearly two-thirds of the women find in some form or other a refuge in matrimony; and, with a chance of two to one in her favour, a young girl is not likely to regard a business as anything but a makeshift. Industrial employment is to a woman, although not to a man, the complement of a state of celibacy; and women may well be excused if they are not content with a condition that has all the discomfort, and none of the gilding, of monastic life. Our social system imposes on about two millions of women a vow of chastity and poverty, and it need

excite no astonishment if these involuntary nuns ceaselessly endeavour to escape from their position. All the unctuous flattery of devotees, all the watchfulness of lady superiors, all the absence of worldly cares, and all the consciousness of superior holiness, are wanted to reconcile women to a lot that they have freely chosen. We seldom consider the pressure put upon our two and a-half millions of adult unmarried women, whose position is worse than that of nuns, embittered by the recollection of withered hopes or vulgar cares. The painful dilemma thus emerges, that our mode of life consigns one-third of the adult female population to a position with which they never can be contented, and from which they are constantly struggling to escape.

The difficulty does not so much affect the case of unskilled labour. Women can generally find employment in work that requires little training; for, if they marry, they lose nothing. But when, as in the case of professions, a costly education and much laborious preparation are inevitable, we cannot, as a general rule, expect a father to put out his money until he has come to give up all hope of a husband for his daughter, and then it is too late to begin. The remedy is clear, though prejudice may hinder its adoption. Is it in the nature of things that married women should have no employment beyond the nursery? It must be borne in mind, looking at the question from a pecuniary point of view, that nursing is very nearly unskilled labour—that is to say, it does not require, or at least rarely obtains, much preliminary instruction. In the working classes, every woman, being the nurse of her own children, has to learn by experience, guided by the empirical observa-

tions of her female friends. In the case, therefore, of a woman, engaged in a highly-skilled and well-paid occupation, she would always be able to afford servants to do the greater part of the work. This is pretty much the existing practice with all who can afford it. A lady likes the drudgery of the nursery just as little as the drudgery of the kitchen, and is always well pleased to delegate her functions to servants. Probably a family would be quite as well attended to when the lady of the house made visits of usefulness, for which she got payment, as now when her time is spent in visits of ceremony, for which she neither receives nor deserves payment. The time would not be wasted in an elegant manner; but the receipt of cash for useful services would be no contemptible compensation. At all events, some satisfactory means ought to be provided to enable women, in all circles alike, to gain their own livelihood. It would, after trial, prove equally agreeable to both men and women. It would confer the boon upon women of a consciously useful life; it would relieve men from a burden. It would, indirectly, solve other problems. With two millions and a half of unmarried, adult women, what can be expected but a state of things by which millions of men are degraded, and thousands of women are brought to far worse degradation? Would there be fewer marriages, if women were self-dependent and less helpless? Would not the self-dependence cause the greatest of all our social cankers to be vastly lessened, if it could not be altogether removed?—*January 13, 1872.*

DOWRIES.

THE dictum embodied in the constitution of the United States, "All men are free and equal," expresses the strongest political force of modern times. The language of the dogma has indeed been criticised, and it is not free from ambiguity. It has been said to be palpably untrue, for men are subject to the most diversified inequality. It refers, however, not to the faculties or powers of men, which are infinitely various, but to their rights. It means that the law should be no respecter of persons, that in its presence the poorest and the richest ought to be on exactly the same level. It means that there should be no privileges, that the State should have no pets in its family, selected for special fondling and care, while the rest are left out in the cold. It means that Parliament, in making laws, equally with the judges in administering them, should not place a higher value on the happiness of some than it does on that of all. It rests on the right of all men to happiness, and on the duty of the State to promote equally the welfare of all. If the principle of equality is understood in this sense, its application to women is apparent, and not less its right to determine the relation in which women have the deepest interest,—

marriage. Marriage must be a union of persons who have an equal claim to happiness, of whom neither is degraded to be a mere instrument for the gratification of the other. The idea of subordination, in the sense that the woman's happiness is to be considered after the man's, may be numbered among the things that are dead or dying. The superficial danger is that by some persons mere equality may be said to be too little; that women's happiness ought to be secured first, and not last.

Equality has its duties as well as its rights. Equal rights imply equal responsibilities. Equality in marriage is not possible unless it goes farther than sentiment; there must be equality also in material interests. Women must be able to meet men with a pecuniary independence. Where the purse is, there power finds its centre of gravity. When the House of Lords ceased to have any control over money bills, it would not have been difficult to foretell that the glory would depart from the nobles, and the sceptre would remain with the plebeian house. He who has the burden of providing funds ought to have the right of determining their application. That is the most wasteful scheme possible in which the spending and the winning of money are disjoined, in which the person who earns the money has nothing to do with the spending of it, and the person who spends has none of the trouble of gathering it together. So long, therefore, as the husband must find the income, he must have the chief, if not the exclusive, voice in settling the expenditure. And, as most questions are at one time or another pecuniary questions, the husband has the power, if he chooses to use it, of governing his

wife's actions, and subordinating her wishes to his own. If the husband consults his wife's views, it is from generosity, or forbearance, and the motive power is supplied by affection or "nagging." In order that a woman may secure her comfort by right, and not by sufferance, she must not be dependent on marriage for a subsistence.

The teaching of history is that equality and pecuniary independence go hand-in-hand. In the days of the patriarchs a suitor had to pay for his wife. But in our more advanced civilisation a woman who has a dowry may be said to pay for herself. At the first glance, the contrast would seem all in favour of the ancient system. In those times, it may be said, men must have put a wonderful value on women, when they actually paid a sum for the privilege of keeping them. Halcyon days for those that reared daughters, when the expense of bringing them up was reimbursed by their sons-in-law. There we must look for the real golden age, when the daughters of men were so eagerly coveted, and handsomely paid for. And, then, what a miserable age is ours in which the old happy state of things is entirely reversed, and men can hardly be persuaded to take wives, without the bribe of a dowry! On a closer inspection, however, we find that our apparent degeneration is really a development; and that the old practice, so far from being an evidence of the high regard of men to women, is the surest mark of female degradation. The idea contained in the most ancient forms of marriage prevailing among the Roman people was that marrying a woman meant acquiring the ownership of her. One ceremony was an ordinary sale; the husband bought the wife from her father with

good money, as he did his cattle or his slaves. Another consisted in obtaining the proprietary right over a wife by a year's unbroken cohabitation. The position of the wife was low. In legal parlance, she was said to be the daughter of her husband, at a time when children had no rights of ownership, when all their earnings went to their father, when they were incapable of gaining by any contract, and when even their life was at the father's mercy. So the wife had nothing she could call her own; she was the menial servant of her husband and owner. Moreover in this phase of society polygamy generally prevailed, a system that signifies and seals the most degrading opinion as to the sphere of woman.

But, as manners improved, all this was changed. During the centuries that cover the rise and fall of Rome there was manifested a steady, continuous, and wonderful development of legal conceptions. What religion was to the Jews, what philosophy was to the Greeks, what free institutions have been to the English, law was to the Romans. The Romans shared the great political sagacity that has characterised the history of England; their system was expansive and elastic; it absorbed the new ideas required by change of circumstances, but it adhered by the ancient landmarks, and moved on the lines that tradition had consecrated and custom had made easy. By the aid of Roman history, we can bridge the gulf that separates the ancient from the modern standpoint. It was by slow and imperceptible steps that the Roman wife conquered her independence. No attack was made on the law as established, for it was not in that way changes were brought about in those days; but under the shadow of the law there sprang up new

ideas,—ideas of the dignity of women and of their rights to freedom. The support of the popular voice was silently withdrawn, and the old legal relation crumbled into dust. It perished of inanition. The new relation henceforth to prevail between the sexes was based on contract. In the olden times, a father procured for his daughter any husband that he liked; her wishes had no effect on the validity of the transaction by which she passed under the yoke of a new master; but, under the late morality, her consent was essential to the contract. The thralldom in which she was formerly held, and her pecuniary dependence, were both removed, and henceforth the Roman wife entered into marriage on equal terms with her husband. It is at this point, where the tyranny of the husband ends, that the custom of dowries begins. The wife, no longer purchased by her husband, brought a contribution to defray the joint expenses of the household. Except as to what was included in the dowry according to agreement, the wife's property remained under her own control, and her husband could not intermeddle with it. Taken as a whole, this was the noblest marriage-law that ever existed. It was based on the great principle of equality, and upon pure mutual affection, not figured by patronising airs on the one side, or miserable dependence on the other. This was the origin of the dowry,—the symbol and safeguard of woman's moral dignity and just influence.

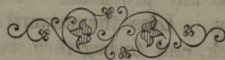
With a singularly perverse ingenuity, the English law contrived to blend the worst parts of the purchase system and the dowry system, and to leave out their redeeming features. It maintained the servile dependence of the wife as it existed in the rude period

of Roman history, but, instead of conjoining with it payment for wives, it took the dowry from the more refined jurisprudence, and deprived woman of the independence for which it was an equivalent. It injured women doubly, it robbed and enslaved them. But when things come to the worst they mend. To make the husband master not only of his wife, but of her fortune, was too much for her relatives, and a means of evasion was discovered, by which, with the aid of the oft-abused Court of Chancery, marriage ceased to operate, like felony, as a forfeiture of the woman's property. All who employ lawyers to prepare marriage settlements have long taken advantage of this silent abrogation of the common law, and in 1870 Parliament attempted to confer this privilege upon the thoughtless and the poor. Two different conceptions of marriage, corresponding to two different systems of law, have prevailed together in this country, illustrating, in a telling way, the old abuse of having not only one law, but one moral code, for the rich, and another for the poor. Among those who possess realised property, a marriage-settlement is resorted to as the means of preserving the pecuniary independence of the wife; and the relation of marriage is no longer of a servile nature. The wife is, and is desired to be, the equal and companion of her husband. The old tradition, that a husband could inflict moderate chastisement on his wife, is, in the well-to-do classes, extinct. In a recent notorious case, Lord Penzance gave husbands to understand that if their wives spontaneously yield them deference and submission, good and well, but husbands must be very careful how they try to win obedience, by too much moral suasion. This expresses the belief of all reason-

able men; the few who look to ordering about a wife as one of the pleasures of matrimony, must be cautious in trying to fulfil their desires lest they should have to listen to something disagreeable from Lord Penzance. Unfortunately among the poorer sort, the law has hitherto sanctioned the pillage of wives' property by their husbands, and the old privilege of chastising wives has been kept up.

Marriage being in its material interest a species of partnership, a question arises, what is the best form for the contribution of the wife to take? Is it money or work? In the working class the question is easily settled; both husband and wife contribute toil or its equivalent—wages. When a woman has no children, she usually endeavours to add to her husband's earnings by making wages herself. This question, also, is easily solved in the relations of the propertied classes. Both husband and wife, living upon past accumulations, bring a contribution to the common expenses, the husband's share being generally, but not always, the greater. But to professional and business men the question has proved a great stumbling-block. They find it hard to save money for dowries. Indeed, the utility of dowries in this class admits of grave doubt. What profit is it to a man to get a dowry with his wife, if he has to repay it with compound interest, in the shape of dowries to three or four daughters? Very often men fall under the load, and the unfortunate girls are left without any provision. Their position is truly melancholy. Like the steward in the parable, they cannot work, and to beg they are very properly ashamed; but, unlike the steward, they have done nothing to deserve so hard a fate. May not the

true remedy for those evils be the introduction of women into suitable employment? It is worth considering whether they should not have some more certain livelihood than the chance of marriage. Many poor folks keep their daughters at home simply because, if they were sent out, their earnings would be too small to be worth having. A doctor, struggling to bring up a family on two or three hundred a year, would be glad to teach his daughters any business by which they would eventually make a hundred or a hundred and fifty a year; but he prefers keeping them idle at home, to making them drudges for a paltry thirty or forty pounds. But if the professions and the higher walks of business were open to women, all who were not occupied with the cares of maternity would make a living independent of the caprice of friends or the accidents of fortune. We should have a diminution in the number of women who are a burthen on their friends, if they are so lucky as to have any friends. We should be spared the wretched cases of women, delicately nurtured and well educated, left as helpless in the world as infants, and with little more capacity to earn even a subsistence. What is wanted is that the dowry of daughters shall take the shape of a professional education, or a share in a good business.—*January 7, 1871.*



THE LAW OF BREACH OF PROMISE.

I.

THE last department of law to submit to the more widely diffused conceptions of justice that prevail in modern times is that which deals with the relations of the sexes. In the law regulating the property of married persons, the power of bad husbands to rob their wives was supposed to be compensated by giving bad wives the power to rob their husbands. Nothing can be more absurd and inconsistent than the legal treatment of infanticide: it is called murder, and it is punished as petty larceny. The law shields the chastity of women in cases where they are presumably able to look after themselves; but, in the most exposed situation of all, domestic servants are left at the mercy of their masters. When a poor woman is beaten by her husband, the law, if it interferes at all, instead of giving him a sound whipping, and compelling him to provide for his family, affords its kindly help by sending the woman to the work-house and the husband to prison.

If the law sins in those graver matters, we need not expect it to be very righteous in the less. The breaking of a man's heart by a woman even, so to speak, feloniously and with malice aforethought, is

regarded in practice as a rather clever and cheerful exploit; but if a man breaks a woman's heart, with the most innocent intentions, and for her own real benefit, he is punished with exemplary damages. It is worth considering how far this confused state of law reflects a distracted public opinion, or is in harmony with the exigencies of modern society.

A fundamental principle, not only of law, but also of morality, is that there should be no punishment where there is no guilt, no malicious or wicked intention. It is therefore a consistent view to hold that punishment, in cases of breach of promise, is awarded to heartless deceivers. Those who have deliberately inveigled others into the snares of love, from a desire of conquest, intending all along to throw them off, are guilty of an offence for which pecuniary damages are an absurdly inadequate and irrelevant punishment. But it may fairly be questioned whether even a small fraction of those unlucky swains who have to pay for their amours are really guilty of any such offence. There are, of course, some, not always of the male sex, who plume themselves on their conquests as a Red Indian does on his scalps. If, occasionally, one of these creatures receives the chastisement that Desdemona wrongly suffered,—a natural incident in the mode of warfare they indulge in,—society cannot affect much sorrow, although it may have a word to say against a breach of the peace. Who sets his neighbour's house on fire should not be angry when his own is burnt down. But when such crimes are not visited with private reprisals, can Courts of Law undertake to deal with them? Could our judges, sitting as a Court of Cupid, on the criminal side, take cognisance of such misde-

meanours? We fear not. They cannot decide without evidence, and by what proofs could the crime of "jilting with malice aforethought" be brought home to the delinquents? Courts of Justice are confined within strict limits that they cannot overpass; there are offences that must go unpunished, and among them we must include jilting.

For those reasons, we throw out of consideration all cases where jilting is a pastime or sport, resorted to for the excitement of the chase and being "in at the death," and restrict the discussion to those cases where in the breach, as well as in the making, of promises of love, there has been good faith. The law applicable to breach of promise takes no account of honesty or integrity of purpose, and, unless the law can be maintained when promises are made in a spirit of fairness, it cannot be supported at all. To cope successfully with this problem, the jurist must pay some attention to the nature of love. Unfortunately with the poets, the chief authorities on this subject (for it has generally been looked upon by philosophers as beneath their notice), consistency has never been the chief of virtues, and their accounts of it are hardly reconcilable with each other. Plato, who was a poet as well as a logician and philosopher, discussed the subject, and left his mark upon it. In one of his dialogues he describes it as a species of mania; genius and inspiration are kinds of mania, and so is love. Others, regarding love from a physiological point of view, hold that it is a nervous epidemic that attacks adolescence, just as measles and the whooping-cough persecute babyhood. But whatever its pathological characters, all are agreed that it is caught like fever; that it is often communicated

without the consent and against the will of the patient; that one might as justly be punished for taking cholera as for being in love; nay, that the victim, so far from meriting harsh treatment, never more deserves the condolence of friends. The progress of the distemper varies with the constitution and habits of the patient. Sometimes it is like a low fever, wasting the strength and never coming to a crisis; or it is a sharp attack producing delirium for a day or two, but passing off and leaving the patient in his usual health; or it is like an intermittent fever that will neither stay nor go away; or, like the small-pox, it leaves scars behind it; or it sends the patient to a madhouse, or, though seldom, to the grave. Without accepting these views as a creed, we may take them as similitudes to illustrate the proposition that the decay of love, equally with its germination and growth, is beyond the full control of the will, and therefore cannot establish any moral or legal responsibility. Some writers, like Dr Whewell, believe the contrary; they hold our affections to be subject to the will, and that they may be cultivated with as much certainty and success as a market gardener rears cabbages. The process is simple. Given a person whom one is to be taught to love, the recipe is—turn your eyes steadily towards the amiable side of the person's character, and, if he does not appear to have one, believe that it is concealed; then avert your gaze from all the unlovely features, and habit will generate love. Whether any one would think such a love-on-false-pretences worthy of cultivation is doubtful. Dr Whewell has missed his aim: he promised apples, but he has given only crabs.

The verdicts of juries have been a great puzzle. When it is only for wounded feelings that they are asked to give damages, they are obdurate. When a man unfolds the tale of blighted hopes, he is laughed out of court. But when lovely woman presents herself, the scene is changed, the jury awakes to anger, and gives heavy damages. Whence this difference? Is it that men are so insensible to grief that compassion for them would be thrown away? One explanation is found in the gallantry of juries. When a woman of interesting appearance comes as a suppliant, what man could refuse the gentle request, especially when he can gratify his generosity at the expense of the defendant? And if the jury are rewarded with a gracious smile, how great their gain at so small a cost! Without detracting from the force of this reasoning, it may be said not to go to the root of the matter. We suspect there is a more powerful motive at work; juries have a reason for the faith that is in them, although it may not be a pretty one. They cannot forget that the loss of a lover means more to a woman than to a man, and that the disappointed maiden, in addition to breaking her heart, loses a share, during their joint lives, in her intended husband's income. The lover might go,—but the settlement! We expect the jury is, after all, not so much concerned about the daughter; their hearts bleed for the father, who is mortified by the loss of an expected son-in-law. They picture to themselves the disconsolate father, who, although he would be ashamed to confess it, would not be sorry to see his daughter maintained at some other person's expense; they remember the anguish with which he must count the loss of precious opportunities; they know that every

hour of courtship diminishes the chance of other arrangements; and, accordingly, they give compensation. Let young men beware! Those moments that seem, as they pass, an eternity of bliss, yielding its own reward, have each their price, and will be changed by the chemistry of law into coin of the realm. We can only wonder at the audacity which, after tampering with a daughter's heart and trifling with a father's pocket, dares to go before a jury, composed chiefly of heads of families. The unctuous oratory of counsel for the plaintiff, the spicy jokes of counsel for the defendant, are merely the outward mask, and beneath both the solid arguments are judiciously left to simmer in the minds of the jury. If the true grounds were bluntly and nakedly put forward, women would be ashamed to ask, and juries to give, compensation.—*January 14, 1871.*

II.

THE law of breach of promise exemplifies, in addition to the incongruities just pointed out, a flagrant departure from recognised principles. Usually, when the law imposes serious obligations, it takes pains to hinder them from being rashly incurred. Thus many weighty acts, and especially promises made without value received, require the solemnity of a deed. This is the best justification for those legal ceremonies connected with marriage which were introduced by Lord Hardwicke in England, and the absence of which in Scotland has been a fruitful cause of scandal and injustice. The proclamation of banns, or the purchase of a license, costs money

and trouble, and makes a pause, during which those who are entering matrimony may reflect before they cross the Rubicon. This is well; but one may have gone too far to retract. Those who have promised to marry are compelled to do so, unless they are prepared to pay heavy, and sometimes ruinous, damages. Now, what precautions are taken to prevent rash and ill-considered promises? It is in vain to step in at the last moment with an idle parade of ceremony, when the parties are committed almost beyond a possibility of extricating themselves. So far from any care being shown to restrain the imprudent from rashly forfeiting their liberty of choice, inconsiderate words, and, even without words, mere conduct, are made sufficient to establish a promise of marriage. Thus many who, if pulled up face to face with impending matrimony, would perceive the danger of a hasty union, are led on, little by little, to make promises to persons of whom they know next to nothing. It is easy, and especially for lovers, to promise; the difficulty is to avoid what may be construed into a promise; and to give legal effect to the articulate or inarticulate expressions of transient emotion, is to set a trap to catch the simple and unwary. The law is in league with matchmakers to draw guileless souls into the meshes of wedlock. The promotion of a marriage is one of the cases where a Hindu is allowed by his religious institutions to tell a lie; so our law seems to regard marriage as so desirable an object that we must not too scrupulously inquire into the means by which it is brought about.

Flirtation is a game at which, under our law, women play with loaded dice; they may do as

much jilting as they please—an enjoyment that no one can practise at their expense with impunity. Promise of marriage is the artful invention by which the law enters into their matrimonial schemes, and facilitates their execution. But the picture has an obverse side, as all gallantry has. The seeming indulgence is a poisoned gift. The law arrays in irreconcilable antagonism the honour and the interests of women. No woman of the least spirit would use a promise as a halter round a man's neck to drag him into marriage. She would scorn to force from his lips the impossible promise to love and cherish her. We do not say that no woman who respected herself would sue upon a breach of promise, for that is often the only, or at least most convenient, remedy for wrongs that, under any system of law, would demand redress. But, generally, the women who bring such actions are mercenary adventurers, who seek revenge for baffled intrigues, and find it pays them better to lose a husband than to get one. This is an additional reason for a change in the law: the women who, if such a thing were possible, ought to succeed, never ask compensation. But though the honour of women forbids their going through the disgusting ordeal of a trial for breach of promise, their interests almost require them to do it. The generality of women are, we were going to say, trained for marriage, but, to be safe, let us say, destined for it. Without property, with no bread-winning knowledge or art, they can choose only between marriage and dependence on their relatives, if they have any. The position is deplorable, but it is not of their seeking; it is prescribed by custom, and must be recognised by law. It is a woman's

business to get a husband, one that she likes, if possible; but, at all events, a husband. Cœlebs in search of a wife was often in comical situations; but a girl in search of a husband can hardly be said to follow an honourable calling. It is not her blame, however, if she accepts a man for whom she does not care, "lest a worst fate should befall her." Who can feel surprise at the deep tone of dejection that occasionally marks the writings of our best women when touching on the position of their sex? The ignominy of the situation assigned conventionally to women is only rendered tolerable in those cases where strong affection submerges everything, an affection that the best laws cannot make, and that the worst cannot altogether destroy.

But is the law, except in the narrowest sense, for the interest of women? It cannot be really for their interest to use promises as whips to drive reluctant bachelors into the fold. It cannot be desirable to establish unions on earth that are not ratified in heaven, but, on the contrary, are registered there as sins of commission. It surely would be the climax of folly to begin a life-voyage, from which there was no return, with a mutinous crew. With every precaution, the old rumbling matrimonial coach, loaded with passengers, will sometimes get out of gear; but if it starts without any supply of oil, it runs a considerable risk of catching fire and being burnt down. A life-engagement is exposed to so many trials and perils, that, but for the toleration that springs out of mutual affection, it would almost inevitably be a failure. It is not an enterprise to be begun with half-hearted faith. But such is the unfortunate pecuniary dependence of women, men

sometimes go into marriage with deep misgivings, which, on every ground, would have better taken articulate utterance, or warmed into rebellion. There is a great temptation to drift with the stream, even when there is no longer a belief that it leads to any desirable haven. A man cannot help seeing that, after a long engagement, the value of his *fiancée* in the matrimonial market has been considerably depreciated; and that, if he fails to carry out his promise, she suffers a great, perhaps irreparable, loss. Yet his opinion of her may have changed; often the first illusion passes away before marriage; and he is convinced that marriage would be a mistake. It would be a real kindness to many a woman, if her dissatisfied lover had the courage to be cruel, and to terminate an engagement that could only lead her, irrecoverably, into a false position.

It thus appears that the seemingly unfair preference shown to women in cases of breach of promise admits of full, but damning, justification. If marriage be regarded, as it practically is, as the sole or chief occupation of women, they must be compensated for the loss of promised engagements. If women are assimilated to upper servants, it is fair that they should have the same remedy as a cook who has been disappointed in a situation offered to her. If they are to be kept in the house of bondage, they ought also to taste of the fleshpots of Egypt. In an ordinary breach of engagement the damages are assessed at an amount that would give the rate of wages agreed on during the time that the servant is looking out for a new master. And as it is more difficult to get a situation as wife than as housekeeper, it follows that the damages should be heavier, espe-

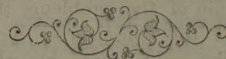
cially when the woman has been kept on so long that she has small chance of other matrimonial employment. The exact sum is hard to fix, for, whereas an ordinarily good servant is sure to get into service sooner or later, it might happen that the only person in the world who would think of marrying a woman was her fickle and faithless lover; in which case, according to correct principles, he ought to pay her an annuity for life equal to the value of her position as his wife. This scale would alone be just to her, and, of course, it would be monstrously unjust to him; for it would virtually drive him to marry the objectionable woman, from the impossibility of his being able to keep a wife after paying the necessary fine. On the other hand, if a woman were very eligible and much sought after, she ought to receive scarcely any compensation; when a woman has many admirers, the loss of one cannot be considered serious. We fear juries are not quite consistent, and that they occasionally give a pretty woman heavy damages, when they ought to send her empty away.

A simple repeal of the law would not affect the real evil, which lies deeper, and has its roots firmly fixed in custom. The disgraceful thing is, not that the law should give a pecuniary *solatium* to a woman for the loss of a husband, but that the circumstances in which society places her should allow, nay, almost compel, her to demand it. So long as women are obliged to seek marriage as a livelihood, nothing is to be gained by asking the law to disregard the ignominious fact. The law does not fall behind our social arrangements, but our social arrangements lag miserably behind the best moral ideas of the time. It would be unfair to say that the best men look with

disgust on such a relation of the sexes as the law discloses to us, for if the real sentiments of the generality of men were expressed, the established custom would find few, if any, devotees. The only thing that reconciles men is the habit in all discussions relating to social topics of this nature, of calling an iron spade a silver trowel, and of thinking it fine to talk about women in a style that was ridiculous in the time of the Knight of La Mancha. How few are the compliments to women that do not contain a latent sneer. When a sensible man talks of women being placed on a high pedestal, we should expect him to add, "and under a glass shade."

The only way to get rid of the anomalies of the law is to change that social custom which restricts women to matrimony as the only business of their life. Quite apart from the enormous waste involved in this practice, there being so many more women than are wanted, it is to be condemned as giving women a mercenary interest in marriage. Instead of modelling the relation of the sexes after the law of master and servant, we ought to follow the analogy of partnership, on the basis of pure affection. If unmarried women were independent of wedlock, they would not forsake their state of single blessedness, except when they liked, and for whom they liked. The employment of women in industrial occupations is the real solution of the problems that confuse the law and perplex the conscience. The independence of women is the only means by which mercenary inducements can be banished, and the purity of marriage generally secured. If a woman were in business, or had a profession, nothing more could, with decency, be heard of breaches of promise. Men

would no longer, from mistaken tenderness, go into marriages when they had ceased to care for their *fiancées*. A woman would have the best assurance that her lover was not risking his happiness to save her from beggary. Mothers, relieved from the arduous duty of finding husbands for their daughters, might direct their energy to more useful tasks. Girls, no longer anxious about their future, would be free to marry or not, just as they pleased. "Old maid" would be no more a term of reproach, when it became clear that it did not mean that a woman was baulked in the great enterprise of her life. There might be fewer marriages, but as they would probably indicate affection on both sides, they would have a greater chance of leading to happiness. The social value of women would be greatly increased, and their influence would be more marked. In short, a time might come when the bringing of a man-child into the world would be no cause for special rejoicing, and the birth of a daughter would cast not the least shade of disappointment over the brows of her parents.—*January 21, 1871.*



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THE NOVEL-READING DISEASE.

PHYSICIANS are familiar with a complaint which, although sufficiently specific, has yet no name of its own. The patient suffers from an alarming and morbid thirst, and consumes a perfectly fabulous amount of fluid, almost always of an unwholesome nature. Tea in a highly dilute shape, *eau sucrée*, raspberry vinegar and water, soda water, or some other such abominable mess, is taken by the gallon, and the unnatural craving is stimulated by indulgence.

Crescit indulgens sibi dirus hydrops
Nec sitim pallit.
 Wholesome food is refused; no exercise is taken; and the patient finally sinks into a flabby and sickly condition, which nothing but severe and determined treatment will shake off. This dropsical habit of body finds its exact analogue in the species of mental dropsy which is produced by over-indulgence in three-volumed novels. This terrible complaint is one of the worst evils which modern civilisation has brought with it. Its progress is gradual, very insidious, and often almost imperceptible. At first, all that is noticed is that the sufferer is apt to be found bent over a novel at unnatural hours—as, say, in the early morning, or in the middle of a beautiful sum-

mer's afternoon. Soon, however, the disease becomes more pronounced, and in its worst stages novels are got through at the rate of three or four or even five a-week, or at an average, in a severe and chronic case, of some two hundred and fifty or three hundred a-year. At first some discrimination is exercised, and one writer is, perhaps, preferred to another—Mr Trollope, say, to Mrs Ross Church, or “Ouida” to the author of *Guy Livingstone*. Very soon, however, the taste becomes deadened and blunted, and all power of distinction and appreciation is lost. In this stage, the unhappy patient can no more go without her novel than can a confirmed dipsomaniac without his dram. The smaller circulating libraries, which lend out very second-hand novels indeed at a penny a volume, are put under contribution, and any amount of garbage is swallowed wholesale. Quality is held absolutely of no importance, and quantity is everything. The very process of reading becomes more or less mechanical, and seems to afford a species of mechanical pleasure or satisfaction, a novel of the feeblest possible type being read as religiously from cover to cover, and yielding apparently as much enjoyment, as if it were a second *Romola*. It is no uncommon thing for a young lady, in whom the complaint has assumed a chronic form, to have read the whole of Scott, the whole of Thackeray, the whole of Dickens, the whole of Trollope, the whole of Annie Thomas, the whole of Mrs Ross Church, the whole of Miss Braddon, and, into the bargain, some four or five hundred other novels, by less famous hands. When the disease is thus confirmed, the dropsical habit of mind becomes apparent. The conversation of the patient

becomes flabby and limp. Her interest in all ordinary subjects — except, perhaps, the latest fashions, or the more scandalous portions of evidence in the Tichborne case, or the marriage of the Princess Beatrice—flickers feebly in the socket, and finally dies out. The last stage—that of absolute imbecility—is now, unless very powerful remedies are exhibited, a mere matter of time.

So much for the symptoms or diagnosis of the disease. Its prognosis depends greatly upon the natural constitution of the patient; but is, as a rule, unfavourable. Even where vigorous treatment has been adopted, and has apparently effected a radical cure, there is always danger of a serious relapse. And even if the cure be permanent, the patient is none the less permanently enfeebled, and will always remain incapable of any severe or protracted mental exertion. It is, indeed, upon the whole, unwise to encourage delusive hopes of a complete cure. The disease is as obscure, as insidious, and as little capable of control, as is softening of the brain itself; and it is doubtful whether we ever do more than for a while to arrest its course. What is most sad is the self-deception of the patient herself, which is very analogous to that of the habitual drunkard. She is, as a rule, convinced that her evil habit is perfectly under her own control; that she could, if she chose, begin to-morrow, and never open a novel again. She is, indeed, fruitful in such good resolutions; but if any attempt is made to secure total abstinence even for a day, she will resort to subterfuges as pitiful as those to which a dipsomaniac will have recourse if deprived of his accustomed dram, and will tell any falsehoods or use any evasion rather than struggle

with the cravings of her diseased appetite. In such hopeless cases even the most judicious firmness is of very little avail.

It is curious and interesting to observe that as this comparatively new female disease has grown more virulent and intense, the old disease of scandal-talking has become comparatively rare. It is, of course, physically difficult to talk scandal and to read a novel at one and the same time. Our grandmothers used to devote three or four hours every day to discussing the virtues and vices of absent friends over a dish of tea. Our sisters loll in American chairs, and listlessly turn over a third volume; and the concentrated and slightly venomous interest which used to be excited by the peccadilloes of some half-dozen neighbours is now languidly diffused over the doings of some four or five hundred washy creations of a washy imagination. It is, of course, possible, nay, even probable, that were novel reading sternly repressed, scandal and gossip would revive. Were it not for this consideration, it is an open question whether the novel traffic ought not to be dealt with as stringently as Mr Bruce proposes to deal with the liquor traffic; whether it would not be well to enable the ratepayers of a district to limit the number of the circulating libraries, or even to close them altogether; and to place the "habitual" novel-reader under some such paternal restraint as that to which Dr Dalrymple wishes to subject an "habitual drunkard."

It is too clear, unfortunately, why it is that so many women thus waste their time and rot their minds. They read novels, exactly as some young men smoke and drink bitter beer, for sheer want of something to

do. And upon the whole a silly girl floundering about upon the sofa and reading a silly novel is a far pleasanter sight than is an unwholesome-looking youth sprawling over a bar, and mining his worthless constitution with nicotine and alcohol. Each is a melancholy specimen of brainlessness, due almost entirely to neglected education. But the brainlessness of the man is, as might be expected, coarser and more animal than that of the woman. The education which has been needed is no very great or wonderful matter. "Sweetness and light" of a high order will never be very generally diffused. Plato, Aristophanes, Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Molière—none of these will ever be as widely read as the 'Pickwick Papers.' A certain number of novels, always more or less feeble, will be written every year, and, being written, will be read. That ordinary and moderate novel-reading will ever be stamped out is not for a moment to be hoped. The education which is wanted to cure the vice of inordinate novel-reading is one which should give an intelligent interest in the matters of every-day life. In this respect it is impossible to deny that women are almost intentionally neglected. They are given to understand that political questions are beyond their sphere and above their comprehension. There is hardly one man in ten who would not literally lose patience if his wife, or his sister, or his daughter were to ask him some natural question about "reductions *ex capite*," or the nature of prerogative, or the constitution of a trades-union. Such a question almost always provokes a vague and unsatisfactory, if not a surly, reply. While as for endeavouring to educate a woman by carefully talking to her about what is

going on, and explaining step by step what she does not understand,—the very notion of such a thing would be scouted as Quixotic in all but a very few families. The result is that a married woman, and even more so a young girl, lives almost as entirely out of the world as does a college tutor. She reads novels for the same reason as he reads Plutarch, or Seneca, or Polybius, or Livy, in naïve ignorance that there is any more profitable occupation. Cobden's much misunderstood sneer did not mock knowledge of the Iliad, but minute knowledge of Iliad *plus* absolute ignorance of Chicago, exactly as one might laugh at a Trollopologist who knew accurately the family history of the Dukes of Omnium, but had never heard of Lord Derby or Lord John Russell. What a woman needs is an education which shall enable her to read and follow the Parliamentary debates instead of the police and divorce reports; and when women are thus educated, then feeble novels and feeble novelists will not vex our souls to the horrible extent to which they irritate us at present. Of such an education we may say that it is *οὐκ ὀστράκον πιστροφῆ ἀλλὰ ψυχῆς περιαιγωγῆ*, nor is it to be got in books, unless, indeed, books can give sound, healthy common-sense, and wholesome interest in common subjects. But men can give it by making the women of their family their companions; and that they should neglect to give it, shows, after all, how inveterately deep-seated is the extraordinary notion that the intellectual difference between men and women is one of kind and not of degree.—August 26, 1871.

RISING IN LIFE.

THERE is no theme upon which admirers of the English Constitution are more accustomed to dilate than the opportunity it affords for rising in life. Our superlative Constitution places no obstacle in the way of the humblest subject. The son of a sweep may become a Lord Mayor, and the son of a barber be entrusted with the keeping of her Majesty's conscience. The son of a peer is but a gentleman, says an eloquent Whig, and any gentleman may become a peer. The time has been when a Mayor could congratulate a Lord Chancellor upon having "risen from the very dregs of the people." It is one of the merits of the present Ministry, for which they have received but scant congratulation, that they have greatly increased the openings for merit, both in the army and in the civil service. Mr Forster, too, is evidently sincere in trying to provide the first rays of superior intelligence with encouragement, and to afford the means of the best education to the poorest. All this is most admirable; for we have no sympathy with the spurious philanthropy that, under the pretence of elevating a whole class, would discourage individuals from getting out of it. Two movements ought always to be going on. There should be a constant improvement in the position of those whose labour

depends upon manual strength or dexterity; but every community requires, and all the more requires as it becomes more complex and civilised, a class whose work is of an intellectual character; and it is highly desirable that that work should be performed by those who are endowed with the best brains, no matter in what position of life they may accidentally be born.

But it would be superfluous to say anything in behalf of "rising in life." It is part of an Englishman's religion. It is an axiom in his worldly creed, and the object of his earnest and unceasing practical attention. It is sometimes presented in a shape extremely repulsive, as if rising in life meant a mere scramble for the means of bodily nourishment and enjoyment. If this were proposed as an object in life,—a fierce struggle for the opportunity of physical enjoyment,—a more contemptible or vulgar end could not be conceived. It would be a contest from which every superior man would hold aloof with disdain. He would leave the pursuit to the ignoble race of whom an excellent book says that "their god is their belly." The mode in which "rising in life" is commonly spoken of gives occasion to misconception. The material results of superior intelligence and energy naturally draw attention to themselves, and Englishmen, who entertain considerable scepticism of intangible results, are accustomed to applaud energy, so to speak, embodied in visible wealth. But there is another peculiarity of our countrymen, long ago pointed out in another connection by Mr Mill, that continually misleads those who take them at their word. It is their constant habit of self-depreciation. It is our affectation of pursuing steadily our own interests that exposes the most generous and unsel-

fish of nations to the taunt of following a selfish policy. There is another reason. John Bull has a soft bit in his heart; he is not exactly ashamed of it, he would not for the world parade it, but he is somewhat afraid of making a fool of himself. Hence, even when he is moved by the purest sentiment, he tries to make out that his conduct is shaped by a calculation of interest. Great care must, therefore, be taken in interpreting the language of his commonplace ambition; it no more implies a grovelling or unworthy theory of life than his habitual grumbling indicates any doubt as to the perfect wisdom of the British Constitution. While he entertains a healthy dread of high-flown and florid expressions of sentiment, he is far from holding that the noblest faculties have no purpose but to serve the lowest.

If we define "rising in life" as placing the best men in the best places, giving the highest work to those who have the highest capacity—as the aim of a well-ordered commonwealth, to put every one in their place, the intellectual to intellectual work, and the rest to such as is suitable—then a serious question suggests itself. Do we not habitually, in thought and speech, when speaking of "rising in life," refer to men only, and forget or ignore the other, and as we ironically say, the better half of the species? Singularly enough, it never occurs to us that, while human excellence is found in both sexes, we never promote it except in the case of men. With all our apparatus, free competitions, endowed schools, and scholarships for the poor, we provide ladders enough for boys, but not for girls. Why should the great gift of intelligence be allowed to run to waste, because the body in which it is enshrined belongs to one sex and not

to the other? The loss is not imaginary. Bishop Temple, from his experience of boys in the middle and upper class, calculates that about three boys out of a thousand should at all hazards get a superior education; he thinks the nine hundred and ninety-seven may very well be left to such education as their parents can give them. This estimate probably does not err on the side of excess. What is true of boys is, we imagine, true of girls, that only about three in the thousand have such pre-eminent ability as to require careful provision for their higher education. At this rate, nearly fifty thousand women in this country would deserve the best training that could be given them. Taking a rough estimate, at least forty thousand must be born in a station where they have no access to the means of superior education, and must live and die unknown and unheard of, "mute inglorious Miltons." To only a few stragglers in this great army of intelligence does good luck ever bring the opportunity of making their talents a source of enjoyment to themselves and of usefulness to the community. Our social system is so arranged that nearly one-half of the superior intellect of the nation is doomed to waste.

It might be said that an equal number of poor boys exist, and that, as they rise in life, they can carry the clever girls with them. Unfortunately, however, marriage, the usual sop offered to women, can have very little application in this case. Men who rise in life prefer to seek wives in the circle that they enter rather than in that from which they have come. Ever so small an elevation, as that from a shop to a pulpit, is a prolific source of breach of promise; the aspiring male seeks the honour of a

more exalted alliance than he can find in a milliner's shop. But even if the geniuses among men were to select wives from their own class, they would be far more likely to take them from the nine hundred and ninety-seven than from the three. Let us suppose, however, that all difficulty is overcome; that the man who rises in life, instead of marrying a respectable mediocrity of higher station, goes down to the "dregs," and picks up a pearl, is it, after all, the highest use to which a gifted woman can be put—to amuse a gifted man? As a means of raising women of exceptional ability to a position where their merits can be duly appreciated, marriage is altogether out of the question. If that is their only hope, poor girls may well despair of their lot.

What becomes of this untapped fountain of intelligence? Does it irrigate and nourish the lower strata of society? Unfortunately, it is like a rare wine, priceless to connoisseurs, but thrown away upon country bumpkins. The uneducated taste turns from it, and prefers its strong, common ale. Very superior intelligence is as useless to surrounding stupidity as the light of the sun to the blind. The eye sees only what it has the gift to see; and it is the unavoidable fate of obscure genius to live and die undiscovered and unappreciated. The least evil that can happen to a poor girl, who is the unfortunate recipient of great powers, is that they shall do her no harm. Not unfrequently, however, cleverness is a snare and a danger. If it is accompanied with the impulse to use it, and with a proper discontent, it compels its possessor to burst through the barriers erected by custom for her imprisonment, and to encounter perils and temptations of every

kind. Too often it happens that "the light that leads astray is light from heaven." Oppressed and stifled nature is not always choice and fastidious in the means by which it seeks relief.

The injustice and wrong done to the ablest women by our social prejudices are grave; but what is not less striking, at first sight, is the wanton folly by which the community sacrifices so much invaluable help. But it is only in appearance. A free course for talent has always been more of a name than a reality even for men. It is only by the progress of radical principles that the duty of the State is regarded in a new light. The policy that is always gaining strength is that merit or capacity, and not pot-luck or prescription, shall be the title to high position. Every class that has gained supreme power has tried to grasp all honours and offices; but, by degrees, the divine right of superior fitness is coming to be recognised as the only guiding principle. The victory of this principle will not be complete until poor girls, as well as poor boys, are provided with the means of qualifying them to fill high posts. Patrician has succumbed to plebeian, rich to poor, and so must masculine privilege before the simple demand of justice. The very same moral law that wins victory for men will gain victory for women. The time must come, and before long, when aspirants to the honourable offices will try themselves by the test, not of rank, or family, or wealth, or sex, but by that of ability. That triumph of justice will, as is always the case, be a blessing not only to those who have been wronged, but also to the unjust; in the same way as injustice always entails a double mischief, being an injury alike to the sufferer and to the wrong-doer.—*November 11, 1871.*

THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN.

THE education of women is a subject that is daily receiving more attention, and the result of most of the consideration that has been bestowed upon it is a conviction that it fails in all the purposes for which it is intended. As to what these purposes are, opinions differ widely. Some people say that women should be educated simply to be good wives and mothers, and that, as to be a good wife and mother knowledge of a domestic nature is all that is requisite, needle-work, cookery, and such amount of domestic medicine as will enable her to look after her children's health, and tend her husband when he is ill, should take the most important place in a woman's education. Others give precedence to accomplishments. Domestic knowledge, they believe, comes instinctively to a woman when she needs it; but not so playing the piano, singing, dancing, drawing, and speaking French and German, and as without all or most of these acquirements a woman cannot take her position in society with that distinction which will help her to make an advantageous marriage, the whole anxiety of prudent parents is that their daughters should attain a proficiency in these respects. The former class of thinkers universally, and the latter pretty generally, admit that the present system of education

utterly fails to supply what they respectively demand.

The old-fashioned people complain bitterly of the ignorance of girls in all useful knowledge. They cannot keep house accounts, they neither can make puddings or direct servants in making them, they cannot make or mend their own clothes, and in a sick room they are either so nervous or so careless that their presence is worse than useless. On the other hand, we hear of girls, after years of school training, playing out of time and singing out of tune. Mothers discover that their daughters cannot produce the simplest sketch except under the drawing-master's eye, and fathers grumble that, after an undue proportion of their incomes has been spent in boarding-school bills, when they take their girls abroad they cannot speak a foreign language so as to make themselves understood. The girls know it all themselves, and know, too, that—with rare exceptions—for their success in society they must depend upon their good looks, their style of dress, and their piquancy of manner, none of which they acquired in the school-room.

Another cause that has operated very powerfully in producing this feeling of dissatisfaction with the existing system of education for women is the tone adopted by an influential portion of the press when dealing with social questions. In all cases where it is possible to introduce the subject, the conduct and character of women are subjected to a rigorous and scathing criticism, with generally unsparing condemnation. And almost every social difficulty and defect is attributed to this cause. The question of the increasing reluctance of men to marriage has long ago

been settled as the result of the great extravagance of women in dress and their love of expensive amusements, which in the present day render a wife too costly a luxury for any but a rich man to indulge in. The loose tone in conversation and manners which has begun to pervade society, and is recognised under the name of *fastness*, is attributed to the fact that respectable women—supposed to be the real censors of public morals—not only tolerate it in men, but make strenuous and successful efforts to acquire it themselves. Women, according to these analysts of human nature, are silly, ignorant, idle, extravagant, and immoral. There are a certain number of people, no doubt, who find women's charms enhanced by their silliness and ignorance, and there are some men to whom a woman's chief attraction lies in her efforts, even when they pass the bounds of decency, to attract him; but these are few: the majority prefer women to have, if not knowledge, at least common sense, and if not a sound, strong judgment, at any rate some discretion, and reluctantly they admit the fact that, in too many instances, they possess neither.

If this be a correct statement of the facts, what is the cause? Some discover it in the nature of women themselves, whom they pronounce to be afflicted with such unreasonableness, frivolity, and weakness of mind, that, if we were to believe them, the only wonder would be that women are not a great deal worse than they are. Others, however, lay all the blame upon the system of women's education, which they say engenders frivolity of mind, and cultivates ignorance by excluding the really valuable branches of knowledge. The latter opinion is the true one. The plan of education at present pursued with women syste-

matically represses all the best faculties of the mind. Everything that is taught is taught dogmatically, and consequently the powers of research, inquiry, analysis, and reason either are altogether crushed, or rust for want of use. The subjects that necessitate their exercise in some degree, such as science and philosophy in their various branches, are omitted. The memory is overtaxed, everything being taught as indisputable fact to be committed to it, and retained there unaltered; and the consequence is that too frequently it breaks down.

Some ludicrous examples of this are to be found in the Report of the Schools Commission. From Mr Hammond we learn that a girl, in reply to a question about Lord Bacon, answered, "He lived in the reign of Henry III.; he discovered a great many things in chemistry and discovered gunpowder." And another, "Lord Bacon was a celebrated philosopher, and he invented gunpowder." To the question, "How do nouns substantive form their plural number?" he obtained the reply, "Sometimes by changing a vowel, as 'ox, oxen';" and to "How is the past tense of verbs formed?" one answered, "By adding d or ed as 'sing, sang';" and another, "more, most." "It is incredible," he says, "how many girls from nearly every school write down such answers."

Since the Report of the Schools Commission has been published—and, though in a less measure, before—there has been a good deal of well-meant agitation set on foot on the subject, and, in consequence, some slight steps have been made to improve the condition of things. Under pressure of this kind, a few schoolmistresses announce courses of scientific lectures in their prospectuses. They have an English Literature

class, and—but rarely—a Philosophy class. An English Literature Professor comes twice a week, and hears the pupils recite carefully pruned passages from Shakespeare's plays, and copious extracts from the 'Proverbial Philosophy' of Mr Martin Tupper. Orthodox clergymen are engaged to instruct the young ladies in geology and astronomy, and pic-nic parties are organised in the summer for botanising purposes. But science taught after this fashion is, if not absolutely mischievous, at least nearly useless. It is a mere dogmatic cramming of facts that calls for no wholesome effort of reasoning or analysis, and only imposes another burden upon the already overweighted memory. And almost the same may be said of the English Literature classes. The practice of studying the works of great writers, simply by learning isolated passages by rote, fails to create any interest in the mind of the learner in the works themselves; and as many are generally studied all at the same time, painful confusion between Shakespeare and Mr Tupper, Milton and Mrs Hemans, is a not unfrequent result. The works of no writer being studied in entirety, the real bent of his mind is never ascertained, the movement of his thought is not followed, and the source of his ideas is not discovered. Consequently, what is read leaves no tangible impress on the feelings or fancy of the reader, and the memory cannot hold it distinct and clear from all else.

Such slight modifications, then, as these cannot satisfy those who, not believing that women any more than men are born unreasonable, silly, or weak in mind, are utterly discontented with a system framed to produce those consequences. They demand nothing less than its complete destruction, and the substitu-

tion of another in its place. What that other should be will prove, perhaps, a difficult question to answer. Our mode of educating boys is, as yet, far from perfect; but boys are far better off than girls. The arbitrary will of parents does sometimes interfere; but, as a rule, the rudiments of most branches of useful knowledge are taught, and the peculiar bent of the mind thus ascertained is considered as to what shall be followed up in a higher degree, to the highest degree attainable by the student if he pleases. If this, and the renunciation of all dogmatism whatsoever, and the proper and due exercise of all the faculties and powers of the mind, be taken as a basis, careful consideration will be sure to produce a satisfactory solution of the difficulty.—*July 29, 1871.*

MOTHERS' WRONGS.

IF any further proof were wanting of the inequality of some of our laws as they affect women and men—two very remarkable cases that have recently been tried in the Court of Chancery, in Dublin, would amply furnish it.

In 1843 a Roman Catholic, of the name of Kearney, emigrated to Australia, and there in 1855 married a Miss Hamilton, a Protestant. They had four children, boys, born between the years 1856 and 1864, who were all baptized Roman Catholics, but—with the father's consent and approval—were educated Protestants by their mother, and on different occasions attended Protestant places of worship with her. Mr Kearney died in 1865, having previously made a will by which he divided his fortune of 20,000*l.* between his wife and children, appointing her co-guardian of the latter with his two brothers and a friend, Thomas M'Cormick,—all Roman Catholics, and one of the brothers a priest. By the will he also directed that his wife and children should return and live in Ireland, and further desired that the children should be "piously and religiously brought up." In pursuance of this, the two eldest were placed in the French Roman Catholic College at Blackrock,

from which they were afterwards removed by the mother, when a petition was filed in the Court of Chancery by the Kearneys and M'Cormick, praying that all the children might be brought up Roman Catholics. Mrs Kearney filed a counter-petition, praying that they might be made wards of the Court. Both were heard before Lord O'Hagan, who decided against Mrs Kearney, and in favour of the other guardians. In delivering judgment, he said that "the expressed directions, or the *presumed desire* of the father, could not be overborne by any opposition on the part of the mother, and he saw nothing in this case which could warrant the education of the children being otherwise than in the religion of the father." In the case of the two elder boys, however, whose riper years and more advanced intelligence required the application of a different principle, as they had declared themselves to be Protestants, and determined to remain Protestants, he decided that they should follow their own inclinations, and remain in their mother's faith, that in which they had been brought up. But with the two younger it was different. "Their age and capacity did not enable them to form decided religious opinions for themselves; they should therefore be brought up strictly in the Roman Catholic faith." In reference to the argument that the separation of young children from their mother, and bringing them up in a different religion from hers, would be attended with evil consequences, he observed "that this was no doubt one of the misfortunes arising from mixed marriages: the same argument had been pressed in the case of *Hawksworth v. Hawksworth*, and the decision of the Court thereon was the same that he

felt bound to give, viz., that *the law left him no alternative* but to pronounce that in the absence of special circumstances—such as the very decided opinions of the two elder of the young Kearneys—the religion of the father must regulate the religion of the child.”

The other case to which we have alluded was that of Meades minors, which was tried by Lord O'Hagan in December, 1870, and was still more remarkable than the foregoing. In Ireland, in the year 1860, Mr Meade, a Protestant, married a Miss Ronayne, a Roman Catholic; before their marriage an agreement being entered into by both that if they had children the sons should be brought up Protestants, and the daughters Roman Catholics. Two children were born, both girls, and Mrs Meade died a few days after the birth of the second. On her death-bed, however, the agreement between her and her husband as to the religion of the children was re-confirmed, he, at her earnest request, solemnly promising to abide by it, and ensure its being carried out by entrusting the care and education of the children to her sister, Miss Ronayne, a Roman Catholic. Mr Meade kept his promise so far as having the second child baptized, as the first had been, a Roman Catholic; and by bringing his sister-in-law to reside in his house, and giving her the sole charge of the education of his children—for eight years. Then he took for a second wife a Protestant lady, and thereupon he entirely changed his mind with regard to the religion of his children and his agreement with his first wife: the latter he decided to break, and, in consequence, informed Miss Ronayne that she must discontinue all religious instruction of his daughters, as in

future they were to be brought up in the Protestant faith, that of himself and his present wife. Not, however, being satisfied with the manner in which Miss Ronayne carried out his wishes, he removed the children from her care altogether. She and the other relations of the first wife then filed a petition in the Court of Chancery, praying that he should be compelled to fulfil his promise, and have his children brought up in the religion of their mother. The Lord Chancellor, however—though strongly condemning Mr Meade's conduct—decided that his will must be paramount in determining the religion of his children; they should remain in his charge, and be educated as he thought fit.

It is not to the religious aspect of these two cases that we wish to call attention, though in that respect they present some very remarkable features, but to the fact, which they plainly demonstrate, that according to our English law a woman has no right whatever to exert any control over the education and training of the children she has brought into the world and reared. In event of the father's death she is responsible for their support and maintenance if he has not made the necessary provision. But she must not teach them what she believes to be true, if it be contrary to even the supposed faith of their dead father; his “presumed desire” is paramount to every claim of hers, and if she will not consent to teach them what she believes to be absolutely false, she must give them up to strangers that they may teach it to them! But though the “presumed desire” of a dead father must overrule the most consistently held beliefs and emphatically declared wishes of a living mother, when the case is reversed, and the father is the sur-

vivor, all the rights of it are reversed also. Then the most solemn agreements entered into between the parties, and reiterated promises, are no security to a woman. The law recognises no rights of a woman in her character of mother. If her husband be dead, the fact of his having been baptized in a particular creed, or, if he be living, his merest caprice, alone can regulate the religion of their mutual offspring.

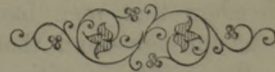
These are facts that women as a rule seem to lose sight of, probably because men as a rule leave the religious education of their children mostly to the children's mothers. Mrs Kearney never seems to have entertained a doubt that her children belonged as much to her as to her husband during his lifetime, and after his death to her alone; until Lord O'Hagan rudely undeceived her by explaining the law of the matter, which "left him no alternative" but to pronounce that she had no right to them whatsoever. Mrs Meade seems to have entertained some misgivings when she required a special agreement on the subject before marriage, and anxiously got the agreement ratified by a promise from her husband to her on her death-bed. But she did not know that, though the law would have recognised Mr Meade's agreement with her to marry her, it would not recognise the agreement with her as to the education of their children, upon which no doubt, however, the first agreement entirely depended. Had Mr Meade broken his agreement to marry her, he might have been made to pay some thousands of pounds, because in that case the law would have regarded her simply as a citizen and the agreement as a business agreement, bound to be carried out; while in the

agreement as to the education of her children it regarded her as a woman and a mother, and as such the agreement was not bound to be carried out with her. If Mr Meade had made a solemn promise before witnesses to a dying partner in business, it is most probable that the law would have compelled him to perform it—at any rate that feeling called honour, which is considered a law in itself, would no doubt have held him to it; but neither law nor honour obliged him to keep his promise to his dying wife and the mother of his children.

These are considerations which cannot be too forcibly impressed upon the minds of women. Not all, as yet, desire the rights of intelligent human beings to personal freedom; not all ask for the rights of citizens, to help in making the laws; many are content without their rights as wives to possess their own property; some are even satisfied that, as daughters, they have no right to choose their own husbands. But there is not a woman in the world in whose breast Nature has not implanted the sense of her rights as a mother;—and yet these are the rights that, of all others, she does not possess. Except in the matter of education, women have the same personal freedom that men have; and, with the exception of the suffrage—and that seems likely to come soon—the rights of citizens have been conceded to them. Married women can now own some, at least, of their own property; and the law will neither permit a parent to force a daughter into a marriage against her wish, nor prevent her forming one according to her own inclinations and contrary to his. But as a mother a woman is still the most powerless of human beings; she has

no rights at all, as such. The children have claims on her as their mother. She brings them into the world with pain, she must nurse them, and on her their whole care and charge is thrown while they are in the first weak and helpless condition of their being. But, once she has done for them what nobody else can do, all her claim to them ceases. They belong entirely to their father; or, if the father be dead, to his father, or mother, or brother, or sister, or friend, especially if the religion he "adopted" at the font, when he was an infant of a week old, is not the religion which she professes and would wish to teach them, and if it can be "presumed" that he desired they should be taught his creed.

This is surely one of the wrongs of women which most sorely need redress; and certain it is that, if women had anything to do with making the law, it would not long remain so.—*June 10, 1871.*



THE

National Society for Women's Suffrage,

Central Committee,

9, BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.

TREASURER—HENRY HOARE, Esq., 37, Fleet Street, E.C.

BANKERS—LONDON AND WESTMINSTER BANK, 217, Strand.

SECRETARY—MISS EMMA A. SMITH.

REPORT of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE presented at the GENERAL MEETING of the CENTRAL COMMITTEE, held at the WESTMINSTER PALACE HOTEL, on WEDNESDAY, JULY 17th, 1872.

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE of THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE was formed in November, 1871. For a long time previous there had been a growing feeling amongst the supporters of Women's Suffrage in London, and the more prominent Committees in the country, that the constantly increasing width and strength of the movement called for a more centralized mode of action than its initial stages rendered necessary, or perhaps possible. Prompted by this feeling a number of friends in London, at the request of Professor SHELDON AMOS, met and formed themselves into a Committee, on the 6th of November, 1871. At their request Mrs. FREDERICK PENNINGTON, Professor AMOS, and Mr. CHARLES H. HOPWOOD undertook to act as Honorary Secretaries. On the Committee being formed it lost no time in putting itself into communication with the leading Provincial Committees, which at once promised co-operation to the fullest extent.

A circular was issued inviting the co-operation of all Committees in the United Kingdom, in which it was stated that the Central Committee would be formed on the broadest possible basis, and that all Members of all Executive Committees, as well as such single delegates as the Committees in connexion with the Central Committee might appoint, should be Members of the Executive of the Central Committee.

The sole aim of the new Committee was declared to be to remove the Political Disabilities of Women.