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

The resolution was put and carried.

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

The vote was carried by acclamation.

TEXTS

ON

WOMAN'S NORMAL POSITION.

"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."

EDINBURGH: JOHN MACLAREN.

1870.

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WOMAN'S NORMAL POSITION.

The events of the day have led me to link together a few texts, to show the position God intended woman to occupy in the world; in contrast to that into which she has been constrained by custom, and forced by the laws of man. I would draw attention to the fact of the oneness of man and woman in creation and redemption; and that an indignity cannot be offered to woman, without debasing mankind, and casting contempt on the humanity of Christ.

This is the book of the generation of Adam. In the day that God created man in the likeness of God made he him.

Male and female created he them and blessed them, and called their name Adam in the day when they were created.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them: and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and

replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and so on.

It was in man's dual nature that man had dominion given them.

Woman, at the creation, was taken out of the side of man-Adam-and was called wo-man (womb-man). Adam—under Divine guidance—did not give her a name separate from his own, but one marking their unity: thus also he foreshadowed their oneness in Christ. Again, by the Spirit of God, he was led to call her Eve, "The Mother of all living," as giving life to all the human race; and in the second place, as the second Adam the Man Christ Jesus—who is "The Life"—took His human nature from her. As Eve, "the mother of all living" was taken from man; so "The Man," who is the Author of life, took His humanity from woman, thus, as Adam was the source from which the woman was taken, so, in her turn, woman was the honoured source of the human life of the second Adam: - thus was one of each sex peculiarly honoured, the man at the Creation; and woman in a yet higher degree at the Incarnation; in recognition of which, she was inspired to sing "He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

When the angel Gabriel descended to earth to announce the Incarnation, the message was to woman, and the second communication of the same great event by the Holy Spirit, was also to a woman; Mary and Elizabeth being the first on

earth to know, and to give glory to God, for the world's redemption.

When Christ arose from the dead, it was to woman that He first appeared, and he commissioned her to announce His resurrection to the other disciples.

After the Resurrection, the women continued with the disciples in prayer and supplication; and on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit descended upon them all. "For there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, and sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." And this, in fulfilment of prophecy; for "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy;" and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit"

When Christ was on earth, He honoured woman by making the house of two women his home—the sisters of Bethany.

Christ taught women personally. "Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words." He talked with Martha of his own resurrection, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." To the woman of Samaria He taught the spirituality of worship in the Gospel dispensation. "Jesus saith unto her, woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the

Father." "Ye worship ye know not what, we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."

He also told her, He was that Messias which she expected, "Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee, am He," and so filled with joy was His soul in teaching this woman, that He refused to eat the food his disciples prayed Him to eat, saying, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work."

He commended woman. When Mary anointed His feet and wiped them with the hair of her head, He said, "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." Thus He made the memory of her action to be as lasting as the Gospel.

Christ defended woman. When Mary was accused of waste, He said, "Let her alone, against the day of my burying hath she kept this." To the Syrophenician woman, whom the disciples would have sent away as a troubler of their Master, Jesus said, "O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt." When the woman, who was a sinner, anointed his feet, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair, and was condemned by Simon the Pharisee as follows, "If this man were a Prophet, he would have known who and what

manner of woman this is for she is a sinner." In answer to this accusation He defends her, and draws a comparison between the treatment He had received from her, and that which he had received from Simon. He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much, but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven."

From all this, we plainly see, first, the unity, hence the equality of man and woman—they are one in Creation and Redemption: one in Adam and one in Christ. A disregard of this truth—like every other disregard of God's will and design, has led to much error. Destroy the unity of man and woman, and you destroy the one federal headship; and that would involve the necessity of man and woman having separate Saviours. May it not have been through losing sight of this unity, that the heresy of worshipping the Virgin arose?

Secondly, that woman was preeminently honoured at the Incarnation and the Resurrection by having these events first announced to her.

Thirdly, she was blessed by being filled with the

Holy Ghost, and *inspired* to prophesy and to sing songs of praise.

Fourthly, she was honoured by Christ when on earth making woman's house His home.

Fifthly, that Christ taught his female disciples personally.

Sixthly, that Christ defended woman against the mistaken zeal of His male disciples and the attacks of the Pharisees.

Husbands were enjoined by St. Paul to love their wives, "even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. Thus, he enjoined man to sacrifice himself for the protection of his wife, even to the giving up of his own life. In relation to this, Chrysostom says, "Do you wish your wife to obey you, as the Church obeys Christ?" then take care for her, as Christ did for the Church; and even if you must give your life for her, or be cut in a thousand pieces, or whatever you must undergo and suffer, shrink not from it; and even if you suffer all this, you have not yet done anything like Christ did; for you do this, being already joined in marriage to her, but He suffered for a Bride who rejected him. As then He brought to His feet her who rejected Him, and hated Him and scorned Him, and despised Him, with wonderful care and affection, not with terror, not with threats, nor with anything of that sort; so do you towards your wife; if you see her despising you, scorning you, treating you with contempt, you can bring her to your feet by spending care on her

love and kindness. No bonds are more despotic than these, and especially between man and wife. A slave, a man may perhaps bind by terror; but, nay, not even him; for he soon will escape and be free: but the partner of your life, the mother of your children, the subject of all your joy, you ought to bind, not by terror or by threats, but by love and gentle consideration."

This is the standing God has given man and woman in relation to each other. But what standing has the laws of our country given? First, if she marries, she is given over by the law to her husband, and subjected to his will, and deprived of her property. Even when she takes his place and becomes the breadwinner, the bread is not hers but his. Again, woman because she is a woman, is deprived by law of a share of her father's property if he dies intestate. And by the will of one man she is often—through the law of entail—deprived of territorial possessions, for all time coming.

And, again, though she pays taxes the same as men, she does not enjoy in any equal degree all the advantages; and is altogether shut out from the emoluments and honours derived from occupying Government situations, some of which are at least quite as suitable for women as for men; and the duties attached to which, she could perform equally well.

She is also almost entirely precluded from obtaining the higher branches of education in so far as they are to be had in our colleges and universities; and prohibited from even attempting to obtain the diplomas and honours bestowed by them.

But worse than all this want of care and provision for her body and mind, is the violation of the fifth commandment, which is most forcibly violated, when the law makes it legal for a man, by will, to remove children from under the care and authority of a mother, and place them under trustees; thus depriving her of the honour the commandment inculcates, as well as the *authority* which God has given her over her children.

Woman's authority, as recognised and enforced throughout the Holy Scriptures, has been too much kept out of sight both by law and custom.

May this not be one reason why so dark a cloud is overshadowing our land, and threatening to debase us morally to the level of other less favoured countries? Under the Mosaic dispensation, the enactment was, "He that curseth his father or his mother, he shall surely be put to death." "Cursed is he that setteth light by his father or his mother, and all the people shall say Amen." Then Solomon says, "Whosoever curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness." . . . "My son, forsake not the law of thy mother, for the law is light, and reproofs of instruction are the way of life."

Our Saviour in answering a question of the Scribes and Pharisees said, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father, and thy mother; and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, it is a

gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father, or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Have we not also made the commandments of God of none effect by some of our laws?

But besides being used to signify a parent, the term mother has a still wider signification; for it also means, a woman who is superior in age, station, gifts, or grace, or who deals tenderly with one; thus Deborah was a mother in Israel, for with tenderness and valour, she judged, instructed, and governed that people. In this last and wider sense, the authority of woman has also been kept out of

sight. Out of this constant ignoring of woman's authority, which has prevented her voice being heard in social questions, has come in all probability that looseness of principle which has led to the most unchristian and one-sided legislation by which, in one notable particular, our present Houses of Parliament have disgraced themselves. By enacting lawless laws, by which not only is the seventh commandment implicitly set aside, but legal provision made for breaking it. All women, in those districts where they are in force, are virtually deprived of the right of Habeas Corpus. Men lowered below the level of "the beasts that perish;" soldiers and sailors encouraged to become walking pestilences over the whole empire; the police corrupted, the medical profession degraded and polluted, and general liberty endangered of being destroyed by the introduction of an organized system of government-paid spies. These wicked Acts of Parliament seem to be the beginning of the breaking up of our constitutional government—for is it not most unconstitutional to make exceptional laws which affect the right of Habeas Corpus of one sex, in order that the other may sin with impunity?

We were startled lately by the Pope saying "The Church is stronger than Heaven itself;" but with like profanity our legislators say by these enactments, "We are wiser than God;" and these are the same statesmen who enact that every soldier should have a Bible in his knapsack and a chaplain in his regiment.

Thus we are in danger of being brought, in a short time, into the state in which the earth was before the flood, which Moses describes when he says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence."

Let our legislators look to it, lest, in fearful national retribution, a revolution burst forth that may bring them down from their high places; when a justly incensed people, full of wrathful vengeance, may act over again some of the murderous scenes of the Indian mutiny.

Can the churches, which ought to be the guardians of public morals, stand by without demanding the repeal of the laws which make our land little better than Sodom and Gomorrah; or can they expect to remain uncontaminated by such surroundings? Remember Lot, and the Church at Corinth!

Unless these unholy laws are repealed, we will appear in the eyes of the world to be nothing better than a nation of hypocrites; and the witnessing of such hypocrisy in a land professedly Christian will tend to create a spirit of Atheism in surrounding countries.

In the midst of this black cloud, which is gathering over us from other lands, our hearts are gladdened by the vision of a bright gleam of light. At Geneva—the cradle of the Reformation—there has appeared a band of earnest and noble women; representatives of different European countries, they met there to confer in holy solemnity, how they might best strive to uproot immorality and further the regeneration of the human race.

Now that woman, in reliance upon Him by whose inspiration she is moved, has at last arisen in the greatness of her moral strength to readjust social relations, the end *must* be renovation. We await the issue in confidence, believing that her high spiritual nature will now obtain that power in the world, which—for its good—it ever should have had.

In the Old Testament it is remarkable how often the Church and servants of God were saved and succoured by women, frequently the first to perceive the truth.

When Israel was in bondage in Egypt, "Shiphar and Puah" feared God, and did not as the king commanded them, "but saved the male children alive." Therefore God dealt well with the mid-

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Again, in the New Testament, they ministered to Christ of their substance.

When Christ was brought before Pilate, his wife sent to him saying, "have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered much this day in a dream because of him."

The woman of Samaria was the first to receive Christ.

So at Philippi a company of praying women by the river side were the first in Europe to receive the Gospel, and they formed the nucleus of the earliest European Church, and Paul often acknowledged their liberality to himself.

Priscilla took Apollo and expounded unto him the "way of the Lord more perfectly."

The songs and prophecies of Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Abigail, Huldah, Elizabeth, and Mary, form part of the inspired word of God, which was written for our learning.

The daughters are ever particularized when the future glory of the Church is foretold.

"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy."

"And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit."

"I will bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth."

"The Lord gave the word, and great was the company (of women) of those that published it."

wives, "because they feared God, that he made them houses."

The mother and sister of Moses, with the daughter of Pharaoh, saved him, and the last educated him in all the wisdom of Egypt.

When the children of Israel, who had been led through the wilderness by Moses, Aaron and Miriam arrived, under Joshua, at the borders of Canaan, *Rahab* received the spies. When Israel was sold by the Lord to Jaban King of Canaan, they were delivered by Deborah and Jael.

By a woman God punished the wickedness of Abimelech, and saved Israel.

Ruth followed her mother-in-law out of Moab, and succoured her in Bethlehem, and was honoured to be one of the ancestors of our Lord.

Michal, Saul's daughter, saved David out of the murderous hand of her father. Abigail prevented David, as he said, "from avenging myself with mine own hand."

A woman by her wisdom saved the City of Beth-Maachah from being destroyed by Joab.

Joash was preserved alive by his aunt and nurse.

Elijah was maintained by a widow woman.

Elisha was entertained by a woman.

The daughters of Shallum rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, along with their father, after they returned from the Babylonish captivity.

When gifts were brought for the Tabernacle, "All the women that were wise-hearted did spin

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WOMAN'S NORMAL POSITION.

"Kings shall be nursing fathers, and queens shall be nursing mothers."

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this—To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

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SPEECH

OF THE LATE

JOHN STUART MILL

AT THE

GREAT MEETING

IN FAVOUR OF

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,

HELD IN THE

MUSIC HALL, EDINBURGH, JANUARY 12, 1871.

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MDCCCLXXIII.

SPEECH

OF THE LATE

JOHN STUART MILL.

Mr John Stuart Mill (who was received with great enthusiasm, the audience rising and waving their hats and handkerchiefs,) said—If there is a truth in politics which is fundamental—which is the basis of all free government—it is that when a part of the nation are the sole possessors of power, the interest of that part gets all the serious attention. This does not necessarily imply any active oppression. All that it implies is the natural tendency of the average man to feel what touches self of vastly greater importance than what directly touches only other people. This is the deep-seated and ineradicable reason why women will never be justly treated until they obtain the franchise. They suffer, assuredly, much injustice by the operation of law. But suppose this changed; even then—even if there were no ground of complaint against the laws, there would be a break-down in their execution as long as men alone have a voice in choosing and in removing the officers of Government.

All our recent constitutional reforms, and the whole creed of reformers, are grounded on the fact that the suffrage is needed for self-protection. All experience proves that if one part of the community is held in subjection by another part, it is not trusted with the ordinary means of self-defence, but is left dependent on the goodwill and pleasure of those who are more privileged, the most vital interests of the subject-portion are certain to be, if not recklessly trampled upon, at least postponed to almost anything else.

The treatment of women is certainly no exception to the rule. They have neither equal laws nor an equal administration of them. The laws treat them as they could not long be treated if they had the suffrage; and even if the laws were equal, the administration of the laws is not. Police magistrates and criminal judges cannot be exceptionally bad men; they are not chosen for their bad qualities; they must be thought, by those who appoint them, to represent fairly, or better than fairly, the moral feelings of average men. Yet, what do we see? For an atrocious assault by a man upon a woman, especially if she has the misfortune to be his wife, he is either let off

with an admonition, or he is solemnly told that he has committed a grave offence, for which he must be severely punished, and then he gets as many weeks or months of imprisonment as a man who has taken five pounds' worth of property gets years.

We are told that the good feelings of men are a sufficient protection to women. Those who say so can never, one would suppose, look into the police and law reports. If good feeling does not protect women against being beaten and kicked to death's door every day of their lives, and at last beaten and kicked to actual death, by their special guardians and protectors, can we expect that it will secure them against injuries less revolting to humanity? Most men, it will be said, are incapable of committing such horrible brutality. Perhaps so; but it seems they are quite capable of letting it be committed. If women who are maltreated by their husbands found a defender in every other man who knew of it, they might have some chance of protection without the weapon of the suffrage. But it is never so; slaves did not find it so; serfs did not find it so; conquered nations do not find it so; and neither do women. There are many men who would not consciously do them any wrong; but there must be a great moral improvement in human nature before most men will exert themselves to prevent or to redress wrongs committed by others under the sanction of law. And of these two things—the suffrage for women, and a grand moral improvement in human nature—the suffrage, to my thinking, is likely to be the soonest obtained. (Cheers.) I could afford to stop here. I have made out an ample case. There is a portion of the population, amounting in number to somewhat more than half, to whom the law and its administration do not fulfil their duty, do not afford even the bodily protection due to all—this half happening to be that which is not admitted to the suffrage. Their most important interests are neglected—I do not say from deliberate intention, but simply because their interest is not so near to the feelings of the ruling half as the ruling half's own interest. The remedy is plain: put women in the position which will make their interest the rulers' own interest. Make it as important to politicians to redress the grievances of women as it is to redress those of any class which is largely represented in Parliament.

If nothing more than this could be said in support of their claim to the suffrage, no claim could be more fully made out. (Cheers.) And if the claim is just, so also is it strictly constitutional. One of the recognised doctrines of the British Constitution is that representation is co-extensive with direct taxation. The practice of the Constitution, it is true, for a long time did not correspond with the theory; but it has been made to conform to it at last, in cities and

boroughs, provided the tax-payer is of the male sex; but if a woman, she may be the largest tax-payer in the place, and the person of greatest practical ability besides; no matter, she has no vote. This is something very like punishing her for being a woman. The conditions which in the eye of the law and of the Constitution confer a title to a voice in public affairs are all fulfilled by her, with the single exception of having been born a male. This one deficiency, which I humbly submit she cannot help—(laughter)—is visited on her by the privation of a right as important to her as to any man, and even more important, since those who are physically weakest require protection the most. This is not an injury only, but an indignity. I grant that those who uphold it are in general quite unconscious of its being so; but this comes from the inveterate habit of having one rule and measure for all that concerns women, and another for everything else.

Men are so much accustomed to think of women only as women, that they forget to think of them as human. (Hear, hear.) It is not only for their own sake that women ought to have the suffrage, but also for the sake of the public. It is for the interest of us all, both men and women, and of those who are to come after us. The reasons that may be given for this are many, but I may content myself with two. One, and the strongest, is what we sometimes hear unthinkingly urged as an argument on the other side because women have so much power already. (Laughter.) It is true they have much power. They have the power which depends on personal influence over men. They have the power of cajolery-(laughter)—and often that of a petted favourite; power sadly inadequate to their own just and necessary protection against wrong, but sufficient at times to produce only too much effect upon the public conduct of the men with whom they are connected. But as this power, instead of being open and avowed, is indirect and unrecognised, no provision is made for its being rightly used. As it is conventionally assumed that women possess no power outside the domestic department, the power which they do and always will possess is exercised without the necessary knowledge, and without the proper responsibility.

It having been decreed that public matters are not a woman's business, her mind is carefully turned away from whatsoever would give her a knowledge of them, and she is taught to care nothing about them—that is, until some private interest or private likings or dislikings come in, when of course these private feelings have it all their own way, there being no public principles or convictions to control them. The power, therefore, which women now have

in public affairs is power without knowledge. It is also power without responsibility. A man's wife is very often the real prompter either of what he does well and nobly, or of what he does foolishly or selfishly; but as she gets no credit for the one, so she is not held accountable for the other; if she is selfish, a very little art suffices to exempt her from censure though she succeeds in compassing her ends; if she is simple and well meaning, she does not feel bound to inform herself, so as to have a reasonable opinion on what is solely the man's business, though all the while her ignorant prepossessions or her natural partialities may be acting as a most pernicious bias on what is supposed to be his better judgment. From this combination of absence of instruction and absence of responsibility, it comes to pass that, though women are acknowledged to have, as a rule, stronger conscientious feelings than men, it is but a very small minority of women who have anything that deserves the name of a public conscience. How great an evil this is, there needs no argument to show. What is the greatest obstacle which the friends of political and social improvement have to struggle with—the drag which is constantly obstructing their efforts and disappointing their hopes? Is it not the weakness of the average citizen's political conscience? Is not this the special danger and failure to which popular institutions are exposed—that the elector does not sufficiently feel his obligations to the public, and either stays away from the poll, or goes there and votes on the prompting of some private interest? And how can we hope that he will learn to postpone private interests to public, while he has beside him, in the person of his closest intimate, one who has been trained to have no feeling whatever of his duties to the public, but who has the keenest feeling of his duties to his family, and who, even without intending it, cannot but sway his mind strongly in the direction of the only interests which she understands and appreciates? (Applause.) It must be remembered, too, that this is a growing evil. Time was when the wife was very little a companion of her husband—their lives were apart; the associates of his leisure and of his recreations were other men. But now the home and its inhabitants are so much to a man, that no other influence can, as a rule, compete with theirs. The time, therefore, is come when, if we would have public virtue in our men, we must have it in our women. (Hear, hear, and applause.) And how can a-woman have a conscience about the public good, if she is told, and believes, that it is no business whatever of hers? Give women the same rights as men, and the same obligations will follow. Instead of hanging a dead weight on men's public conscience, their greater

general susceptibility of moral feeling will make their habitual influence a most valuable support to the honest performance of public duty. (Loud applause.) This, then, is one of the reasons why it is for the good of all that women should have an admitted right to take part in public affairs. Another is the vast amount of brain power and practical business talent which now runs to waste for want of an outlet into those great fields of public usefulness, in which no one, I suppose, will pretend that such qualities are not very much wanted. Few men, I suspect, are sufficiently aware of the great amount of administrative ability possessed by women; for want of considering that the essential qualities which lead to practical success are the same in what are called small things as in great.

It is my belief that, in all those parts of the business of life which depend on the vigilant superintendence and accurate estimation of details, women, when they have the necessary special knowledge, are better administrators than men. And I am now speaking, not of women as they might be-not as some improved mode of education would make them-but of women as they now are, and of the capacities which they have already displayed. If an example is wanted of what women's powers of organisation can accomplish in public life, I appeal to one of the most striking facts of modern times, the Sanitary Commission in the late American War. The history of that Commission ought to be as well known all over the world as it is in America. From the beginning, and throughout, it was women's work. It was planned, organised, and worked by women. The Government was jealous of them at first, but the hopeless inferiority of its own arrangements made it soon glad to make over the first place to them. Not only had such work never been so well done, but nobody had ever supposed it possible that it could be so well done. I am aware that this argument would carry us much further than the suffrage; but I suppose it will be acknowledged that those who are themselves eminently capable of practical business, must be fit to take a share in the choosing of those to whom practical business is to be entrusted. The ability which is specially required for the exercise of the suffragethat of selecting the persons most capable for the work that is to be done—is one of the qualifications for business in which women have always excelled. Great queens have in nothing shown themselves greater than in their choice of Ministers. When the ladies of the Sanitary Commission wanted men to help them, they knew the right men and how to use them; and they distinguished themselves not less by the work which they caused to be done, than by that which they did in their own persons. (Applause.) These are some of the reasons which make it equally just and expedient that the suffrage should be extended to women. It must, at the same time, be borne in mind that, by admitting them to the suffrage, no other question is in the smallest degree prejudged.

Supposing it true, what some people are so fond of affirming, that women have nothing to complain of, and that the vast majority of them do not desire any change; if so, giving them the suffrage can do nobody harm, and would afford them an opportunity of showing their perfect contentment with their present lot, in a manner beyond

the reach of dispute. (Applause.)

more and more adverse.

If what we are told is true, that women ought to be, and always must and will be, in a state of domestic and social subordination to men, why, then, they require the suffrage so much the more, in order that the sovereignty of men over them may be exercised under the fitting responsibility. None need political protection so much as those who are in domestic dependence, since none are so much exposed to wrong. On every possible supposition, therefore, they have a claim to the suffrage. And we live at a period of human development, when the just claims of large numbers cannot be permanently resisted.

The whole movement of modern society, from the middle ages until now, greatly accelerated in the present century, points in the direction of the political enfranchisement of women. Their exclusion is a last remnant of the old bad state of society—the regimen of privileges and disabilities. All other monopolies are going or gone. The whole spirit of the times is against predetermining by law that one set of people shall be allowed by right of birth to have or to do what another set shall not, by any amount of exertion or superiority of ability, be allowed to attain. (Applause.)

If nature has established an ineradicable and insuperable difference in the capacities and qualifications of the two sexes, nature can take care of itself. What nature has decided may safely be left to nature. But when we find people making themselves uneasy for fear that nature's purposes should be frustrated unless law comes to her assistance, we may be pretty certain that it is not nature they are so careful about, but law pretending to be nature. To all such pretences the growing improvement of mankind is making them

I do not know how long a time it may require to get rid of women's disabilities. Great changes in the habits and opinions of mankind are always slow. But of one thing I am certain—that when once they have been got rid of—when their true aspect is no longer disguised by the varnish of custom and habit—they will appear in the retrospect so devoid of any rational foundation, and so contradictory to the principles by which society now professes to guide itself, that the difficulty which will be felt will be to conceive how they can ever have been defended, and by what possible arguments they can ever have been made to appear plausible. (Loud and prolonged cheering.)

THE POLITICAL DISABILITIES

OF WOMEN.

by Lydia Becker

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THE POLITICAL DISABILITIES OF WOMEN.

THE question of the political disabilities of women, which, long dormant but never dead, has remained hidden in the hearts of thoughtful women, to be repressed with a sigh over the hopelessness of the attempt to gain a hearing, has suddenly sprung into life and activity, and assumed, in an incredibly short time, an acknowledged position among the most important social and political subjects which call for the attention of the nation. This result could not possibly have been attained unless the principles involved in the claim had been in harmony with those great ideas of progress and reform which have taken so deep a hold on the minds of the people of this country, and which have received so sudden a development in about the same period of time as that comprised in the history of our present movement.

Within the last half century there has been a revolution in the principles which govern the distribution of political power. Shall the people be governed by rulers claiming to be divinely appointed, or shall they be ruled by representatives of their own choosing? Shall the right of the common people culminate in the claim for good government, or shall it rise to that of self-government? Is it enough for the populace that their irresponsible rulers shall govern them according to what they, the rulers, believe to be just and beneficial principles, or have those who must submit to laws and governance a right to be consulted in the election of the governors and the enactment of the laws? Such is the problem which it has been the task of the last fifty years to solve, and which has resulted in the triumph of the principles of popular government by the passing of the Representation of the People Act of 1867. This principle is now accepted by both the great parties in the State. A measure based upon it has become law by common consent. It has therefore changed its position from that of one which had to be recommended and enforced by those who urged the adoption of any measure founded upon it, to that of one which is admitted to be established. Therefore any class in the community which seeks for the removal of political disabilities does so on principles which are now sanctioned by the Legislature as those on which the government of the country shall henceforward be conducted.

We, who make this claim for the enfranchisement of women, do so from the feelings and for the reasons which have led other classes of the community to make the same claim, and we ask that our claim shall be decided by the same principles which have guided the judgment of the Legislature in the case of others. In making this demand we are, however, met at the outset with the allegation that the same principles of justice are not applicable to both sexes—that the claim which is just when made by a man, is unjust when made by a woman—that when men say that the Government has no moral right to hold them responsible to laws enacted without or against their consent, nor to tax the fruits of their labour without giving them a voice in the imposition and disbursement of such taxation, their complaint is just and reasonable, and deserves attention; but that when women say the same thing, their complaint is unjust and absurd, and must be suppressed. Now we say that we can see no reason for this alleged discrepancy, and we challenge those who maintain it to show cause why the same broad principles of justice are not applicable to all human beings. We maintain that women are equally liable with men to suffer from misgovernment—that they have the same interest as men in securing good government—that they have the same intelligence as men in regard to the method of obtaining it, and further, that the only security for good government, either of women or men, is that the governed shall be consulted in electing the rulers and making the laws. We say that the disadvantages and hardships entailed on women by their deprivation of representative government are analogous to those suffered by the lower classes at the hands of the more powerful interests in the country. Women complain of the want of the means of education, want of liberty to engage in honourable or lucrative professions, want of opportunity of earning the means of subsistence, want of security for the possession of their property, their tenure being forfeited by marriage; want of sufficient protection for their persons from the violence of men; these and many other grievances are enough to justify any class of persons in seeking for their removal. Whether the special grievances of women are or are not precisely like those suffered by the common people at the hands of the privileged classes, there can be no doubt that they spring from the same root, political slavery, and their redress must be sought by the same means, political emancipation.

The theory on which the right of voting under the new Reform Act is ostensibly based is that of giving a vote for every household

or home. Mr. Disraeli stated in the House of Commons that by the Act regulating the franchise, the House gave it, and intended to give it, to every householder rated for the relief of the poor. But when this declaration comes to be practically tested, it is found that about one-seventh of the ratepayers in every borough are adjudged to be out of the pale of representation. This happens though they are taxed to the same extent as the others, and, moreover, have been subjected to the special burdens imposed by the ratepaying clauses of the Representation of the People Act, for which the vote conferred by that Act was confessedly offered as an equivalent. A woman would not only be derided, but punished, who refused to obey a law on the ground that "man" did not include "woman," that "he" did not mean "she," and that therefore she was not personally liable for contravening any Act so worded. Accordingly, though the "occupiers" and "owners" who come under the operation of the ratepaying clauses of the Reform Act were referred to throughout by masculine pronouns only, women were made to pay the increased rates thereby imposed. These clauses bore with distressing severity on thousands of poor women, as we gather from police reports which appeared in London and other newspapers. At Hackney in one day more than six thousand persons, mostly women, were summoned for non-compliance with them; and at Lambeth, we are told that several poor women applied to Mr. Elliott for his advice how to save their "things" from being seized by the parish authorities for rates under these clauses. Mr. Elliott did not appear to have any power to help them, and the applicants left, lamenting that they were likely to have all their "things" taken for rates for the right to vote under the new Reform Act. But when women came into court to claim the vote conferred on the occupiers who were fined, they discovered that "words importing the masculine gender" were held to include women in the clauses imposing burdens, and to exclude them in the clauses conferring privileges, in one and the same Act of Parliament.

One of the excuses alleged for excluding women from the right of voting is a desire to save them from the unpleasantness of contact with a crowd during the conduct of an election. But no one proposes to force women to record their votes, and if they did not like the crowd, they would have full liberty to stay away and exempt themselves from the operation of the vote-giving clauses. But there was no escape from the operation of the ratepaying clauses; and under these, thousands of poor women were dragged from their homes, and haled before the magistrate, for no wrong that they had done, but solely by the operation of an Act from the benefits of which they were excluded under the pretext of exempting them from an unpleasant duty. Men must

have a very low idea of the intelligence of women when they endeavour to impose on them by pretences such as these.

The political position of women under the existing law has been compared to that of minors, criminals, lunatics, and idiots. But a little examination will prove that the status of persons of all these classes would be considerably lowered were it reduced to that of women. Minority, if a personal, is merely a temporary disqualification. A householder who is a minor will in time come into the enjoyment of his vote. But adult women are kept throughout their lives in the state of tutelage proper to infancy. They are never allowed to grow up to the rights of citizenship. As Justice Probyn said, "Infants cannot vote, and women are perpetual infants." Criminals are also only temporarily disqualified. During the debate on the Bill of 1867, Lord E. Cecil proposed a clause providing that persons who had been sentenced to penal servitude for any offence should be incapable of voting. Mr. Gladstone objected to the clause because "a citizen ought not to bear for life the brand of electoral incapacity." Another member objected to "extending a man's punishment to the whole of his life." The clause was finally negatived. But the brand of lifelong electoral incapacity, which was thought too severe for burglars and thieves, is inflicted without scruple on rational and responsible human beings, who have never broken the law, for the sole crime of womanhood. Parliament deems an ex-garotter morally competent to exercise the franchise, whilst it rejects the petition of Florence Nightingale. So much for the moral standard required for the exercise of the suffrage. Let us now see what the law says to lunatics. In a legal text-book we find the following statement:—"With regard to a lunatic who, though for the most part he may have lost the sound exercise of his reason, yet sometimes has lucid intervals, it seems that the returning officer has only to decide whether at the moment of voting the elector is sufficiently compos mentis to discriminate between the candidates and to answer the questions, and take the oath, if required, in an intelligible manner,"* But the law never allows that a woman can have a lucid interval during which she is sufficiently compos mentis to discriminate between the candidates, and to comply with the formalities incident to recording a vote. Thus it places her mentally below lunatics, as it does morally below felons. The courts have a very kindly consideration for the electoral rights of idiots, as a case quoted by Mr. Rogers will show. He states that the voter had no idea of the names of the candidates, but he had of the side on which he wished to vote. He seems to have been unable to answer the ordinary questions, and the returning officer

rejected the vote of this idiot; but on appeal the decision was reversed, and the vote held to be good. Mr. Rogers states that it is difficult to determine, since the decision in the "Wigan Case," what degree of drunkenness need to be shown in order to disqualify an elector. It is a question of fact for the returning officer to decide; and with respect to persons deaf, dumb, and blind, he says, that "although it is difficult to believe that such persons should have understanding, still if such a person can show by signs or otherwise that he knows the purpose for which he has come to the poll, and can also comprehend the obligation of an oath, and the temporal dangers of perjury, it is conceived that a returning officer would not be justified in refusing his vote." It will be seen by these extracts that those who compare the political status of women to that of criminals, lunatics, and idiots, give too favourable a view of the facts." The true comparison is that which was used by Mr. Justice Byles in the Court of Queen's Bench, when he likened the political condition of women to that of dogs and horses. After indignantly scouting the claims of woman to humanity: "I will not," said the Judge, "allow that woman can be man, unless in a zoological treatise, or until she is reduced to the condition of fossil remains," he proceeded to level the political rights of woman to those of the domestic animals. He would not even allow her to be "something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse," but assumed the absolute identity of the political rights of all three. The case was that of 1,600 ratepayers, who had been placed on the register by the overseers of Salford, and who had been struck off by the revising barrister without inquiry, merely because they bore such names as Mary, Hannah, &c. No objection was raised by any one to these names, though they had been published in the usual way. The mayor, the overseer, and the public generally concurred in the propriety of retaining them, and the representatives of both Liberals and Conservatives in the Revision Court did their best to keep them on the register, but in vain. Though the revising barrister expressed doubts as to whether he had a right to expunge the names, he said he should do so. This decision was appealed against, and the counsel was arguing that the revising barrister had exceeded his jurisdiction in striking off the names of persons not objected to, and the description of whose qualification was good upon the face of it; when he was interrupted by the Judge asking whether he meant to say that if the barrister found the name of a dog or a horse on the register he would not be justified in striking it off. This sudden question rather staggered the learned counsel, who had evidently up to that time not looked upon his clients as exactly on a level with brutes; but he could only follow the Judge's lead, and reply that in case a man

^{*} Rogers, "On Elections," 10th edition, p. 153.

happened to be called Ponto or Dobbin, he did not see why he should lose his vote.

In the election petition at Oldham, where a scrutiny was demanded, one set of objections turned on alleged legal incapacity of the voters. These comprised some aliens, some minors, and one woman, who, being upon the register, had recorded her vote. Mr. Justice Blackburn decided that the objections to the aliens and minors should have been taken before the revising barrister, and that it was then too late to challenge the votes on the ground of legal incapacity, but a woman was not a man at all, and he should strike off her vote at once. He added, however, that if the vote became of consequence, he should reserve the point for the Court of Common Pleas. We hereby perceive what a mere fetish sex becomes according to the principles of English law. The attributes that distinguish man from the beasts are speech, reason,* moral responsibility, and religious faith. Out of these attributes springs the capacity for political functions, for knowledge and experience, and for the formation of a stable, regular government. Yet in seeking the proper basis of a qualification on which to rest the possession of political power, men deliberately reject as insufficient all those attributes of reason and conscience which raise humanity above the brutes, and select one which they have in common with these.

We say that this principle is injurious, because it sets a stamp of inferiority on women. The opinion of a woman is not esteemed so highly as the opinion of a man, because the law does not deem it worthy of being taken into account in reckoning the votes of the people. This lowers women in their own eyes, and in the eyes of men. By making the capacity for feminine functions a disqualification for political functions, the female sex is depressed from its natural position as the one whose preservation is of the most importance in the human economy to that of one which is deemed of secondary consequence, and the welfare of the race suffers accordingly.

The exclusion of women from political power has been defended on diametrically opposite grounds. On one hand it is said that the interests and sentiments of women are identical with those of men, and that therefore women are sufficiently represented by taking the votes of men only in the various classes of society. But if the opinions and interests of women are identical with those of men of a similar social grade, there could be no possible harm in giving them the same means of expressing them as are given to men. On the other hand it is said that

women are morally and intellectually distinct from men; that they possess mental attributes not inferior but diverse, and consequently the ideas which they may form on questions of national polity will be of a different character, or based on different principles, from those entertained by men. On this view, however, whether we regard political questions with reference to the interests of the community at large, or of the feminine element in particular, the recognition of the right of women to vote seems absolutely necessary in order to secure that fair representation of all classes of the community, and that impartial consideration of subjects involving the interests of these various classes, which is the final

cause of representative government.

In illustration of this necessity we may refer to a speech by the present Attorney-General in the House of Commons during one of the debates on the Bill to render legal marriage with a deceased wife's sister. He is reported to have said:—"If ever there was a woman's question it was this one, and he asked if it were reasonable or generous to legislate on a matter of marriage against the well understood feeling of one of the sexes who were parties to it." Now whether Sir John Coleridge was right or wrong in his estimate of the feelings of his countrywomen on this question, there was surely justice in his appeal to the House not to legislate upon it without taking the sentiments of women into consideration. But under the present law what possible means exist for gauging the opinions of women on this or on any subject? The process of carefully eliminating from the electoral body every person otherwise qualified who belongs to the sex whose views are especially desired, seems singularly ill-adapted for the purpose of arriving at a trustworthy estimate of those views. Probably the opinions of women are divided on this question of the marriage law as on other topics, but until women are allowed to vote no one can possibly determine on which side the majority lies. Every attempt to do so is mere random guesswork, and until women are allowed to express their sentiments as freely, as fearlessly, and in the same manner as men, no man has a right to speak in their name. Legislation in regard to the interests of women, by an assembly from which the representation of women is rigidly excluded, is truly a "leap in the dark."

Another question specially affecting women is that of the right of married women to own property. Strange to say—or is it strange?—there seems less disposition to acknowledge the justice of consulting women in regard to this proposed amendment of the marriage law than on the other. In the debates which took place in both Houses of Parliament on the Married Women's Property Bill of 1870, it was throughout assumed that the matter must be settled according to men's notions of what was just and expedient for

^{*} We must not be understood as denying that the lower animals reason to a certain extent; but this does not affect the argument, as the distinction between these and mankind is sufficiently marked.

women. Women's ideas on the subject counted for nothing. The opponents of a change in the law relating to marriages of affinity appealed passionately on behalf of the presumed sentiments of women. They arrayed them in opposition to the measure, and claimed for them the right to be heard. But the opponents of a change in the law relating to the status of wives were silent respecting the opinions of women. Either they did not dare to appeal to them for fear of an adverse verdict, or they thought that although women might be generally in favour of the maintenance of the existing law, their opinions were not worth quoting in its defence.

The law relating to the property of women is an instance of flagrant wrong inflicted on the unrepresented half of the nation. What would be said of a law which deprived the majority of adult men of the right to own property? It would be at once concluded that such men had no votes, or they would not allow a session to pass without enforcing a measure to secure their rights. Yet this is exactly the position of the great majority of adult women under the common law of England. The Act of 1870 does not in any way interfere with this principle of the common law, but leaves it in full force. It merely extends to the personal earnings of women, to small amounts of property accruing to them by deed or will, and to certain descriptions of property, on special application, the facilities offered by the Chancery courts for evading this principle. It would not touch such a case as the following:-A woman selling oranges in the streets of Liverpool related her history to another woman as follows: Her first husband died leaving her in possession of a comfortable inn in Liverpool and one thousand pounds in the bank. She married again. The second husband, after living with her a short time, ran away to Australia, having previously paid a visit to the bank and drawn out the thousand pounds. The wife continued her business, by which she was able to earn a comfortable subsistence for herself and a daughter by the first marriage. After a few years the prodigal husband returned without the thousand pounds, penniless, ragged, and ill. He professed penitence for his past offences and begged of his wife to forgive and receive him. She consented, and took care of him until he recovered. For a time all went well, the husband was kind and attentive, and the wife began to think they might be happy. One day the husband observed that he thought a drive in the country would do his wife good after the care of nursing him through his illness; he would order a carriage for her and her daughter. The wife did not wish to go, but in order to gratify her husband she consented, and she and her daughter departed. On her return she did not see her husband, but found a stranger in the bar. When she asked his business he produced

a bill of sale by the husband to him of the house with all it contained and the business. The mother and daughter found themselves turned adrift homeless and penniless on the streets of Liverpool without appeal and without redress. The husband has not since been heard of.

This robbery was committed under the sanction of the marriage

law, and the law which sanctions it is still in force.

Sometimes it is urged that since the husband is bound to maintain his wife, it is but just that he should pocket all her property and earnings. But this is a fallacious argument. The claim of a wife to maintenance by her husband is based on the performance by her of the duties of a wife. Her maintenance is an equivalent for services rendered—an equivalent to which she is justly entitled whether she owns property or not. In truth, in the majority of cases, a husband no more "maintains" his wife than a man does his footman or his cook. To each is given maintenance in requital of services rendered. A cook or footman receives wages in addition to maintenance—a wife usually does not. To claim from a wife in exchange for mere maintenance not only her personal services, which are a full equivalent, but the surrender of all the property she may possess or acquire independently of her husband, is to

demand something for which no equivalent is offered.

Under a system of free trade in labour every able-bodied single man or woman is presumably capable of maintaining himself or herself by the exercise of bodily or mental powers. Each such person has two classes of labour to accomplish for this end: 1. Out-door labour—i.e., the earning of the money necessary to procure food, clothing, and shelter. 2. In-door labour—i.e., the application of this money for the personal sustenance and comfort of the individual. It is not enough to earn money to purchase food in order to sustain a man; that food must be prepared and made ready for his use. It is not enough to earn money to pay the rent and furniture of a house; a very considerable amount of daily labour is requisite in order to keep that house habitable and comfortable. Suppose the case of a labouring man working for wages, who had no domestic inmate—who had to light his fire, prepare his own breakfast, and ere he set forth for his day's toil had to make his bed and set his house in order. Then, when he returned for the midday meal, had to go to market to purchase the food, to cook it for himself, to wash up the dishes and arrange his room before he again went forth to his labour, to return at the close to repeat the same process before he could get his supper; and in addition to these daily toils, had the periodical scrubbing of the floor and washing of his clothes, and such mending as is rendered necessary by their wear and tear. It may be safely assumed that a man so circumstanced would not be able to earn

more than half the wages which he could earn were he relieved of all these laborious and time-consuming offices. Let us imagine a woman similarly situated, half of whose time was consumed in out-door or money-earning labour, and half in domestic or comfort-earning labour. Let us now suppose that these two marry. In order to perform the domestic duties for the man, and thus set him free to devote his whole time to money-earning labour, the woman most give up that portion of her time which she had hitherto devoted to money-earning labour. Because of this, she has an equitable claim to share the money which this sacrifice on her part enables a man to earn. The claim of a wife to maintenance arises from the simple fact that marriage enables a man to earn money by relieving him from the burden of domestic cares, while it disables a woman from earning money by imposing upon her these cares.

The claim of a wife for maintenance we hold to be absolute under these circumstances—i.e., where neither husband nor wife owns property or income other than the earnings of their daily labour. It becomes considerably modified when either possesses a fortune sufficient for maintenance without such labour. Since marriage need not of necessity, and would not, had the bill introduced in the House of Commons by Mr. J. G. Shaw Lefevre, in 1869, become law, have actually dispossessed a woman of her income or in any way disabled her from its possession or enjoyment, and since the possession of independent means of subsistence relieves her from the necessity of maintaining herself by marriage, and renders such an engagement a purely voluntary one on her part—the claim which a woman who gives up her independent means of subsistence in order to marry, has on the man at whose invitation she gives it up, does not exist, and in the case of persons who marry possessed each of independent property, we should be disposed to admit that the claims of husband and wife upon each other for maintenance are mutual and equal.

But this difference in the condition is not recognised by our laws. Whatever obligation the law at present imposes on a man to maintain his wife is totally irrespective of the amount of her possessions: it is the same whether she be a beggar or an heiress. Moreover, this vaunted liability shrinks to the narrowest limits when examined. If a man refuse to supply his wife with food and clothing, she has no means of enforcing her claim upon him. No magistrate could listen to a woman who complained that her husband would not maintain her. All he could do would be to recommend her to apply to the parish, and then if the guardians chose to supply her with pauper's allowance, they could recover the amount from the husband. But if the parish authorities were to find that the husband was in the receipt of good wages, and

therefore to decide that they would not relieve the woman, she must starve, for the wife has no direct remedy against the husband for neglect to maintain her. Cases have occurred of women being actually starved to death under the circumstances.

If, instead of bringing his wages home to his wife, to be applied to the maintenance of the family, a man takes them to the public house and spends them all in drink, the wife has no remedy. Yet surely, when the husband induced the wife to marry him on the faith that he would provide her with a maintenance, he contracted an obligation as binding and as capable of legal definition and enforcement as any other contract for the performance and reimbursement of personal services.

Suppose the common case of a working man paying court to a servant-girl in a good place. She is earning board and lodging of a much better quality than the wives of working men usually enjoy, and from ten to twenty pounds annually in addition. He asks her to leave all this, to give up all prospect of earning money, to devote herself to his service, to be not only his wife, but his servant-to wait upon him, to cook for him, to wash for him, to clean his house; and to perform all these arduous and multifarious duties, not only while she is well and strong, but through the period when the cares of maternity render them physically oppressive and injurious. In requital, he undertakes to provide her with uncooked food, lodging without attendance, and clothing. Now this is not a very tempting bargain, and commercially it cannot be considered advantageous. But such as it is, the terms ought to be carried out, and the law ought to provide means for enforcing their fulfilment. If the wife does not, at the end of the week, receive a portion of her husband's wages sufficient to provide herwith these things, she ought to have as ready a means of redress as the working man would have who, after performing his week's work, should find that his employer neglected to pay him his week's wages.

Were the rights of the wife to her share of the husband's wages recognised as fully as the right of the workman to his share of the profit of his labour, a husband would no more think of defrauding the wife of her due than the employer now thinks of defrauding the workmen of their wages. The knowledge that wages can be recovered, effectually secures punctual payment without the resort to actual process of law, while this power in no way disturbs amicable relations between master and man. The experience that employers are now as a rule in the habit of paying wages punctually, would by no means induce the workmen to forego their legal claims. They would not think it just to be bound to spend their time and strength in working for their masters, and then be compelled to trust to their caprice or favour, or sense of honour alone,

for the payment of their wages. Yet we are unable to discover in what way the position of a man earning his livelihood by working for a master who supports him in return for his labour, differs as regards the question of right to maintenance from that of a woman who earns her bread by the performance of household duties for the husband who has undertaken to maintain her in return for her labour. If, when pay-day came round, the master were to inform the men that he had no money for them, as he had spent it all in selfish indulgence, and they would get nothing for that week's labour, the men would consider themselves unjustly treated. What, then, must the wife feel whose husband comes home on the Saturday night with his head full of drink and his pocket empty of cash? But the case of the wife is the harder of the two. The money she has a right to find in her husband's pockets at the end of the week is not hers for her personal use. It is the fund out of which she has to furnish food for her husband, her children, and herself. When that is wasted, their sustenance is gone.

A short time ago a lady was asked by a poor woman for a loan to pay off a debt at a provision shop for food supplied for the use of her family, consisting of her husband, herself, and three children. The husband was earning good wages, which he spent mostly in drink, and he did not give his wife enough even to provide the cost of his own food. The wife was obliged to go out to work, in order to earn money to pay for her own and her children's food, and make up the deficiency in that of her husband. The lady was advised not to lend the money, but to say to the poor woman that her husband was legally liable for the debt incurred at the provision shop, and that the shopkeeper should sue him for it. The reply was, that the husband had threatened to strip the house and sell off every stick of furniture, and that if he were asked to pay the debt he would very probably carry his threat into effect. The furniture had not been provided by the husband; it had been bought with money advanced by the lady who was our informant, and repaid by the wife in weekly instalments out of her earnings. But as this transaction took place before the passing of the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, the husband would now be upheld by the majesty of the law in desolating his wife's home, the fruits of her honest industry.

The clergyman of a parish in Lancashire stated the case of one of his parishioners, the wife of a drunken, truculent collier, who is earning good wages, but who spends all on his own vicious indulgences, and gives his wife nothing for the maintenance of the household. Nevertheless he expects to be provided for at home, and kept "like a lord," as the clergyman said. The woman is industrious, clever, orderly, and a good manager. She contrives

to earn enough to maintain a comfortable home and provide good meals for her legal master, who makes no scruple of abusing her if things are not served to his mind.

Such cases are very common: but were they as exceptional as they are common, they would afford ground for altering the law

which supports and sanctions them.

The franchise is needed as a protection for women in regard of equal law. In every case where the laws determine the relative duties of men and women, the interest and the feelings of the unrepresented half of the nation have been made wholly subservient to that of the class which has political power. In the marriage relation, the wife's separate existence is lost; the husband is the only person recognised by the law. One of the most sacred natural rights, that of a mother to the child she has borne in her bosom, flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone, is set aside; and to the married mother's legal master is given the power to dispose of her offspring, not only during his lifetime but after his death. The law does not recognise a mother, even after her husband's death, as the natural guardian of her children. Her husband can will them away from her, and even if he names no other guardian, the mother does not become such by law. A married woman's children are not her own. Until a very few years ago an unweaned child might be torn from its mother's bosom, and deprived by a father's will of its mother's milk. However unnatural or bad a man might be, the law, without making any inquiries into his character, invested him with irresponsible power to make such a decree, and sanctioned and enforced it effectively. One of the revising barristers who adjudicated on the claims of women to be put on the roll of electors, desiring to say something especially insulting and unpleasant to the claimant who came to plead in his court, stated that he declined to recognise suckling as a qualification for the suffrage. But if womanhood had not been a disqualification for the suffrage, it would have been impossible that for hundreds of years the law should have vested the right to the custody of an unweaned child in that parent who could not nourish it. This glaring anomaly has been partially remedied, but at the cost of an injustice which is almost more cruel than the original one. By Sir Thomas Talfourd's Custody of Infants Bill, passed soon after the accession of her present Majesty, the married mother is as a matter of grace kindly permitted to keep—not her children—oh no! the law does not recognise them as hers—but she is graciously allowed to keep her husband's children until they are seven years old. Why! that she may have all the care, trouble, and anxiety of their helpless infancy, and the-it may be-profligate father be relieved from the same, and the torture and the uprooting of her heart be all the more cruel at the end of the seven years, when the fiat of separation goes forth. What that torture is, none but a mother can know. It is probably the greatest that a human being can suffer. And the law sanctions the infliction of this torture on Englishwomen at the irresponsible will and pleasure of a man who may be a cruel and heartless scoundrel.

The despotic powers of a father are by no means a dead letter. But a short time ago a scene took place which shows what can be done, and what is done, under the sanction of man-made laws. The account went the round of the newspapers in a paragraph entitled

"PAINFUL SCENE IN A COURT OF JUSTICE.—In the Irish Court of Queen's Bench, Mr. Justice Fitzgerald had a habeas corpus application made by the Rev. Henry Newenham, to obtain custody of his two children, Adelaide and Edith, who were under the care of their mother, Lady Helena Newenham, and her father, Lord Mountcashel. His lordship ordered that the younger girl, a child of about seven years, should be delivered up to her father; but the other girl, who is nearly sixteen, the age at which she is legally a free agent, having already expressed her unwillingness to comply with her father's wish, was permitted to exercise her choice. A painful scene occurred as an officer came into the court, bearing the younger child, a pretty little girl, with long fair hair, and intelligent beyond her years. She screamed and struggled violently, exclaiming repeatedly, 'Oh, must I, must I? Oh, dear, I won't go to my father.' Mr. Justice Fitzgerald took her up and spoke kindly to her, telling her her father would be fond of her, and that her mother would often see her. To this the child only replied again and again, 'Oh, please, do let me do as I like. Don't send me away. Will mamma ever see me again? Grandpa, grandpa, where are you?' Mr. Justice Fitzgerald: 'I shall take care of that, my dear. Your mamma will see you as often as she likes.' Child: 'Will it be every day? Tell me—will it be every day?' Mr. Justice Fitzgerald: 'Oh, yes, every day.' Lord Mountcashel (who was much moved): 'Knowing what I know, that is impossible. He is a d-l.' Mr. Justice Fitzgerald said: 'I am sorry I cannot leave the two sisters together. If I could, I would persuade you to that, Mr. Newenham. However, I hope you will allow free communication between the girls; and I must order that the mother be allowed to see her child as often as she wishes.' Mr. Purcell: Yes, my lord, all reasonable opportunity will be given her.' The child was then handed over to her father, who carried her out."

What a mockery to call the above a court of justice! A mother is to be "allowed" to see her child as often as she wishes, and a lawyer promises that all "reasonable opportunity" shall be given her. But suppose that on one of these reasonable opportunities on which the mother is "allowed to see" her child, she sees that the child is unhappy, or harshly treated, she cannot take it away, and the permission to "see" it may only add to her agony.

We appeal to every mother in the land to say, Is that mother and is that child justly treated by this country's law? Is it enough for those who are happy to say, "These laws, though unjust, are a dead letter in my case; therefore I take no care for these things?" As well might those who are warmed and fed allege their own sense of personal comfort as a reason why they should bestow no thought on the sufferings, or care for the relief of the cold, the hungry, and the naked. We ask all women who have happy homes to join us in trying to protect those women who have unhappy homes, or who have no homes. For it is only the happy who have strength to help. The unhappy are helpless entirely.

We thought it necessary before appealing to this condition of the law as an argument for the necessity of the franchise, to ascertain with more precision the state and animus of the law with regard to mothers. From a legal text-book which enters fully into this subject we gather that the fundamental principle of English law is, that the father alone is entitled to the custody and disposal of his children; that this right inheres totally irrespective of his moral character or fitness for the charge; and that it will be confirmed and enforced by the courts, though he be an open and notorious evil liver. That while the law is thus jealous of the natural rights and parental feelings of the father, those of the mother are utterly disregarded; and that in the rare instances in which the absolute power of the father in regard to the disposal of the children is restrained or modified by the action either of the judges or special application of the law relating to the custody of children under seven years of age, this is done not in consideration of the natural right or parental feelings of the mother, but solely out of care for the supposed interest of the child. The courts have specially and expressly disclaimed any other intention than that of interfering for the protection of the child, and the claims of the mother have been dismissed as altogether out of the consideration of the Court. Such modified rights to the custody of the babies as are permitted at the discretion of the judges to be conceded to a mother, are wholly forfeited if she has been guilty of adultery, while a father may be living in open adultery, yet may withhold the custody of her children from a virtuous mother. It seems so monstrous and incredible that so unjust a law should prevail, that we think the fact will scarcely be credited on assertion only. We will therefore offer to our readers some cases and decisions quoted by Mr. Macpherson, to set forth the state of the law :-

"On the petition of a mother and her daughter, a child of about fourteen years of age, praying that the daughter might be placed

under the mother's care, or that the mother might be permitted to have access to her daughter at all convenient times, it being stated at the bar that the father father was living in habitual adultery, on account of which the mother had obtained a divorce in the Ecclesiastical Courts, Sir Anthony Host, L.C., said that the court had nothing to do with the fact of the father's adultery; that some conduct on his part, with reference to the management and education of the child must be shown to warrant an interference with his legal right to the custody of his child. He did not know of any case which would authorise him to make the order sought. If any could be found, he would most gladly adopt it; for in a moral point of view he knew of no act more harsh or cruel than depriving the mother of proper intercourse with her child."

II.

"The mother of three girls, the eldest aged five and a half years, left the house rented by her husband in which she was living with the infants, and afterwards removed them, and instituted proceedings in the Ecclesiastical Courts for a divorce. On the application of the father a writ of habeas corpus was granted to bring the children before Mr. Justice Paterson. The judge ordered that the mother should deliver up the children to the husband. In this case it was stated that the father was living in adultery."

"An Englishwoman married a Frenchman domiciled in England. She separated from her husband on account of ill-treatment, and he by force and stratagem got into the house where she was, and carried away her child, an infant at the breast. The mother obtained a habeas corpus upon affidavit, stating these facts. Lord Ellenborough said, 'The father is the person entitled by law to the custody of his child. If he abuse that right to the detriment of the child, the court will protect the child. But there is no pretence that the child has been injured for want of nurture, or in any other respect.' The child was remanded to the custody of the father."

IV.

"G. H. Talbot, a Roman Catholic, married a Protestant lady. They had two children, John and Augusta. By a deed of separation between the parents it was agreed that Augusta should remain with her mother till the age of ten. The father died, having by will appointed a Roman Catholic priest to be the guardian of his children. The infants were made wards of court. The mother married Mr. Berkeley, a Protestant.

"A petition was presented on behalf of the infants, stating that the guardian had removed the boy, aged ten years, from school, and placed him under the care of his uncle, the Earl of Shrewsbury—that Lord Shrewsbury refused to allow him to visit his mother. The petition prayed that Augusta might continue with her mother, and that John might have unrestrained intercourse with his mother, and might reside with her for convenient periods.

"The guardian petitioned that Augusta might be delivered to him. "The Lord Chancellor (Lord Cottenham) said that the mother had no right to interfere with the testamentary guardian. The Court would exercise a discretion whether an infant should be ordered to be delivered up to such guardian. The female infant was of the age of eight years and seven months, residing in her mother's house, under the care of a Roman Catholic governess, and there was strong evidence showing her to be of delicate constitution, and requiring the care of her mother. There was also a statement of the late father's wishes that she should be left in the care of her mother till the age of ten, and on that circumstance his lordship relied as evidence that she might safely be left with the mother till that period. He therefore left the female infant in the care of her mother. The petition of the guardian was ordered to stand over, no order being made upon it for the present. As to John Talbot, the Lord Chancellor said that it was right that he should live with Lord Shrewsbury. The petition of the infants was dismissed. The only access to her son which the guardian would afford to Mrs. Berkeley was at Lord Shrewsbury's house, and in the guardian's presence.

"Mrs. Berkeley petitioned that her son might be allowed to visit her for a month; the petition was accompanied with a medical certificate that she was in ill health owing to her anxiety to have access

"The Lord Chancellor felt it to be necessary to look only to the interests of the infant, and to the wishes of the father, expressed in his appointment of a guardian, and declined to make any order on the petition. June 13, 1840."

"A father applied to obtain possession of a child of five years old which the mother kept from him. There was reason to doubt whether the child was his; he had been divorced from the mother soon after its birth. Lord Kenyon had no doubt but that the father was entitled to the custody, as the Court saw no reason to believe that he intended to abuse his right by sacrificing the child."

"Lord Eldon, on habeas corpus, ordered two children of the respective ages of five years and seven months, to be delivered to their father by their mother, who was living apart from him, and who claimed their custody in virtue of a deed which provided for their residing with her in the event of a separation, and of another deed by which a provision was made for her separate maintenance, and an allowance was agreed to be paid her for the maintenance of the infants."

"In a modern case, in the Court of Common Pleas, a husband ill-treated his wife; a separation took place. The wife kept her child, which was six years old. The husband cohabited with another woman. The husband sued out a habeas corpus. The judge decided that neither the father nor the mother was entitled to the custody of the child, and it was given up to a third person."

The propositions which these cases illustrate are the following:— The law vests parental rights in the father alone, to the entire exclusion of the mother. The father has power to remove children from their mother, not only during his life; but he may by will appoint a stranger to be guardian after his death, and such guardian may separate mother and child. The power of the father is not forfeited by his immoral conduct. It inheres in him by law, and he cannot be divested of it at the discretion of a judge. The Custody of Infants Act allowed some modified rights to mothers. But these rights are not conferred directly on any mother. They do not inhere in her by virtue of her motherhood; the Act is merely permissive. It declares that it shall be lawful for a judge, upon hearing a petition, if he see fit, to make an order that a mother shall be allowed access to her child, and if it is under seven years of age, to order that it be delivered to and remain in the custody of the mother until attaining that age, subject to such regulations as he shall deem convenient and just. Another section of the Act declares that the judge shall have no power to make the order if the mother has been guilty of adultery.

The franchise is needed as a protection for women from the uncontrolled dominion of the savage passions of men. In the less cultivated classes of society these passions rage with terrific violence, and their effects fall chiefly on the unhappy wives whom the law delivers up to the mercy of their legal masters. The existence of this savage element in our population will not be denied. Yet we will call two witnesses whose testimony is well calculated to arouse attention to this commonly acknowledged but commonly neglected fact. At the meeting of the British Association in Liverpool, after a lecture by Sir John Lubbock on "Savages," Professor Huxley, in the course of some observations, said:—

"Since I have walked in your great town of Liverpool I have seen fully as many savages, as degraded savages as those in Australia. Nay, worse; in the primitive savage there remains a certain manliness derived from lengthened contact with nature and struggle with it, which is absent in these outcast and degraded children of civilization. The people who form what are called the upper strata of society talk of political questions as if they were questions of Whig or Tory, of Conservative and Heaven knows what, but the man who can see, will, I think, believe that in these times there lies beneath all these questions the great question whether that prodigious misery which dogs the footsteps of modern civilization shall be allowed to exist—whether, in fact, in the heart of the most polished nations of the

present day—of those nations which pride themselves most on being Christians—there shall be this predominant and increasing savagery, of which such abundant instances are in your midst. I believe that this is the great political question of the future."

We agree with the eminent Professor in this belief, and we ask—Have not women the deepest interest in, and is it not their duty to care for, political questions such as this? For women, and notably the women of our own land, are the chief victims of this savagery. There is not, we believe, any class in the world so subjected to brutal personal violence as English wives.

Soon after these remarks of Professor Huxley at Liverpool, Mr. Justice Brett held the winter assizes at Manchester. The following are extracts from his charge to the grand jury:—

"The calendar is not long, but I am sorry to say it is serious, and this seems to me to arise principally from a habit of brutal violence, and giving way, without the smallest provocation, to evil passions. There are no fewer than four persons accused of murder, and there are many cases of violence by stabbing and cutting with knives.

The first case is No. 1 in the calendar, and it is the case of a man who is accused of the murder of his wife. According to the depositions, by his own confession, he went in without any particular ill-feeling to this woman. The principal evidence against him is his own child. He put a rope round his wife's neck, tied it with a knot under her ear, and dragged her about the room until she was dead.

"The next case is No. 6 on the list. It is also that of a man charged with the murder of his wife. In this case no one was present when the blow was struck, but the man was seen going into his house, a scream was heard, and the woman was seen coming out holding her apron to her head, the blood streaming profusely from a severe wound in the head. There was a brush or part of a broom found on the floor, and the woman made a statement in the prisoner's presence that he struck her with the broom. When she was examined by the doctors it was found that her skull was crushed in, and she was seized with paralysis and died.

"The next case is No. 27. This, again, is the case of a man who is charged with the murder of a woman with whom he lived as his wife. There is evidence that he struck the woman a blow.

"Another case is that of a man who killed his wife; and here, again, the blow was not seen, but the man was seen going into the house, and shortly afterwards the woman was seen bleeding about the head, and several contused wounds were afterwards found on her person. She seems to have died from what the doctors call prostration and weakness from exhaustion; and in presence of the man she said he not only struck her with a poker, but stamped upon her after having knocked her down. How terrible this is! Here are no fewer than four cases in which men are charged with wilful murder, with brutal violence to women with whom they lived as their wives. Some steps must be taken to put an end to such conduct."

Men say that women are not oppressed. But women themselves tell a different tale. From all parts of the country, from suffering and sorrowing women, come voices blessing the efforts that are made and bidding them God speed. Sometimes they come from the ranks of the peerage—sometimes from the well-to-do middle classes—sometimes from the poorest of the poor. From all sorts and conditions of women the cry of distress has gone forth. And the story is ever the same deep and cruel wrong, suffered at the hands of those who in theory are their natural protectors. All have the same hopeless consciousness that for them there is no help and no redress. They are made legally subordinate to men, and their sufferings are held as of no account.

We are persuaded that the sufferings and the wrongs of women will never be considered worthy of attention by the Legislature until they are in possession of the suffrage, and not until they are politically on the same level as men, will their education and their welfare receive equal care from the Government. All those who are interested in the general progress of society in intelligence and virtue should aid in the effort to remove the political disabilities of half the nation. When this shall be accomplished the additional power thereby gained will enable those who are working for measures of social and political reform to carry them on at a rate of progress hitherto undreamed of. At present half the people are excluded from participation in matters of national interest, and of the privileged half a great portion are held back by want of public spirit, of knowledge, and of interest in these matters. This apathy is the natural result of the influence of the huge mass of political ignorance, partly engendered by the exclusion of women from political existence. Remove the cause, and the effect will begin to diminish; enfranchise the whole people, and the whole people will begin to develope political life. In a celebrated Essay on the Education of the World, the writer has personified the human race under the figure of a colossal man, whose infancy, education, and growth represent the development of religious and political civilisation throughout the period of authentic history. If we can imagine this man determining that his right leg alone must have the advantage of exercise, and the left should be regarded as an ornamental appendage, it will not inaptly figure the attempt of humanity to make progress by cultivating only one sex. All who have turned their energies to public affairs feel how lame and imperfect is the advance of opinion on great questions, and in the suppression of intelligent and responsible opinion in women we find the cause of this lethargy.

(National Jocial Science Confress.)

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1872.

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.* BY ARTHUR ARNOLD.

I AM inclined to envy the insensibility of those who can stand up before educated and accomplished women-their acknowledged superiors in mental attainments, in moral worth and judgment—and refuse the claim even of such to political enfranchisement. For my own part, I find an apology rising to my lips together with the advocacy of women's suffrage. It seemed abasement enough when working-men, the humblest, but the most numerous class of householders, most of them orderly, law-abiding citizens, had to sue the same tribunal to which our plea is addressed, with prayers for the initial right of citizenship. But it is surely shameful that in a country which, for longer than the average period of one generation, has been ruled by a woman—in a country in which, against every obstacle, women have won such high place in every path to which their endeavours could be directed—where they are the responsible owners of vast wealth, and where of course they are exposed to all the rigours of the law-where, though under serious disabilities in regard to earning money, they are yet liable equally with men to the demands of the imperial and local tax-gatherer—it is surely, I say, not without some sense of shame, that a man, who is not the mere slave of precedent, can find himself engaged in advocating the political enfranchisement of women.

Yet I am not disposed to think harshly of men who oppose their impotent resistance to this demand, because I doubt their consciousness of wrong-doing. Half the errors of the world would be cured in an instant if we could inoculate mankind with the idea of progress. The friends of progress must not deceive themselves. There is actually in the mind of a large section of mankind a notion that humanity has from the beginning always wandered far and farther from perfection, though how they reconcile this inverted belief with any trust in the providence of God I never could make out. But if the

^{*} Read Monday, February 5th, 1872.

review of progress affords no indictment of the honesty of apathetic objectors to this demand, they can hardly escape the reproach of stupidity if they do not now observe how rotten has become the anchorage of their objections. If any one were to say of the ablest of the many distinguished ladies whom I have the honour of addressing to-night, "Madam, you and your sex are born in acknowledged inferiority to men; you are only fit to be classed with reference to political enfranchisement among lunatics, criminals, idiots, and minors", -if he escaped the conviction of more than brutal rudeness it could only be upon the ground of his folly. In those good old times, long even before the Queen of Sheba's day, when there was no law but that of the strongest, a man who feared no Jael in his tent could not illogically make use of such arguments. But how much more ridiculous than insulting would such an argument be in our day, when women exercise every suffrage but that of Parliament, and when a woman sits by right of a larger number of votes than ever were given for a man in the chief educational council of the kingdom. It is late, far too late, to bring forward the old rib theory; and though I will not believe that men who oppose the claims of women are directly animated by selfish and unworthy motives, yet sure I am that if they will fairly consider the matter, they will see nothing but the old and dying law of mere might, is the foundation of their resistance. Feebly and unworthily as I shall handle a few of the arguments on the side of concession, I have yet so much confidence in the clearness and cogency of these arguments as to leave no doubt of the result upon the mind of one who is open to conviction.

Roughly speaking, we may divide those who withstand the claim of women's suffrage into four classes—those who say that women are unfit for the suffrage; those who contend that the suffrage is unfit for women; those who maintain that women do not want the suffrage; and lastly, those who assert that women have nothing to gain, no wrongs to redress, by

means of the suffrage.

I shall not insult your ears by dealing at great length with the objection that women are unfit to be intrusted with the suffrage. Of course, no man in his senses would deny the eligibility of some women. Among the members of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, is a lady who is nothing less than the most distinguished astronomical mathematician; there are two others whose acts of philanthropy in Europe, Asia, and America, have made household

words of their honoured names; there are few living writers who do not acknowledge inferiority in her own department of literature to George Eliot; I know of no man whose services are valued at so high a rate in hard money as those of Adelina Patti. Few would have liked to deny the claim of Miss Burdett Coutts to the franchise. But do not these blind individuals who are about to fall into the ditch of defeat, do they not see that in admitting the claim of Mary Somerville they concede the whole matter? It is not to be expected that when by the operation of the law of the strongest, women have through all time been excluded from so many opportunities for intellectual improvement, that they should all thus shine before men; but if owing to this rude law, which it is the mission of civilization to banish, they have been deprived, unjustly deprived, of many advantages which, rightly used, tend to make life higher and nobler, they have not had to contend to so great an extent with the vices which, together with learning and power, men have done their best to monopolize. Rather than assert that all men were fit for the franchise, I would contend that all women are as fit as all men for the privilege.

But that is not necessary. Here the right of voting is a question of property; and there are very few men who will venture to argue that if a woman is fit to be intrusted with the rights and duties of property, she is unfit to vote in respect of her possessions. If I buy a freehold for 100l., it yields me a vote plus the enjoyment of the property, and any man should be ashamed to confess that such a possession of the suffrage is not a valuable consideration. Why then should the woman have less than I for her money? Is not this injustice? If not, I know not what is just? Is it because she is unfit to exercise a right which the most drunken and ignorant and sordid clown may hold as the appanage of his purchase? This objection that women are unfit for the franchise, I think,

has fallen rotten to the ground.

Let us give our attention now, for a moment, to those gentler hindrances who regard the suffrage as unfit for women. I must confess to you that from my earliest youth I have always suspected an argument of this sort. When I have heard people say:—"This is unfit for children" I have often found they had no good reason why the limitation should be so restricted. The suffrage is not given to minors, because minors universally cannot hold property—cannot perform the duties of citizenship, and are not amenable to the full burdens of that condition. And only in the paternal theory of govern-

ment have we a right to say of any privilege: "This is unfit for them; let us keep it all to ourselves." Such, indeed, is the standpoint of these objectors. They, in fact, assume a paternal authority over all women. But I never heard that this could be pleaded to bar the operation of a distress warrant issued against the furniture of a woman-householder; I never heard that it would excuse her from the payment of her rates and taxes. Surely if the suffrage is unfit for women, they ought never to be troubled with the cost of sewers, the wages of policemen, the maintenance of lunatics, the provision of paving? "Ah! but that is not what I mean," protests the self-constituted protector of women. "I mean that women are unfit for scenes in which men are brought together in hot excitement." Well, I must say, that I think it is just then that their influence will be most beneficial. Whether it be so or not does not of course affect in the slightest degree the question of their right. They have in respect of their property a right to the suffrage, and a further right to consider for themselves, whether the circumstances under which they were called upon to exercise it are such as invite them to record their vote, or to repel them from the exercise of the suffrage. But I do maintain that the scandals of the polling booth will be ended most quickly by the adoption of woman suffrage. I find no evidence of this stronger than in the very instances which the holders of the argument that the suffrage is unfit for women bring forward to refute my claim. They point to the presence of a few disorderly women at the poll in Manchester and at Preston. Yet the misconduct of these women has produced more solemn and abiding resolution for reform, than the far grosser misconduct of men for past ages. What a pity, I say, that we had not years and years ago these few ill-behaved women at the poll, that men, shocked at vice, to which their eyes were closed in their own case, should so resolve to make the conduct of elections orderly and reverent, as the most solemn act of worldly duty! Who indeed can fail to see that just in proportion as we have fewer places of which it can be said that they are unfit for women, so men become more self-respecting, more refined, more virtuous, in short, more fit for the performance of their own share of the duties of life. When I hear it said that something is unfit for women, experience has led me to associate more or less of drunkenness with the forbidden thing. There is riot and revelry, rude licence and improper conduct in the things from which fathers, and husbands, and brothers, desire to keep women. But do

they lose sight of the fact that the admission of women to those functions, the performance of which is stained with such conduct, is the surest antidote, the most certain way of removing the gross accompaniments of these public assemblies? Why should they doubt this? Let them look to their own dinner tables, and then ransack their memories for the records of the three-bottle men of their grandsire's day. If men have gained this advance by "joining the ladies," with more sense left in their brains than their grandfathers thought necessary for the drawing-room, why should it be questioned that the same result would be produced at the poll? For my own part, I think a further improvement at dinner tables would be the abolition of the separate system; the gain would be on the side of the temperance and of esprit; for dreary as English dinners not unfrequently are, I confess I always look forward with positive dread to that most dreary period of the evening, when, in obedience to the nod of the presiding Juno, "one shall be taken and the other left." I think the argument that the possession of the suffrage would unsex women, is more profane and impious, even than it is silly and inconsequent. Men say that the possession of the franchise would be contrary to a woman's natural position. Am I to suppose, this indicates a belief that the Creator specially formed women with reference to their perpetual exclusion from voting-not at contested elections to boards of guardians, local boards, town councils, and school boards, but at parliamentary elections? Does the proposer of this objection presume to suppose that he or I can unsex women—that we can undo the work of creation? I do not consider it necessary to continue the argument upon this part of the subject.

I am now prepared to meet the third class of objectors, those who assert that women do not want the franchise. I admit that all women do not demand the franchise; if they did, there would be little need of such poor efforts as I can make for their enfranchisement. But sure I am that every day and every hour an increasing number of women will join in this demand. Is it a new thing that the suffrage should not be demanded en masse? After all, the work of pulling down the park railings, and drawing a tear from the eyes of good Mr. Walpole, were not the achievements of a population. There is far more of real effort represented in the petitions from women which have again and again loaded the tables of the House of Commons. Now, the advocacy of the Women's Disabilities Bill is becoming quite fashionable, but it has been a different matter

in years that are but lately passed, and even now for earnest, sincere women, who feel the injustice of their disabilities deeply in their hearts, it is often a far harder matter to brave the silly prejudices of tyrant custom in the mere signing of a petition than to bear a hand in the removal of any length of Hyde Park railings. When I hear it said that the majority of women do not demand the political suffrage, I am not surprised. Of any unenfranchised class the majority had always been found apathetic. And think what special reason women have for apathy, or seeming apathy! Nine-tenths of them, and probably I might say more, are directly dependent upon men for the means of existence. They are more obedient to custom, more fearful of combatting the opinion of the world; they are much ruled by fashion, and the leaders of fashion-I mean the leaders of fashion in dress and apparel of all sorts-will be slow in demanding for women a life of greater dignity and more equal partnership. But I say this: that whether the woman with whom he talks be frivolous or ignorant, the gay butterfly who regards mere household work as a chrysalis state, or the poor drudge whose life is almost breathless in the performance of the vulgar duties of the most sordid home-no man, be he the bitterest opponent of this movement to be found within the walls of Parliament, can fail to arouse in her mind an active demand for justice, if he will honestly and truthfully set before his comprehension even those few of the disgraceful anomalies of our law with which I shall conclude my remarks. For now, lastly, I am going to do battle with those that assert that women have nothing to gain, no wrongs to redress by the possession of the suffrage, which I take to imply a more active interest on the part of the sex in political affairs. I ought indeed to have put the question of women's wrongs before that of their rights. It may perhaps be alleged against me with some truth that, as a man, I naturally shrunk from exposing to the shame of my sex laws so hideous in their injustice, so monstrous in their cruelty, so unparalleled throughout the whole world for their rank injustice. Let us look at the life of a woman from her cradle as affected by these laws. We may say of this country that "all men and women are born free and equal;" but directly the educational process begins, then the injustice commences. The boy finds ample endowments, many of them bequeathed for the education of poor children, open exclusively to those of his sex, while in nineteen homes out of twenty every effort is made for his advancement as something upon which the whole well-being of the family depends, while

the sister is often left as it were to feed upon the scanty herbage which she may find growing by the wayside of the remote bye-paths of her life. He is encouraged to be "manly," which with many people means skilful at fisticuffs; and rudeness to those weaker than himself is not regarded as a high crime and misdemeanour. When the lad is looking through the pleasant paths of a university career into that vague world in which he shall some day be an actor, free to try his strength against the strongest, and to win the highest honours in the State, there is settling down upon the mind of the girl a haze of uncertainty. Her common refuge is romance. She is bound by every tie of affection and of interest to be conventional, and to assure herself and her friends that she is very happy? But is she so? Is human nature so very different that inactive life can be as it were suspended without emotion. Do not believe this. Even "girls of the period" set their little wits a thinking occasionally. And what do they see? Nothing so ennobling as a certain career of active duty inviting every man in a hundred forms. An aimless, idle life, ending in marriage or inferior comfort to that enjoyed in the paternal home—perhaps penury. They find consolation and hope in romance and frivolity, and men find the consequence in the extravagance and want of sympathy of their wives. We have seen to some extent what is their position if they inherit property and live unmarried. A million of women in these islands cannot marry, but as for those who do, they must at the outset of married life accept the imputation from the law, of idiocy, or a mild and as it were semi-lunatic form of felony. They will not be allowed to retain possession of their property. Either they must commit its custody—with the possibility of utter ruin—to persons called trustees, who ofttimes cannot be trusted, or the husband, who has just vowed to endow them with all his worldly goods, receives by the mere act of marriage a transfer of all their property.

"Ye who believe in affection that hopes and endures and is patient,' Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of woman's devotion,'

do not make the fatal error of supposing that this lovely fruit grows out of injustice and cruel wrong! As you value these sweetest rewards of life, these clasps, more dear, as an eloquent friend of mine has said, than those of Alma and of Inkerman, as you are zealous for the dignity of true love and for the fidelity of married life, set yourselves to right the wrongs of women! The time is long past when it was in the

power of the strong to force the physically weak to live a life of ignorance and subjection. All knowledge is open before women; a really learned woman has long ceased to be a curiosity: You cannot look for the most conscientious regard for duty and truth and honour from women who live under the thraldom of cruelly unjust laws; and for yourselves you must make your choice, whether in this matter you will so act as to receive the respect, the aversion, or the contempt of intelligent women. If you think I speak too strongly, bear me company a few minutes while I pass but very superficially over some of the iniquities of the laws of this country as they affect women. Let us take the laws at their best. Two friends of mine were lately married; both the man and the woman were possessed of property, which each had managed most admirably and with great success. The man retains full command over his fortune, but the woman was obliged on entering the portal of marriage to pass her property either to her husband or to trustees; she chose the latter, and is now thwarted and harassed in regard to every disposition of her fortune. So much for the good husband. Now let us look at another everyday picture. May I repeat the published facts of the case of a woman who is now reduced to selling oranges in the streets of Liverpool? Her first husband died, leaving her a licensed house and 1000l. She married again. In the early days of their married life her second husband drew out the 1000l. from the bank, and took ship with his legalized plunder for Australia. Robbed with the approval of the laws of her country, she made no revolt, but laboured and succeeded in maintaining in comfort and respectability herself and the daughter she had borne to her first husband. In a few years the unpunishable rogue returned, miserable, ragged, and destitute. She fed, and fondled, and forgave him. Happy in relieving his distress and in ministering to his comfort, she felt a new pleasure in life. One day he proposed a drive in the country for the hard-working wife and daughter, and they took the unaccustomed luxury of a carriage. On returning they found a stranger in full possession of the bar and the business of the inn. He produced a bill of sale from the husband, of the house with its contents and goodwill. Imagine the feelings with which this woman found herself and her daughter homeless and penniless, turned out to live a pauper or to die a beggar in the streets of Liverpool! Ladies and gentlemen, I am overwhelmed with shame as I confess that such—in spite of that legislative abortion, the Married

Women's Property Act—such is to-day possible under the laws of my country. Mark, too, while on the subject of property, that the law gives a woman no claim whatever to any definite portion of her husband's wealth. He finds her a girl, earning good wages in service, or salary in a shop, or the inmate of a happy home, and makes proposal to her for a life partnership. She accepts. Her part of the work is to economize his time for money-making employment, to be careful of the house, to nurse and educate the infant children, to sustain and improve his status in society by making their home respectable and respected. But the wholesome doctrine that the labourer is worthy of his hire does not apply to her. The law, which is so much a respecter of persons, with regard to the man's right to possess himself of his wife's property, that it permits her to receive for her own no sum exceeding 2001. coming to her by bequest after marriage, is purely indifferent with regard to the maintenance of women. If a lady of the most delicate health and refined breeding—one whose very existence demanded that which would seem luxurious to women of rustic mould—if such a one were the victim of a secret marriage, of the validity of which she was assured but could not prove, thirty pence a week is all she could obtain for the maintenance of his child from the richest man in the State, and for herself she could not directly obtain even a share of such biscuit as he gave his sporting dogs. She, his wife, the deluded unhappy wretch who accepted his vows to love, honour, and cherish her, who was mocked with the endowment at the altar of all his worldly goods-she is the one human being who has no rights against him. But surely justice-? No! Though he may be spending her fortune with harlots, English justice will not listen to her prayer for a mandate compelling the husband to give her food. Somebody must feed her, if they please—for even her claims as a pauper are merely those of starving humanity, not of such rights as belong to the drunken prostitute—and then they may recover the cost of their bounty from the husband, whom, though she hunger into slow consumption, the law will hardly brand as a criminal, only regarding him as a trivial debtor. But in this condition there is one joy; the famished child she hugs to her poor breast is her own, because its possession is shameful; it is thought to be illegitimate. She may have heard the recent wrongs of Lady Helena Newenham, and while she loathes the coarse food the Poor Law gives her, she may bless the injustice which bastardises her child. This daughter of the present Lord Mountcashel had two little

liken the position of women to that of the brutes, who, by the way, are never "brutal." Yet he was sitting on what may tomorrow be the King's Bench; he had been a queen's counsel, when the accident of a minute might have made him a king's counsel; he spoke every day of mankind inclusive of the entire race, of the Church inclusive of all worshippers, and of a kingdom which he dares not say should not be ruled by a queen. We may hope, however, that when the English law is less slavish, its professors will share the elevation. And this we hope is based on no uncertain foundation. For he who runs may read the lessons of the ages. The Divine decree, stamped upon the face of every people, ordains the progress of each generation to a fuller exercise of individual faculties for the greater happiness and responsibility of the individual, and the more complete advantage of all. And with this it is given to men and women, the children of all time, to regard with lasting honour, as highest and nearest to the Divine nature, those who labour most successfully to bring human law into harmony with justice, not those who make themselves the law and dispense justice to the weak as to the strong, but the truer servants of right, who in their law-making follow that Divine refusal to recognise disability of sex which is the foundation alike of the Decalogue and of Christianity-who in all their law-making have but one rule of duty, to deal with others as they themselves hope to be dealt with. I humbly advocate these reforms in the English law, not more for the interest of women, than with true and dutiful regard for those of my own sex-for to me nothing is more clear than that the perpetuation of injustice implies the degradation of mankind.

DISCUSSION.

EDWARD B. EASTWICK, Esq., C.B., M.P., in the Chair.

Among those present were the following:—Professor Amos, Mrs. Amos, Mr. W. H. Ashurst, Mrs. Arthur Arnold, Miss C. E. Babb, Miss Baines, Mr. Sneade Brown, Mr. Edwin Bell, Mrs. Evan Bell, Misses A. and C. A. Biggs, Dr. Brentano, The Misses Blinns, Rev. C. H. Cholmeley, Mrs. Chesson, Miss Chesson, Dr. Drysdale, Mr. E. C. Dunn, Miss Agnes Garrett, Miss P. Garrett, Miss Katherine Hill, Mr. P. H. Holland, Mr. C. H. Hopwood, Mrs. Elizabeth Howe, Professor Hunter, Rev. C. Thomas Hunter, Mr. and Mrs. Hyde, Mr. H. D. Jencken, Mrs. E. M. King, Dr. D. F. Lincoln, Mr. G. C. Mast, Mrs. F. Malleson, Mr. Lewis Morris, Mr. Mettra, Mr. H. N.

Mozley, Mr. James Mowatt, Mr. and Mrs. Prout Newcombe, Mr. Pears, Mr. Frederick Pennington, Mrs. Pennington, Mr. John Percival, Mr. and Mrs. H. D. Pochin, Hon. A. D. Ryder, Mr. S. A. Ali Sehan, Miss Shacker, Miss Emma A. Smith, Mr. William Shaen, Mrs. G. Sims, Miss Sims, Mr. William Storr, Mrs. Storr, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Taylor, Madam Venturi, Miss Vickary, Miss Emma Wallington, Mr. Robert White, Miss Williams.

Mr. Pears said that he could not agree with the reader that English law was responsible for the existing position of women. He believed that, on the contrary, law had done much to alleviate her hardships. He believed it would be a much fairer way of putting the question, to say that English law had found the position of women to be such as it always is in barbarous times, and had set itself to work to improve it. Judging indeed from the records of our law, it would appear that lawyers have always been ahead of the rest of the community in this matter. Not only had our ancient Common Law made provision for the wife, but one of the most important branches of Equity had been absolutely created by lawyers for the benefit of women without the aid of Parliament, and even against the generally prevalent public opinion outside the profession. The wife's equity to a settlement, by which the courts stretched their power to the utmost to benefit the wife whenever their aid was asked by the husband, the doctrines in regard to pin-money and paraphernalia, and above all, the establishment of separate use, all bear testimony to the jealous watchfulness of the courts on behalf of woman. Indeed, it is only two years ago that public opinion would sanction a measure doing for poor women what Equity had already provided for the rich; and although the Married Women's Property Act was far from being what this Association would have liked, no one could doubt that it represented a great advance. The Law Amendment Society would have preferred an Act like that introduced by Mr. Russell Gurney, and supported consistently and persistently by them, placing a married woman in the position of a feme sole in regard to her property; but here, as at other times in our history, the legal profession was ahead of public opinion. Turning next to the subject of giving women the franchise, Mr. Pears observed that he saw no ground of principle on which it could be denied to women who had the same qualification as men. The basis of our electoral representation had always been property; and if a single woman or a widow were a householder, he did not see why she was not entitled to have a vote as well as a man. He was glad that the question had passed through its religious phase, to use Conte's classification. It was now in its metaphysical stage. People were asking, what would be the use of the franchise to women? What right have they to it? Would they use it? All these objections, he believed, might be easily met, and before long the question would enter its positive stage, and woman's franchise would be one of the institutions of the land.

girls. Separated from her husband,—their father, the Rev. Henry Newenham, made application to the Court of Queen's Bench in Ireland, for their delivery to him. The younger was aged seven, the elder sixteen; the latter an age at which the law regards the wish of a girl. Both were earnest in their desire to remain with Lady Helena. The Court respected the wish of the elder girl, but decreed that the younger must be delivered to the father. Let me quote a bit from what the reporters called the "scene in court." "An officer came in, bearing a pretty little pet with long fair hair, and intelligent beyond her years." Can we not fancy a St. Augustine looking on her, and saying of the sisters:—

"Non Angli, sed Angli-"

"If free!" But they were not free. The worst horrors of the slave market were about to be enacted under the sanction of the Queen's Bench! "She screamed and struggled violently, exclaiming repeatedly, 'Oh! must I, must I? Oh, dear! I won't go to my father! O please, do let me do as I like! Don't send me away! Will mamma ever see me again? Grandpa! Grandpa! where are you?" Then following the wail in childish treble, was heard the sonorous voice of the humane Judge, evidently struggling against deep shame and emotion. "I shall take care of that my dear. Your mamma will see you as often as she likes." A ray of hope overspread the child's face. "Will it be every day? Tell me-will it be every day?" To which entreaty the Judge replied, "Oh, yes, every day." Mr. Justice Fitzgerald must have known this was false; but I dare hope with Sterne concerning another piece of falsehood, that the tear of the recording angel blotted out the sin. Then the "grandpa" himself, a Peer of Parliament, a member of that House which mutilated Mr. Russell Gurney's Bill, then Lord Mountcashel, who, the reporter says, "was much moved," put in his word, "Knowing what I know," he said of the Judge's promise, "that is impossible; he (the father) is a --." Finally, the Judge expressed the "sorrow" with which he administered the law; the sobbing child, sent from mother and sister, was handed to the father, who carried her out. I have not time now to speak of the condition of wives and mothers in that high life which over all this kingdom apes royalty in regard to the custom of primogeniture, with this ungenerous exception, that our aristocracy, and even our squirearchy, ordain a strict Salic law. In England a Queen may reign;

and it is noteworthy that the reigns of women have been the grandest periods of English history. For all time men will refer with pride to the Elizabethan and Victorian ages of our history. But an English countess reigns by right of her husband; life for her, and in his sense of the word, has only half the chance of ordinary mortals; for when he dies she will surely lose house and home, and the very jewels she has loved

to wear are taken from her hand.

You who oppose this claim for the political enfranchisement of women; you who are touched to the heart-for are you not gentlemen and men of honour?-even by my halting and imperfect recital of these wrongs—you ask me, what would I have? I tell you I would have laws not of the strongest, but of right. I would have no disabilities. If men are liable to be compelled to serve in defence of their country, women should be held liable also to work in their own way, after the example of Florence Nightingale and many others, in the same service. For every employment open to competitive examination women should be permitted to submit their claims. I think men are much better fitted for "up-country" service in India; while on the other hand the clerical work of many of the public offices, both at home and abroad, might be performed with far greater advantage to the State by the admission of women. As to property, the law I hold should give facilities for settlements, while it should also allow the retention by a married woman of her property just as though she were a feme sole. She might reasonably be entitled to a moderate share of her husband's earnings while fulfilling to the best of her ability the duties of a wife; and as for the children in legal infancy—at the death of the father the mother, should be their guardian of right; in the case of divorce I think they should pass from the care of the sinful parent, who, however, should be compelled to make due contribution for their education and maintenance; when there was a separation, the children of one sex should go to one parent, and those of the opposite sex to the other. Such and other needful reforms in the law relating to women we should strongly claim. We cannot trust to lawyers for justice. I mourn not more at the rudeness than at the ignorance of men like Mr. Justice Byles, who, scouting the claim of 1600 women ratepayers to the political franchise, exclaimed, indignantly, "I will not allow that woman can be man, except in a zoological treatise, or until she is reduced to the condition of fossil remains;" and proceeded from the seat of justice to

Mr. Henry D. Pochin was surprised to hear it said that the law was fair in regard to rich women. Although not a lawyer, from his own observation he could say that it was very unfair to both the rich and poor alike. Even when the wife had a settlement, she had no real power over her property. He (Mr. Pochin) knew an instance where a woman of considerable property married an unworthy, bad man, and although she had all the security a settlement could give, her husband contrived, by cunning or force, to secure to himself all the benefit of it, and the wife had no remedy. In regard to the intestate disposition of property, women were certainly not on an equal footing with men. Why were men preferred to women in this respect? As the usage of society had shut out women from the learned professions, the law should, he thought, rather side to their interests than to that of men in such matters as this. He would remind them also of the miserable support the law provided for a married woman; and before she could claim even this, she must become a pauper. The law was formed by men, for men-more in favour of their own interests than for those of women. He (Mr. Pochin) supported the present movement as well for the benefit of his own as for that of the opposite sex. Wherever women had been mixed with men in management, the result had been that the proceedings had been immensely influenced for good; and he thought that their presence on committees, boards of guardians, or even in the House of Commons, would be productive of great benefit to the community. If we had respect for goodness, purity, and grace, which are more especially the qualities of women, we should act wisely in granting what is now asked for them. They asked this concession as a matter of justice to themselves, but we should grant it in the certain hope of thereby benefiting mankind.

Mr. JENCKEN said that he differed with Mr. Arnold on several points. And, first, the law as cited was entirely wrong. In Equity, the property of the wife was protected, and the separate income of the wife could in no wise be taken by the husband, nay, even the goods purchased by the wife with her separate means were protected. At Common Law, the wife could always get her needs supplied, and the husband would be liable for the debts incurred. He, nevertheless, agreed that the law, as it now stands, bravely battling against a barbarous custom, ought to be amended, and separate rights granted to the wife. On the continent almost universally an immunity of goods existed, that is, the wife shared in all the property of her husband, and took half his estate upon his decease, or she could execute an ante-nuptial contract and reserve the right to separate property. A similar law would work, he thought, beneficially in England. But before the right of franchise was granted to women, the unfettering of the chains that bound property ought to be accomplished; give women the right to property and educate them first, and then it would be time to consider the franchise. Unless women were intellectually raised, he much feared priests would use their advantage of the franchise in their hands, and rule the land, as they now do in France and Spain. In the former country the Jesuitical fathers had since the commencement of this century accumulated four hundred millions sterling, and this all but entirely through the instrumentality of women. He alluded to this as a warning against admitting women to sacerdotal orders, which some of the speakers before him had recommended. But to the point. Franchise arose by use of the right of vote in waging war; wars were continually waged, private contentions and public national internal struggles; but beyond this there existed war with an external enemy: this had to be answered; and in all these matters he doubted much whether women, with their ever failing strength, were fit to take a part. The mothers and nurses of men, nature had indeed imposed on them a heavy task, and to burden them with the heavy duties that outward contentions would

impose, he much doubted the expediency.

Mr. P. H. HOLLAND said, it was sometimes contended, as was no doubt true, that wives are not generally treated with injustice, though by law they will be. It will be remembered that Mrs. Beecher Stowe, when told that few slave owners treated their slaves cruelly, replied that that was no defence for laws which made it legal for any to be treated cruelly. Of course, there were very few Legrees, for if there were many, society could not hold together; but the legal existence of a single Legree was a disgrace to the whole American nation; so likewise, though in a greatly reduced degree, the mere existence of an unjust law is a wrong, however rarely it may be put into operation. But the cases of husbands legally robbing their wives, though of course very small in proportion, are by no means small in number, and there are probably few of us who have not met with an instance amongst our own connections or acquaintance. It has been said that women are less well qualified than men to form correct political opinions, and as it was just now put, that may be true; but exactly the contrary is true of the class of women whom it is proposed to enfranchise, namely, those who are ratepayers. Nearly all female ratepayers are either the widows or daughters of men in the middle classes, who are nearly all educated, at the very least sufficiently to read and understand any public discussion; while, perhaps, a majority—certainly a very large minority -of male ratepayers cannot even read with ease, and are at the mercy of any fluent demagogue who wishes to mislead them. The female ratepayers would be very far superior to the majority of the present ratepayers in intelligence, and beyond all comparison better in moral sentiment and true public spirit. In one important respect, the addition of well-educated and high-principled women, such as the vast majority of middle-class English women are, would be a great improvement to the constituency. Very likely they would not often vote, but they would always be ready to vote against a

clever reprobate; nothing would persuade them to support a notorious blackguard; they attach more value than men do to moral character, and it would be of the greatest possible public benefit if all public men felt that their moral character as well as their ability was an important element for their success. There is another objection that hardly needs an answer. It is often said there is no occasion to give women votes: they do not wish for them. If it were proposed to compel all women to vote, the objection might be considered; but as those who do not wish to vote need not unless they please, that is no reason why those who please should be prevented.

Professor Sheldon Amos said, it was difficult to vary the arguments for the proposed measure. He thought there was no weight in the objections that had been urged that evening against it. He looked upon it as part of a large movement for the amelioration of the condition of women. Part of this was political, and part social. We must have education for them. Hitherto all that was menial had falien to their share, in this and every other matter. This and other subjects would have to be brought forward, together with the granting of the suffrage. He did not believe that women possessed a monopoly of the graces; but thought that the result of association, in the work of legislation and administration, of men and women, would bring out a higher principle in our doings. We wanted this more than formerly; for we attempted much more now in the way of legislation towards scientific and moral ends than in past days. Real knowledge and reliance on true principles were our great needs, and these he thought the measures proposed would help us materially to gain. He would exhort everybody to join in this movement. It had a side intimately connected with the future of man. With regard to what had been said about the administration of bad laws, he thought the most effectual way to promote their abrogation was to press them to their uttermost.

Miss Garrett said that the ultimate object of the proposed measure was to enable women to protect themselves—to give them the power to do all for themselves which was necessary to be done.

Dr. Drysdale could speak from experience of the education of women in regard to medicine. The various disabilities they suffered from in this respect could not be completely remedied until they had the franchise. The reason they were not allowed to compete with men in professional pursuits was, that they had no power. They should devote their whole energies to gain the franchise, for until this is gained nothing effective would be done for their benefit. Intolerable injustice was done in many particulars to the female sex. In marriage great wrong could be and was committed by bad men, and we had got so much accustomed to this as scarcely to notice the amount of suffering endured. He had ample evidence of this in his hospital experience. If women had the suffrage, and became members of committees or such like, their presence he believed in such bodies would have an

immense influence for good. Matters which now injuriously affected them, would receive a due share of attention, and in particular regard to their education, the vexatious hindrances which now lay in their

path would soon be swept away.

The CHAIRMAN said that he had not an easy task to sum up the discussion, for it had been nearly all one-sided. There was only one opponent to the measure advocated, and he (the Chairman) thought that he was not a real adversary. It was Mr. Jencken's duty to defend the laws, and he had done so. If, as he (Mr. Jencken) said, a wife could go out and buy a number of pounds of cheese, for no other purpose than to spite her husband, he thought there was a sad want of morality and common-sense in the law, and it gave him no better opinion of its regard for the interests of woman. In the numberless systems of law existing in Germany, there was not one in which, upon marriage, a woman was denuded of all her property. The legal view of the question had had much notice; he thought it better to take a wider range. He would have been glad to have had a little more opposition in the discussion—to have heard the best arguments which could be brought against the proposed measure. He believed that what women did would be done in an admirable manner. The interests of females were not inferior to those of males, but they had no direct participation in their consideration. Some women who had attended to statesmanship had become most accomplished and intelligent politicians, as, for instance, Queen Elizabeth. This would prove that there was no lack of capacity in women, when the opportunity was present. He attached no importance to Mr. Jencken's assertion that women had no right to a voice in the decision of whether there should be war or peace, since they could not fight. Rather, he would let their influence have weight on the question, for they would be always in favour of peace. Many women had already become eminent in spheres of labour formerly closed to them. He hoped that in this measure we should make a great stride in this Session of Parliament. It might be asked why, when on this particular question, America, to which country we generally looked for examples of progress, was quiescent, we should take the initiative in pressing for female suffrage? Without attempting to answer this question, having just returned from America, he might say that the social status of women there was higher than it was here. In the department of the Treasury at Washington there are seven hundred women employed, and they are in every way as efficient as men. The knowledge of their duties as citizens, which the possession of the franchise would confer on women, would, he thought, be a great benefit to men, who in the earlier stages of life received so much instruction from them. But after all, the greatest argument to his mind in favour of the measure was that no reasonable argument could be or had been brought against it. A great statesman, whose name he would not mention, had answered

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a question he (the Chairman) had put to him, as to what reasons could be urged against the proposal, by saying that there was really no argument against it. He was sorry that some of those who habitually spoke against the measure, and some of those ladies who languidly opposed it, had not been heard on that occasion. In conclusion, he would express his thanks, and he was sure he might say that of the meeting, for the valuable paper of Mr. Arnold, and he hoped that their presence there might contribute in some measure to the success

Mr. Arnold expressed the pleasure with which he had heard the debate.

Mr. Ashurst proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman for his presence and remarks on that occasion; and Mr. Arnold seconded the vote, which was carried unanimously.

The department then adjourned.

CONDITION OF WOMEN IN FRANCE.

L'Ouvrière. Par Jules Simon. Quatrième Edition. Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette. 1862.

La Femme Paurre au XIXme Siècle. Par Mdlle. J. V. DAUBIÉ. Ouvrage Couronné par l'Académie de Lyon. Paris: Librairie de Guilaumin et Cie. 1866.

SEVERAL interesting books on the condition of women in France have appeared of late years, of which "L'Ouvrière" and "La Femme Pauvre" are among the most valuable.

It is unnecessary to speak in praise of the former, as it is a wellknown work, and has reached the fourth edition; but "La Femme Pauvre," being so recently published, requires a few words of introduction. The circumstances under which it was written are described in the preface.

The Academy of Lyons offered a prize for the essay which should the best set forth and explain the means by which the following objects might be attained: - "1st. The raising of the wages of women to the same level as those of men where the quality and amount of work done are equal; 2nd. The opening of new employments and professions to women which should replace those that have one after another been taken from them by the rivalry of men and the change in manners and customs." Mdlle. Daubié won the prize, and publishes the prize essay under the title of "La Femme Pauvre au XIXme Siècle," which appears in the form of one thick octavo volume. Having secured the approbation of the Academy of Lyons, the book carries more authority with it than the production of a mere private individual.

The book goes far to disprove the opinion so generally entertained that women are better off in France than in England. It shows, at least, that if their position is in some respects superior to that of our

own countrywomen, it is very much less good in others. The truth appears to be that once upon a time they really were more generally prosperous than Englishwomen, but that this prosperity is rapidly disappearing.

The women of a country may be considered prosperous when the unmarried can earn an honest livelihood in an ordinary day's work of twelve hours, and when the married are not called upon to work at all, beyond their own houses, but are maintained at home by their husbands. The nearer the women of a country approach to this condition, the nearer they approach to prosperity.

Mdlle. Daubié, who speaks chiefly of single women, shows that but a few years ago many employments and means of obtaining good instruction were open to women which are now closed against them, and that seventy or eighty years ago still more employments and superior means of instruction were open, which a few years later were closed. Hence a progressive deterioration in the position of unmarried Frenchwomen. To trace the various steps by which Frenchwomen have lost their prosperity will be instructive to us in England. Such research is indeed less instructive than would be a history of the causes which led to it; but, unfortunately, French writers give us but little assistance there. The causes, whatever they were, originated in the middle ages, and Frenchwomen, if Mdlle. Daubié is to be believed, were in their glory before the reign of Louis XIV.

The best course will be to begin by showing what is the position of single women in France at the present time, and then to trace back their history towards the palmy days of the past. M. Simon, in "L'Ouvrière," gives an account of the condition of married as well as of single women: we will consider this part of the subject last.

Nothing shows more clearly the hardships of the present position of French working girls than their eagerness to enter what are called "Industrial Convents" as apprentices.

These convents have no endowments, or very small ones, and are maintained by the work of the inmates. "They afford," says Mdlle. Daubié, "nothing but a scanty diet in return for hard labour, yet young girls crowd into them to such an extent, that during the last fifteen years the Government has annually authorized the establishment of from 80 to 100 communities of women."*

The greatest part of the girls enter, not with the view of becoming nuns, but in order to learn a trade under good care and protection. When the term of the apprenticeship is over, they live by the exercise of the trade they have learned, or they marry, as the case may be.

M. Simon, in "L'Ouvrière," gives a detailed description of three very similar establishments which came under his notice at Lyons.

"Although the trade of a dressmaker, and even that of a milliner, is scarcely remunerative, families at Lyons have long hesitated to send their daughters into the factories.* It has been necessary to seek for apprentices from a distance. When the neighbourhood could provide no more, they have been sent from Dauphiné, from Provence, and from Auvergne. After a time fathers of families were seized with scruples, they asked each other what became of their daughters in that great town, and they remarked that these young working women had difficulty in finding husbands, unless they had

lived under the safeguard of a family during their apprenticeship.

"To provide against these reasonable apprehensions, a manufacturer, who had raised himself from the workshop, and grown rich by miracles of economy, had the idea of turning apprenticeship into a sort of boardingschool. He built for this purpose, a few miles from Lyons, a large establishment which may be called either a manufactory, a school, or a convent. The plan succeeded, and there are now several houses of this kind; we will, however, only speak of the three principal ones. One, at Jujurieux, is for stuffs, that is the oldest house; another at Séauve is for ribbons; the third, at Tarare, is only a milling workshop (atelier de moulinage), belonging to a plush manufactory. The young girls who enter these establishments sign an engagement for three years, not counting a month of trial. Journey-women are also received, who sign an engagement for eighteen months. The rules are everywhere extremely severe. In one of these houses, for instance, work begins at a quarter past five in the morning, and ends at a quarter past eight in the evening. Out of this space of fifteen hours, fifty minutes are allowed in the morning for breakfast and making the beds, and an hour for dinner and rest, which leaves rather more than thirteen hours of actual work. The day's work over, supper is eaten, prayers are said, and by nine o'clock everybody is in bed. The apprentices have a right to go out for the day only once in six weeks. The rules show no trace of any elementary instruction being given except in a Sunday-school. Instruction bestowed at such long intervals on children tired by the week's work can be worth little; a different course would be pursued in England or Germany. It must be said, however, in extenuation, that children under thirteen years of age are not received.

"The fifth chapter of the rules describes the manner in which Sunday is to be spent. 'Sunday is an exceptional day; we wish to preserve to it the character it ought always to possess, that is to say, to keep it holy by fulfilling our religious duties, and resting from our labours. As, however, monotony would render Sunday the most wearisome day in the week, the exercises will be varied in such a manner that the day may be passed both Christianly and cheerfully.' These are certainly excellent principles. In order to put them in practice, all the morning is divided between religious exercises, a school for reading and writing, and a longer play-time than usual. The apprentices spend from two to three hours over the catechism; after the catechism they hear vespers, and it is only then when vespers are over that the general walk takes place under the superintendence of the sisters. This walk is evidently the great pleasure of the day, the object to be looked forward to throughout the week. The rules say that in the fine season it is to be prolonged till seven o'clock, but in winter it is either altogether impossible, or only begins at the close of the day, and lasts but a few minutes. It is more than probable that the boarders at these establishments

^{*} On account of the want of moral supervision and protection.

^{* &}quot;La Femme Pauvre," p. 2.

are better fed, better lodged, better cared for in illness than apprentices and working women in Lyons, but these thirteen hours of work under supervision, this Sunday passed altogether at church or in school, only enlivened by a walk in fine weather which does not begin till four in the afternoon, this almost complete prohibition of communication beyond the walls, constitutes a system from which the imagination shrinks. The other girls have at least their liberty on Sundays, a comparative liberty in the work-rooms, and perhaps sometimes a walk or a gossip when the day's work is over. Here everything is very severe for girls from thirteen to eighteen years of age. It is more than the convent, for it is the convent with thirteen hours of work. One asks in what respect this system differs from a house of correction. However, at the first call, families availed themselves of the institution, a proof that they were afraid of the danger to which a residence in Lyons exposes those apprentices whose parents are not there to watch over them.

"Although these establishments are of no ancient date, it has already been found that the girls who leave Jujurieux find it easier to get married. The manufacturers who have founded these schools obtain no profit from them, because of the necessity of keeping them always going, to maintain the inmates, and preserve the machinery in good order. In a word, to shut up these young work-women for three years, and make them work for thirteen hours a day, is to do them a service. This fact throws more light on their condition than all the details we have given before. The Archbishop of Lyons has founded a community of nuns for the purpose of providing superintendents for manufacturers who wish to establish boarding-houses for workwomen. This boarding-house system may be a comparative good, but in itself it is an evil."—(P. 54.)

That such establishments as these should be found to confer a benefit on their inmates shows that the position of a large number of girls outside their walls is not a good one. The circumstance, too, that young women, whose term of apprenticeship is over, should re-engage themselves as ouvrières apprenties for another term of service, shows that they also have no very brilliant prospects elsewhere.

Yet the inmates of these industrial convents are sometimes envied by those who cannot obtain admission. Only the strong and healthy can be admitted; the weakly are necessarily excluded.

Admission into ordinary non-industrial convents can rarely be obtained except by the payment of a sum of money. A philanthropist tells a story of a poor woman who asked whether it would not be possible for her to get sent to prison without committing any offence, as then the prison earnings might enable her to be received into a convent.* We suspect that even one of our ill-managed workhouses would have been hailed by this poor woman as a haven of rest.

If, however, a large portion of the female working classes are so badly off as to be glad to exchange their liberty for hard work and imprisonment in industrial convents, it is also certain that a number of working women, considerable in itself, though proportionally not

large, are enabled to earn a good livelihood by various kinds of handicraft requiring skill and taste. In some cases they earn as much as three or four francs a day.* The counterparts of these superior handicrafts-women are scarcely to be found in England. The great number of men killed in the wars of the Empire must have encouraged the introduction of Frenchwomen into many trades, and extended their employment in others. Another circumstance has also facilitated their entrance into handicrafts. When the present Emperor first ascended the throne, a law was made prohibiting combinations of workmen; thus strikes were abolished. Two or three years ago this law was repealed, † and the workmen in some trades instantly struck to turn out the women, and in certain instances were successful.

However, during the twelve or thirteen years that this law was in action, there can be little doubt that women must have obtained too firm a footing in many trades to be ejected.

These are great advantages in favour of Frenchwomen; but certain educational disqualifications to which they have been subjected of late years give cause for apprehension that it is only in the lowest branches of handicrafts that they will be able to retain their footing, and that they will gradually be eliminated from trades requiring intelligence or knowledge of art, which are of course the best paid.

In France schools for primary instruction, answering to our national schools, are maintained by the parishes (communes) if they are schools for boys, but not if they are schools for girls. This regulation was made in 1836, and is, naturally, extremely injurious to the educational prospects of girls. In 1850 a still more disadvantageous regulation was enacted.

There exists in France a description of school to which we in England have nothing to correspond. These schools are called Ecoles Professionelles. Young children are not admitted; but when they have received the elements of education in national schools or elsewhere, they are allowed to attend.

We do not know a better translation for Ecole Professionelle than "Technical School."

"Technical schools (says Mdlle. Daubié) complete the work begun in the primary schools; and although they do not form workmen trained to special trades, it may be said that they prepare the mind to exercise intelligence in every trade.'

We believe that commercial arithmetic and book-keeping, also

* "L'Ouvrière," pp. 212-221.

‡ See "Popular Education in France." By Mathew Arnold, p. 56.

[†] The law was probably enacted because the Emperor was at first doubtful of his popularity with working men; now that he has conciliated their good-will he no longer opposes their power of combination.

drawing and a knowledge of the rules of art, form part of the instruction given, but we are not well informed with regard to the whole course of education pursued.

Until 1850, girls were permitted to attend Technical Schools, but in that year they were forbidden to attend, and have ever since been excluded.* These schools are supported partly by the school fees, and partly either by grants from the Government or by grants from the municipal authorities of the towns in which they are situated.

Rates are levied by the municipal authorities for their maintenance, and payment of these rates is compulsory, option not being allowed of giving the amount to a Technical School for girls. Thus parents dwelling in a township, who have only daughters, are compelled to contribute to this municipal school from which their children are excluded. Female householders are also compelled to pay the schoolrate, although if the choice were allowed them they would probably prefer giving the money to a school for girls. Mdlle. Daubié observes :-

"It is easy to perceive that this retrograde legislation must have produced serious consequences in the course of sixteen years, and in the question we are now considering (the employment of women) the first step towards obtaining apprenticeship for girls is to establish the right of both sexes to attend these schools. This is the explanation of the inferior wages paid to women from the moment they are old enough to suffer from the oppression of their sex; for it is well known that boys and girls under fifteen years of age receive the same wages and do the same work. Private enterprise is trying to remedy these deficiencies at Paris, † where Madame E. Lemonier has commenced the great work, but it cannot be too often repeated, that all the rate-payers of a town and all the tax-payers of a state, for the very reason that they are made to contribute in equal proportions, have equal claims to participate in the common expenditure."

If we compare the conduct of the French Government in this respect with that of the English Parliament, the comparison is much in favour of England. With us none of these unfair distinctions of sex are permitted. If the pupil can pass the inspector's examination, the Government grant is equally made whether the child be a boy or a girl.

Mdlle. Daubié is of opinion that this is by no means a solitary instance of partiality, and she believes that the present Government is deliberately inimical to women. This can hardly be the case; but it is probable enough that the Government, in its anxiety to please working men, does not unfrequently overlook the claims of working women.

This appears to be the cause of the partiality with regard to

Government and municipal educational grants. Only a certain sum of money can be spared for educational purposes, and as it is essential to the stability of the Government to keep working men in good humour, and as the shortest way of so doing is to make it easy for a large number of them to earn a comfortable livelihood without much exertion, the whole of the municipal grants, and by far the greater portion of the Government grants, are expended on boys' schools, for the purpose of giving them such instruction as will assist them to earn good wages.

The consequence of this partiality is that all trades which depend for success on a knowledge of art are passing into the hands of men,* so that there are now a good many men employed as dress and bonnet makers. Mdlle. Daubié declares that, in her opinion, their patterns are frightful, and that no amount of education can make up for the natural difference of good taste in dress between men and women. She admits, however, that the public verdict differs from hers, and that it is now the fashion to employ men in these

capacities.

One of the most curious passages in "La Femme Pauvre" is the account of the manner in which women have been excluded from the places they formerly held in the Post-office.† During the time of the first Empire and of the Restoration, women were admitted on a footing of perfect equality to men, and a large number of women held minor post-offices, and not a few had attained to the dignity of being "directrices comptables." But in the reign of Louis Philippe, an ordinance was issued forbidding the appointment of a woman to the post-mistress-ship in any considerable town. In 1850 a still heavier blow fell: another ordinance was issued forbidding the appointment of a woman even as Post-office clerk, if the pay of the situation were higher than that of a male supernumerary. It was ordered that women who already held these situations were to receive no further promotion, but that their male juniors should be passed over their heads, all of which orders were punctually executed. The idea which naturally occurs to an English reader is that the women had proved incompetent, and were therefore excluded; but the same system has been pursued in other directions where the incompetency was clearly on the side of the men.

^{* &}quot;La Femme Pauvre," p 69.

[†] By establishing technical schools for girls, supported partly by school fees, partly by subscriptions.

^{*} The master of a shop explained to Mdlle. Daubié why shopmen and workmen are preferred to shopwomen and workwomen:

[&]quot;Les femmes n'ont pas d'instruction professionelle, leur manque d'éducation artistique les rend souvent incapables de draper les étoffes, d'harmonier les couleurs, de manier les canevas, de façonner les broderies aussi habillement que l'homme." We have lately heard that a foreign tailor has set up a dressmaking establishment in London, and obtains much fashionable patronage.

[†] Page 197.

In hospitals for men, male sick-nurses have been appointed, and even in some cases in hospitals for women.*

M. de Watteville, who is quoted as a great authority in hospital matters, complains of the dismissal of the female nurses. "The service of hospitals ought," he says, "to be made over to women, who are far more capable of the gentle care which this occupation demands." † Men have also been appointed inspectors of Foundling Hospitals, an office which in former days was secured to women by royal edicts. ‡ A double injury is thus done to these institutions. First, the high salaries assigned to the gentlemen eat up a large share of the revenues; and, secondly, their ignorance in the matter of baby-linen has entailed severe suffering on the unfortunate infants. M. Simon remarks that, at Rouen, of the children admitted into these hospitals eighty-three die out of each hundred during the first year, which does not speak favourably for the management.§

We may, therefore, dismiss from our minds the idea that the cause of the exclusion of women from any of the above offices was their own incompetency. One reason is no doubt similar to that which has already been assigned for the exclusion of girls from an equal share in the Government educational funds, viz., the necessity of conciliating members of the more powerful sex by providing them with easy employment. Another reason, however, makes itself evident. Every man in France has a vote, and it is a part of the duty of every Government official to give his vote to the Government candidate at elections. The more male officials the Government possesses the more votes it commands. Women having no votes are incompetent for this part of their duty, therefore they cannot be permitted to hold offices under Government. The case of the Postoffice is peculiarly clear. During the first Empire and the Restoration the Government rested for security on bayonets. The only business of post-masters was to attend to the letters; women were therefore eligible for the place.

In Louis Philippe's time political influence and votes became of importance, but as the qualification for the suffrage was very high,

it was only the post-masters in large towns who could assist the Government by their support. Women were consequently excluded from post-mistress-ships in large towns, but were permitted to retain them in small ones. When manhood suffrage was established every male clerk had a vote, and as the Government wished to secure as many votes as possible, women were got rid of altogether, and they are now only permitted to remain when the pay is so small that a man cannot be induced to take the situation.

The same thing has occurred in all other Government departments; and as in France the Government manages pretty nearly everything, women are everywhere excluded. At the Mont-de-Piété at Paris, in 1810, most of the inferior clerkships and sixteen out of eighty-four superior offices were held by women; * now out of three hundred clerks there are only four women. The same thing has occurred in the Monts-de-Piété all over the kingdom. Women are no longer permitted to sell stamps and licenses.† The office of warder in prisons; for women was at one time confined to men, but such scandals arose that women have been re-appointed. The Government for obvious political reasons insists on appointing the telegraph clerks even of private companies, and it only appoints men.§

It is unnecessary to multiply instances; the same unfavourable influence is everywhere exerted against the employment of women. The moral we draw from these facts is that centralization when united to manhood suffrage is not advantageous to women, but the contrary, and that wherever large numbers of working men are admitted to the suffrage, unmarried working women ought to be admitted to its exercise also, as the possession of the suffrage then becomes necessary for their protection.

Another accusation brought by Mdlle. Daubié against the Government would not be easily believed were it not proved by figures. It is that partiality is shown in the distribution of relief to the poor; the out-door allowance given to infirm old men being larger than that given to infirm old women, while it is more difficult for women than men to obtain admission into the public asylums for the aged. If persons in the receipt of public relief have votes at elections in France, the motive of the partiality is sufficiently clear, otherwise it is difficult to understand.

Only one-third of the free admissions at the disposal of Government into deaf and dumb schools are given to girls, and twice as many boys as girls are admitted into the schools for the blind.

The motive here may be easily discovered. The pupils when they

^{*} In France, hospitals, as well as all other public charities, are under the control of the Government.

^{# &}quot;La Femme Pauvre," p. 231. ‡ Ibid., p. 227. § "L'Ouvrière," p. 140.

M. Assollant, in "Un Quaker à Paris," gives several anecdotes illustrative of the political services required from the Government by its employés. A school inspector sends the following circular to schoolmasters:—"When we have a body of efficient and devoted functionaries, Government is reduced to the simple interchange of willing service on one side, against still more willing rewards on the other. . . . To oppose these candidates would be to fight against the Emperor himself. I expect your active help. Your indifference would cause me surprise and regret. Your hostility would be in my eyes a culpable and causeless mistake." A schoolmistress would clearly not be an efficient functionary, on account of possessing no vote.

^{* &}quot;La Femme Pauvre," p. 228. † P. 206. ‡ P. 226. § P. 217. || P. 29. ¶ P. 39. The number of deaf and dumb and blind is larger among boys than girls, but not in so large a proportion. The difference in England is about one-fifth.

grow up will naturally continue grateful to the Government which has befriended them, and the young men can evince their gratitude by voting for the Parliamentary candidate recommended by the Government. The money spent, therefore, in bringing up boys in these institutions is so much political capital invested, while the money spent in bringing up girls carries no political advantage with it, and is a mere matter of charity.

Centralization has not at all times in the history of France been unfavourable to women. M. de Tocqueville has shown that the Government of France was almost as much centralized before the Revolution as it is now; but before the Revolution the Government, whatever its other faults may have been, certainly displayed a benevolent disposition towards women. The municipal authorities used to give away sums of money to be distributed as marriage portions among poor girls. The Government itself, as late as 1790, reserved 24,000 livres for this purpose out of the budget, and the example thus set was followed by numerous private individuals and benevolent

The money so distributed may not have been wisely spent, but the expenditure shows the paternal interest which the Government felt in the young girls of the nation.

Some of the institutions established under the ancient régime for the benefit of women were, however, as judicious as well-intentioned. Louis XIV., as is well known, founded schools for girls, which were abolished after the Revolution by the appropriation of their funds by the Republic. But perhaps the most useful of the ancient institutions was the College for Midwives.

"The pupils who desired to become midwives were obliged (says Mdlle. Daubié) † to pass a long and severe novitiate, to give proof of a good character, to study during several years a course of practical and theoretic anatomy, usually in connection with lying-in hospitals for poor women. Sworn midwives, maintained at the public expense, examined these candidates, whose examination generally lasted three hours. On occasions of public ceremony these (examining) midwives held rank with doctors, and took their places with them at the corporation banquets, dressed in the robes of their order, and wearing the insignia of the city. These honourable distinctions, these severe studies, and this influential position, caused many clever midwives to be trained before the Revolution, such as those in whom the Sevignés and the Grignans had complete confidence. A number of distinguished midwives, whose fame is remembered in our century, were sent out from the Hôtel Dieu de Paris. The last pupil of this school was Madame Dugés, mother and teacher of the celebrated Mme. la Chapelle."

Since the Revolution these female medical schools have been abolished; and Mdlle. Daubié tells us that to see what has been established in their place we have only to cast our eyes on "La

† P. 356.

* "La Femme Pauvre," p. 2.

Maternité," which is (she says) always quoted as a model establishment. The course of study lasts only a year,* and even that year is passed under unfavourable circumstances, because during the daytime the hospital is given up to the male students, and it is only at night that the female pupils have an opportunity of learning their profession practically. † The consequence of this inferior instruction is that midwives are found to be unskilful; rich women therefore do not employ them, but avail themselves instead of the services of well-educated medical men. Women who cannot afford this expense are obliged to employ the unskilful midwives, and suffer accordingly. The well-educated midwives of former days sometimes aspired to become regular doctors, and if they could pass the usual examinations they were permitted to receive diplomas; indeed a woman might receive a diploma without having previously exercised the profession of a midwife.

"The last of these licenses was granted in 1794, by the Faculté de Médecine de Montpellier, which gave the title of Officer of Health (Officier de Santé) to Madame Castanier, who was as remarkable for her good personal qualities as for knowledge of her profession. Madame Castanier practised until 1843, in the department of Ardèche, where, in spite of her advanced age, she never refused to attend a patient."

It would appear also that the royal power in France had encouraged and protected female artists as well as female medical practitioners. The king, raised by his position above particular interests and prejudices, wished to extend advantages alike to his subjects of either sex. The kings of France, while their absolute power lasted, generally considered their own selfish and individual pleasure first, but when they condescended to consider the interests of their subjects at all, they regarded them with an impartial eye. Women, therefore, before the Revolution, were admitted to equal artistic instruction with men. Eight ladies were members of the Paris Academy of Painting; but when the academies, which had been abolished throughout France during the time of the Republic, were re-established under the Consulate, ladies were everywhere excluded. The celebrated Mdlle. Le Brun was one of those expelled. Nor are women now allowed to learn in the schools of art on the same terms as men. The result of their partial exclusion from these schools, and complete exclusion from the technical schools, is shown in the last census. In the previous census the number of women employed in painting on porcelain in Paris was returned at more

^{*} In Queen Charlotte's Lying-in Hospital, and some others in England, the course of study only lasts three months.

⁺ P. 359.

than a thousand; in the last census the number is only four hundred

The old workwomen die off, and the young girls, deprived of instruction, cannot succeed them. Thus shut out from occupations requiring intelligence, women crowd together into two or three easy professions which require little or no previous instruction, and then, by competition, beat down each other's wages to starvation point, so that many working girls fall far short of the ideal state of prosperity for single women, i.e., being able to earn an honest livelihood in a day's work of twelve hours. M. Simon calculates that at Paris, where lodging and firing are extremely dear, a woman cannot live with comfort on less than two francs a day.

"But (he continues) where is the needlewoman who earns so much? It is not the shirt-maker, for to earn two francs she must make eight shirts a day; nor the glove-maker, for to earn one franc eighty centimes she must sew six pairs of gloves a day; nor the waistcoat-maker, for to earn one franc seventy centimes she must make six waistcoats or six pairs of trousers a day. It is not the embroiderer, nor the fringe-maker, nor the shoemaker, for only one franc is paid for a pair of ladies' boots, and fifteen centimes must be deducted for thread and cord. The cleverest workwoman can hardly make two pairs in a day, and so earn one franc seventy centimes by a day's work of sixteen

M. Simon reckons that an immense majority of workwomen earn only from one franc fifty centimes to one franc twenty-five centimes a day, in a day's work of much more than twelve hours. This is no worse than the condition of needle-women in England, but it is a long way from prosperity; and as the condition of women in France is deteriorating—which does not appear to be the case in England —there seems reason to fear that they may in a few years sink to a still lower level.

We will now consider the condition of married women.

There is much less difficulty in ascertaining their position, whether positively or comparatively, than in determining that of single women, for there are certain statistics which throw a clear light on this part of the subject.

To deprive an infant of its mother's care during the first six months of its existence is extremely prejudicial to its health, and frequently proves fatal to its life.

The table of the infantile death-rate shows, therefore, with considerable accuracy, to what extent married women are maintained at home, and how much they are obliged to go out to work. In England and Wales the average death-rate throughout the country is 18 per cent.; † that is, out of every hundred infants born, eighteen

die within the first year. The death-rate varies extremely in different parts of the kingdom. In the most favoured district, an agricultural neighbourhood in Wales, the deaths are only eight in a hundred. In Ashton-under-Lyne, a manufacturing town, the rate rises to its highest point; and between twenty-five and thirty infants perish out of every hundred born. In the agricultural counties of Wilts, Somerset, and Northumberland, the deaths are rather above sixteen per cent. In Surrey and Sussex, only between twelve and thirteen. As a general rule, infant mortality is below the average in agricultural districts, and above it in manufacturing ones, though there are some agricultural districts where the mortality is so great as to rival that in Manchester.

In France the mortality is greater than in England. M. Simon says:*-

"A mother very rarely brings up more than one or two children, whatever the number born. At Rouen the registers of the civil condition of the people for 1859 show that out of 3,000 children registered, 1,100 died within the year. This number, however, is not exact, because only those children were reckoned who died at Rouen, while a great number died besides who had been sent out to nurse in the country. It may therefore be held as certain that one-half of the children of the poor die in the year following

"Observations made with care during 1855 and the half of the year following, in the foundling hospitals and crèches of St. Vivien and St. Maclou,

at Rouen, have given the following result:-"Out of a hundred infants left at the hospital under sixty days old, eighty-three died before the end of the year. Out of a hundred children admitted into the creches between six days and a year old, fifty-six died in the year. Almost all died of hunger. Broth fatigues the digestive organs and gives chronic diarrhea; nothing is digested, and the child, which urgently requires support, sinks. This has besides been proved by several postmortem examinations. According to Dr. Leroy, a very clever and careful observer, it is less the drunkenness of the mothers than their absence which causes their mortality. The milk of a mother, however poor it may be, which would not agree with another child, will suit her own; the only exception is when mothers have saturated themselves with brandy. There is one general rule which hardly allows of exceptions: whenever a poor child has the thrush (which always happens), if the thrush is accompanied by diarrhœa (which it usually is), it always dies if brought up by hand. By this rule manufactories must be positively murderous, for the mothers who work in them can scarcely nurse their children, except at night, or during the midday hour of rest, when a neighbour brings the infant to them. All these hideous consequences come from poverty; but what is the cause of the poverty? It is not low wages, it is not want of work, or epidemics. These evils are all nothing compared to drunkenness.† This is the Minotaur

^{* &}quot;La Femme Pauvre," p. 291, in a note.

^{† 17.975.} These figures are taken from Dr. Gairdner's paper on "The Infantile Death-rate," in the Social Science Transactions of 1860.

^{* &}quot;L'Ouvrière," p. 139.

[†] In another work, "Le Travail," M. Simon recurs to this subject :-

[&]quot;A vast number of working men only cross the street from the pay-office when they have received their wages to the cabaret, where they spend them. They return to it next day and the day after, till they have no longer money or credit. During all this

which kills unworthy working men and persecutes their offspring; it exposes them to the contempt of their respectable fellow-workmen, to want, to degradation, to crime; it changes industrious, devoted women into martyrs, and makes it torture to be a mother."

This account relates to towns, and, compared even with the worst of English towns, the result is in favour of England. There is a difference of twenty per cent. in the infantile death-rate between Ashton-under-Lyne and Rouen. This difference is, we think, to be attributed to the difference of legislation in the two countries.

In France there is no law to compel a man to maintain his wife. In England, if a wife is in want, she can apply to the relieving-officer of the parish, who, if the guardians approve, may relieve the wife and prosecute the husband for putting the parish to expense.

The law is not as effectual in England as it ought to be, because where the guardians are neglectful or parsimonious (as they often are in great towns) they frequently decline to attend to the wife's application, and, except through them, she cannot obtain redress, the magistrates not being allowed to entertain the complaint of a wife that her husband neglects to provide her with food. If, therefore, the guardians will not interfere, a wife has no protection. In country parishes, however, the guardians not unfrequently do interfere and prosecute a husband, and the punishment thus occasionally inflicted keeps up the sentiment among working men that it is wrong not to support a wife. Among the uneducated the belief prevails that what the law punishes is seriously wrong, and what the law overlooks is not wrong. The disgrace also of an offence consists, according to their view, much less in its commission than in its punishment. The man, therefore, who lets his wife starve or maintain herself as best she can, is little felt to be disgraced unless he is unlucky enough to be taken up for it; but then, when he comes out of prison with his hair cropped, he is felt to have fallen below the rank of respectable workmen: he is liable to be jeered at on the subject, and to find his society avoided. The spectacle of this social degradation is improving to the young men who witness it, and who thereby learn to look with contempt on the offence which leads to such consequences. Thus a good feeling on the subject of duty towards wives and children is maintained in many country districts in England. In our great towns, owing to the negligence of the parochial authorities —the only power which can set this salutary law in action—this good feeling is less strong, as the law is rarely enforced; and the

time the wife and children are suffering from cold and hunger. They flit round the cabaret with the hope of catching his eye, and thinking that, after all, a father is not utterly insensible to pity or remorse; but that man is no longer a father, nor even a man."—(From an extract in a review of "Le Travail" in the Times.)

consequence is, that the infantile death-rate is three times as great as in the best country districts: it does not, however, approach to that in the large towns in France, while the difference between English and French country districts appears to be prodigious.

M. Simon does not give us the registrar's returns from the country, but he remarks* that, in spite of numerous births, the population all over the country remains stationary. This need not surprise us, the notion that living amidst fields produces superior excellence of character having long been exploded. If country people are better conducted than townspeople, it is because their conduct is more open to the inspection of their neighbours, and that the law is more easily administered.

In France, where there is no law against the offence of wifestarving, either in town or country, there is no reason why a man should behave better in this respect in the country than in town.

Probably rather more infants survive in the country, because the purity of air gives them a better chance of struggling against starvation. It is true also that in the country there are few manufactories to employ the mothers of families; but this circumstance makes but little difference. The woman who is not maintained by her husband must work in some way or other; and if there are no factories, she works in the fields or mines, or makes bricks, or goes out charing, or in some way or other earns a livelihood.

It appears to us that much may be learned by studying the condition of women in other countries. We thus see how dependent the welfare of women is on legislation. We do not mean that, under all circumstances, good legislation can make the women of a country prosperous; for if the male population be poor, the women must inevitably share that poverty. When a man earns too little to maintain his family, the wife must go out to work; and when wages for men are low, the wages of women are sure to be lower still, and no legislation can prevent these evils. We mean that when the men of a country are prosperous, it depends on legislation whether the women share in that prosperity, or are excluded from it.

It has been shown that in France the increasing prosperity of the working men + is not shared by the working women, and how, on the contrary, they are gradually sinking into a more and more miserable condition, and that this deterioration in their state is caused by legislation. We have seen how the law which excludes girls from the means of obtaining a good education in art, has caused the number of women employed in Paris in one trade alone (china paint-

[†] The author of "Ten Years of Imperialism in France" states (p. 162) that the wages of workmen in Paris have risen enormously, and that they generally eat two meals of meat a day.

ing) to sink to less than half the number employed a few years ago; while the same law enables men to compete successfully against them, even in those trades formerly supposed to belong especially to women —dressmaking and millinery.

The defect in the French law also with regard to marriage leaves the wife excluded from a share in the good wages earned by the husband. He earns good wages, and eats and drinks them; she is poorly paid, and to earn that poor pay must leave her infant of a few weeks old without her care for the whole day. She fears it will sink and die if she leaves it; but the law affords her no redress, and the infant no protection. She goes to work, the infant dies, and the law takes no notice. It will, perhaps, not be going too far to say that, whenever the men of a country enjoy prosperity, there must be something wrong in legislation if the women and children do not participate in that prosperity. It is sufficiently evident that to pass a law forbidding married women to go out to work would neither reach the root of the evil, nor be in reality a humane measure; because these poor mothers, whether English or French, only go out to work to avoid the worse alternative of staying at home to starve.

JESSIE BOUCHERETT.

WHY WOMEN

DESIRE THE FRANCHISE.

By FRANCES POWER COBBE.

Politicians consider that a subject enters an important phase when it becomes publicly recognised as a "Question." During the last five years the proposal to give votes to women has very distinctly grown into the "Question of Female Suffrage." Few of the most sanguine advocates of the cause would have ventured, in 1865, to hope that by the close of 1872, it should stand where it now obviously does in public opinion, or that 355,801 persons should

have petitioned in its behalf.

The last Reform Bill, by lowering the franchise for men, has affected the claims of women in several indirect ways. In the first place, by admitting to the exercise of political judgment a class whose education is confessedly of the narrowest, and whose leisure to study politics extremely small, it has virtually silenced for all future time the two favourite arguments against the claims of women; that their understandings are weak, and their time too fully occupied by domestic cares. The most strenuous asserter of the mental and moral inferiority of women cannot urge that the majority of the new voters have more power to understand, or more leisure to attend to, public affairs than even the inferior class of female householders; not to speak of such women as Miss Nightingale and Mrs. Somerville, Miss Martineau and Lady Coutts. Rather, on the contrary, may it be maintained that the picked class of women who would be admitted by Mr. Bright's Bill to the franchise are needed to restore the just balance in favour of an educated constituency against the weight of the illiterate male voters now eutrusted with the suffrage.

Again, by the introduction of the ballot the threat of a supposed practical difficulty to be found in the recording of female votes has been permanently set at rest; while the triumphant success of female candidates at the School Board elections has demonstrated how warmly the general feeling of the nation welcomes the accession of women to a share in the guidance of important pub-

Lastly, by identifying the duty of ratepaying with the right of voting in the case of men, the Reform Bill has made more glaring than before the inconsistency of enforcing rates upon women while refusing to them the avowedly cor-

At the present moment our proper course appears to be this: to form committees in every town in England for the purpose of directing attention to the

subject, and affording information and aid to all friends of the cause. Local petitions, as numerous as possible, will afford the best machinery for carrying on such a plan; not because of their direct influence on the Legislature, (which is notoriously incommensurate with the labour of their preparation), but from their convenience as tangible methods of enrolling allies and interesting new associates. Already, in this last session, some 843 petitions, with the signatures of 355,801 men and women, were presented. The parable of the unjust Judge will probably not be found inapplicable to a masculine Legislature, when "poor widows" (and also rich ones, and other single women), by their "continual coming," become wearisome. Women are not prepared to break any pailings, material or metaphorical, albeit they have been taunted with the indifference they thus betray for their rights; but it is just possible that keeping the peace and signing petitions to Parliament may eventually be thought almost as well to prove their fitness for a voice in the Legislature of their country.

Women are often asked, Why they desire the franchise? Have they not everything already which they can possibly desire: personal liberty, the right to hold property, and an amount of courtesy and chivalrous regard which (it is broadly hinted) they would bitterly regret were they to exchange them for equality of political rights? Why should those epicurean gods, who dwell in the serene empyrean of drawing-rooms descend to meddle with the sordid affairs of humanity? What a pity and a loss it would be to the toiling world could it never look up and behold afar such a spectacle of repose as a true lady now presents! We can easily dispense with more legislators; but what is the world to do without those mild Belgravian mothers, those innocent young "Girls of the Period," those magnificent grandes dames who are the glory of our social

Let us briefly answer these questions, once for all. We do not believe that one particle of womanly gentleness and dignity, nay, not even the finest flavour of high-bred grace, will be lost when women are permitted to record their votes for representatives in Parliament. We consider the fear that it might be so among the idlest of chimeras. What will be lost, we are persuaded, will be a little of the frivolity, a little of the habit of expressing opinions without having conscienciously weighed them, a little of the practice of underhand and unworthy persuasion, which have been hitherto faults fostered in women by their position. Women can lose nothing, and have much to gain by entering a field of nobler interests than has hitherto been open to them. It was deemed well said of the old Roman, that nothing human was alien to him. It will be well when all women learn to feel that none of the wrongs and sins and sufferings of other women can be alien to them. The condition of women of the lower orders is beset with hardships; and it is for the very reason that a lady is freed from those heavy trials, that she should exert every power she possesses or can acquire, first to understand, and then, if possible, to remedy them. How these evils are to be lightened; how the burdens of the poor toilers are to be made less intolerable; how wives are to be protected from brutal husbands; how, above all, the ruin of the hapless thousands of lost ones is to be stopped: how these things are to be done, may need more wisdom than all the men and women in England together may possess. But it is quite certain that if women had heretofore been represented in Parliament, such evils and wrongs would never have reached, unchecked, their present height, and that whenever women are at last represented, some more earnest efforts will be made to arrest

But it is not only for the sake of women of the suffering classes that we seek for female influence on politics; nor for that of happier women whose sphere of usefulness might thereby be enlarged, and their lives supplied with nobler interests. We believe that the recognition of the political rights of women, as it will be a signal act of justice on the part of men, so it will also prove an act beneficial to them no less than to us; and that when a generation has passed after the change, it will be said, by all alike, "What did our fathers mean by forbidding women to have a voice in politics? If it were nothing more, their influence must always be the safest ballast to keep steady the Ship of State.'

Finally, to sum up our meaning in the most concise terms we can find, we desire that the political franchise be extended to women of full age, possessed of the requisite property qualification, for the following eight reasons:-

- 1. Because the possession of property and the payment of rates being the admitted bases of political rights in England, it is unjust that persons who possess such property, and pay such rates, should be excluded from those rights, unless from the clearest and gravest reasons of public interest. Such interest, however, we believe, requires, not the exclusion, but the admission of women into the franchise.
- Because the denial of the franchise to qualified women entails on the community a serious loss; namely, that of the legislative influence of a numerous class, whose moral sense is communly highly developed, and whose physical defencelessness attaches them peculiarly to the cause of jastice and public order.
- 3. Because, under a representative Government, the interests of any nonrepresented class are confessedly liable to be misunderstood and neglected; and nothing but evidence that the interests of women are carefully weighed and faithfully guarded by the Legislature would nullify the presumptive injustice of denying them representation. Such evidence, however, is not forthcoming; but, on the contrary, experience demonstrates that the gravest interests of women are continually post poned by Parliament to the consideration of trifling questions concerning male electors, and, when introduced into debates, are treated by half the House rather as jests than as measures of serious importance.
- 4. Because, while the natural and artificial disabilities of women demand in their behalf the special aid and protection of the State, no proposal has ever been made to deal with their perils and difficulties; nor even to relieve them of the smallest portion of the burden of taxation, which they are compelled to bear without sharing the privileges attached thereto.

- 5. Because women, by the denial to them of the franchise, are placed at a serious disadvantage in competition for numerous offices and employments; especially women of the middle class, whose inability to vote tends extensively to deter landlords interested in politics from accepting them as tenants, even in cases where they have long conducted for their deceased male relatives the business of the farms, shops, &c., to whose tenure they seek to succeed.
- 6. Because the denial to women of the direct exercise of political judgment in the typical act of citizenship, has a generally injurious influence on the minds of men as regards women, leading them to undervalue their opinions on all the graver matters of life, and to treat offences against them with levity, as committed against beings possessed only of inferior rights.
- 7. Because the denial of the direct exercise of their judgment has a doubly injurious effect upon the minds of women, inclining them to adopt, without conscientious inquiry the opinions which, they are warned, must be always practically inoperative; and beguiling them to exert, through tortuous and ignoble channels, the influence whose open and honest exercise has been refused.
- 8. Finally, we desire the franchise for women, because, while believing that men and women have different work to do in life, we still hold that, in in the choice of political representatives, they have the same task to accomplish; namely, the joint election of a Senate which shall guard with equal care the rights of both sexes, and which shall embody in its laws that true Justice which shall approve itself not only to the strong, but also the weak.

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OUGHT WOMEN TO LEARN THE ALPHABET?

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OUGHT WOMEN TO LEARN THE ALPHABET?

TARIS smiled, for an hour or two, in the year 1801, when, amidst Napoleon's mighty projects for remodelling the religion and government of his empire, the ironical satirist, Sylvain Maréchal, thrust in his "Plan for a Law prohibiting the Alphabet to Women." Daring, keen, sarcastic, learned, the little tract retains to-day so much of its pungency, that we can hardly wonder at the honest simplicity of the author's friend and biographer, Madame Gacon Dufour, who declared that he must be insane, and proceeded to prove herself so by soberly

replying to him.

His proposed statute consists of eighty-two clauses, and is fortified by a "whereas" of a hundred and thirteen weighty reasons. He exhausts the range of history to show the frightful results which have followed this taste of the fruit of the tree of knowledge; quotes the Encyclopédie, to prove that the woman who knows the alphabet has already lost a portion of her innocence; cites the opinion of Molière, that any female who has unhappily learned anything in this line should affect ignorance, when possible; asserts that knowledge rarely makes men attractive, and females never; opines that women have no occasion to peruse Ovid's "Art of Love," since they know it all in advance; remarks that three quarters of female authors are no better than they should be; maintains that Madame Guion would have been far more useful had she been merely pretty and an ignoramus, such as Nature made her,—that Ruth and Naomi could not read, and Boaz probably would never have married into the family, had they possessed that accomplishment,—that the Spartan women did not know the alphabet, nor the Amazons, nor Penelope, nor Andromache, nor Lucretia, nor Joan of Arc, nor Petrarch's Laura, nor the daughters of Charlemagne, nor the three hundred and sixty-five wives of Mohammed; but that Sappho and Madame de Maintenon could read altogether too well; while the case of Saint Brigitta, who brought forth twelve children and twelve books, was clearly exceptional, and afforded no safe precedent.

It would seem that the brilliant Frenchman touched the root of the matter. Ought women to learn the alphabet? There the whole question lies. Concede this little fulcrum, and Archimedea will move the world before she has done with it: it becomes merely a question of time. Resistance must be made here or nowhere. Obsta principiis. Woman must be a subject or an equal: there is no middle ground. What if the Chinese proverb should turn out to be, after all, the summit of wisdom, "For men, to cultivate virtue is knowledge; for women, to renounce knowledge is virtue?"

No doubt, the progress of events is slow, like the working of the laws of gravitation generally. Certainly, there has been but little change in the legal position of women since China was in its prime, until within the last dozen years. Lawyers admit that the fundamental theory of English and Oriental law is the same on this point: Man and wife are one, and that one is the husband. It is the oldest of legal traditions. When Blackstone declares that "the very being and existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage," and American Kent echoes that "her legal existence and authority are in a manner lost;" when Petersdorff asserts that "the husband has the right of imposing such corporeal restraints as he may deem necessary," and Bacon that "the husband hath, by law, power and dominion over his wife, and may keep her by force within the bounds of duty, and may beat her, but not in a violent or cruel manner;" when Mr. Justice Coleridge rules that the husband, in certain cases, "has a right to confine his wife in his own dwelling-house, and restrain her from liberty for an indefinite time," and Baron Alderson sums it all up tersely, "The wife is only the servant of her husband,"—these high authorities simply reaffirm the dogma of the Gentoo code, four thousand years old and more. "A man, both day and night, must keep his wife so much in subjection that she by no means be mistress of her own actions.

If the wife have her own free will, notwithstanding she be of a superior caste, she will behave amiss."

Yet behind these unchanging institutions, a pressure has been for centuries becoming concentrated, which, now that it has begun to act, is threatening to overthrow them all. It has not yet operated very visibly in the Old World, where (even in England) the majority of women have not yet mastered the alphabet, and cannot sign their own names in the marriageregistrar. But in this country, the vast changes of the last few years are already a matter of history. No trumpet has been sounded, no earthquake has been felt, while State after State has ushered into legal existence one-half of the population within its borders. Every free State in the American Union, except, perhaps, Illinois and New Jersey, has conceded to married women, in some form, the separate control of property. Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania have gone further, and given them the control of their own earnings—given it wholly and directly, that is—while New York and other States have given it partially or indirectly. Legislative committees in Ohio and Wisconsin have recommended in printed reports the extension of the right of suffrage to women. Kentucky (like Canada) has actually extended it, in certain educational matters, and a Massachusetts legislative committee has suggested the same thing; while the Kansas Constitutional Convention came within a dozen votes of expunging the word male from the State Constitution.* Surely, here and now, might poor M. Maréchal exclaim, the bitter fruits of the original seed appear. The sad question recurs, whether women ought ever to have tasted of the alphabet.

It is true that Eve ruined us all, according to theology, without knowing her letters. Still there is something to be said in defence of that venerable ancestress. The Veronese lady, Isotta Nogarola, five hundred and thirty-six of whose learned epistles were preserved by De Thou, composed a dialogue on the question, Whether Adam or Eve had committed the greater sin? But Ludovico Domenichi, in his "Dialogue on the Nobleness of Women," maintains that Eve did not sin at

all, because she was not even created when Adam was told not to eat the apple. It is "in Adam all died," he shrewdly says; nobody died in Eve: which looks plausible. Be that as it may, Eve's daughters are in danger of swallowing a whole harvest of forbidden fruit, in these revolutionary days, unless something be done to cut off the supply.

It has been seriously asserted, that during the last half-century more books have been written by women and about women than during all the previous uncounted ages. It may be true; although, when we think of the innumerable volumes of *Mémoires* by French women of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,—each justifying the existence of her own ten volumes by the remark, that all her contemporaries were writing as many,—we have our doubts. As to the increased multitude of general treatises on the female sex, however,—its education, life, health, diseases, charms, dress, deeds, sphere, rights, wrongs, work, wages, encroachments, and idiosyncrasies generally,—there can be no doubt whatever; and the poorest of these books recognises a condition of public sentiment of which no other age ever dreamed.

Still, literary history preserves the names of some reformers before the Reformation, in this matter. There was Signora Moderata Fonte, the Venetian, who left a book to be published after her death, in 1592, "Dei Meriti delle Donne." There was her townswoman, Lucrezia Marinella, who followed, ten years after, with her essay, "La Nobilità e la Eccelenza delle Donne, con Difetti e Mancamenti degli Uomini,"—a comprehensive theme, truly! Then followed the all-accomplished Anna Maria Schurman, in 1645, with her "Dissertatio de Ingenii Muliebris ad Doctrinam et meliores Literas Aptitudine," with a few miscellaneous letters appended in Greek and Hebrew. At last came boldly Jacquette Guillaume, in 1665, and threw down the gauntlet in her title-page, "Les Dames Illustres; où par bonnes et fortes Raisons il se prouve que le Sexe Feminin surpasse en toute Sorte de Genre le Sexe Masculin;" and with her came Margaret Boufflet and a host of others; and finally, in England, Mary Wollstonecraft, whose famous book, formidable in its day, would seem rather conservative now; and in America, that

pious and worthy dame, Mrs. H. Mather Crocker, Cotton Mather's grandchild, who, in 1848, published the first book on the "Rights of Woman" ever written on this side the Atlantic.

Meanwhile there have never been wanting men, and strong men, to echo these appeals. From Cornelius Agrippa and his essay (1509) on the excellence of woman and her pre-eminence over man, down to the first youthful thesis of Agassiz, "Mens Feminæ Viri Animo superior," there has been a succession of voices crying in the wilderness. In England, Anthony Gibson wrote a book, in 1599, called "A Woman's Woorth, defended against all the Men in the World, proving them to be more Perfect, Excellent, and Absolute in all Vertuous Actions than any Man of what Qualitie soever, Interlarded with Poetry." Per contra, the learned Acidalius published a book in Latin, and afterwards in French, to prove that women are not reasonable creatures. Modern theologians are at worst merely subacid, and do not always say so, if they think so. Meanwhile most persons have been content to leave the world to go on its old course, in this matter as in others, and have thus acquiesced in that stern judicial decree, with which Timon of Athens sums up all his curses upon womankind—"If there sit twelve women at the table, let a dozen of them be—as they are."

Ancient or modern, nothing in any of these discussions is so valuable as the fact of the discussion itself. There is no discussion where there is no wrong. Nothing so indicates wrong as this morbid self-inspection. The complaints are a perpetual protest, the defences a perpetual confession. It is too late to ignore the question; and, once opened, it can be settled only on absolute and permanent principles. There is a wrong; but where? Does woman already know too much, or too little? Was she created for man's subject, or his equal? Shall she have the alphabet, or not?

Ancient mythology, which undertook to explain everything, easily accounted for the social and political disabilities of woman. Goguet quotes the story from St. Augustine, who got it from Varro. Cecrops, building Athens, saw starting from the earth an olive-plant and a fountain, side by side. The Delphic oracle said, that this indicated a strife between Minerva and Neptune

for the honour of giving a name to the city, and that the people must decide between them. Cecrops thereupon assembled the men, and the women also, who then had a right to vote; and the result was, that Minerva carried the election by a glorious majority of one. Then Attica was overflowed and laid waste: of course the citizens attributed the calamity to Neptune, and resolved to punish the women. It was therefore determined that in future they should not vote, nor should any child bear the name of its mother.

Thus easily did mythology explain all troublesome inconsistencies. But it is much that it should even have recognised them, at so early an epoch, as needing explanation. When we ask for a less symbolical elucidation, it lies within our reach. At least, it is not hard to take the first steps into the mystery. There are, to be sure, some flowers of rhetoric in the way. The obstacle to the participation of women in the alphabet, or in any other privilege, has been thought by some to be the fear of impairing her delicacy, or of destroying her domesticity, or of confounding the distinction between the sexes. I doubt it. These have been plausible excuses. They have even been genuine, though minor anxieties. But the whole thing, I take it, had always one simple, intelligible basis—sheer contempt for the supposed intellectual inferiority of woman. She was not to be taught, because she was not worth teaching. The learned Acidalius, aforesaid, was in the majority. According to Aristotle and the Peripatetics, woman was animal occasionatum, as if a sort of monster and accidental production. Mediæval councils, charitably asserting her claims to the rank of humanity, still pronounced her unfit for instruction. In the Hindoo dramas, she did not even speak the same language with her master, but used the dialect of slaves. When, in the sixteenth century, Françoise de Saintonges wished to establish girls' schools in France, she was hooted in the streets; and her father called together four doctors, learned in the law, to decide whether she was not possessed by demons, to think of educating womenpour s'assurer qu'instruire des femmes n'était pas un œuvre du démon.

It was the same with political rights. The foundation of the

Salic Law was not any sentimental anxiety to guard female delicacy and domesticity. It was, as stated by Froissart, a blunt, hearty contempt: "The kingdom of France being too noble to be ruled by a woman." And the same principle was reaffirmed for our own institutions, in rather softened language, by Theophilus Parsons, in his famous defence of the rights of Massachusetts men (the "Essex Result," in 1778): "Women, what age soever they are of, are not considered as having a sufficient acquired discretion [to exercise the franchise]."

In harmony with this are the various maxims and bon mots of eminent men, in respect to women. Niebuhr thought he should not have educated a girl well,—he should have made her know too much. Lessing said, "The woman who thinks is like the man who puts on rouge, ridiculous." Voltaire said, "Ideas are like beards: women and young men have none." And witty Dr. Maginn carries to its extreme the atrocity: "We like to hear a few words of sense from a woman, as we do from a parrot, because they are so unexpected." Yet how can we wonder at these opinions, when the saints have been severer than the sages?—since the pious Fénelon taught that true virgin delicacy was almost as incompatible with learning as with vice; and Dr. Channing complained, in his "Essay on Exclusion and Denunciation," of "women forgetting the tenderness of their sex," and arguing on theology.

Now this impression of feminine inferiority may be right or wrong, but it obviously does a good deal towards explaining the facts it assumes. If contempt does not originally cause failure, it perpetuates it. Systematically discourage any individual, or class, from birth to death, and they learn, in nine cases out of ten, to acquiesce in their degradation, if not to claim it as a crown of glory. If the Abbé Choisi praised the Duchesse de Fontanges for being "beautiful as an angel and silly as a goose," it was natural that all the young ladies of the court should resolve to make up in folly what they wanted in charms. All generations of women having been bred under the shadow of intellectual contempt, they have, of course, done much to justify it. They have often used only for frivolous purposes even the poor opportunities allowed them. They have employed the alphabet, as Molière said, chiefly in spelling the verb Amo. Their use of science has been like that of Mdlle. de Launay, who computed the decline in her lover's affection by his abbreviation of their evening walk in the public square, preferring to cross it rather than take the circuit: "From which I inferred," she says, "that his passion had diminished in the ratio between the diagonal of a rectangular parallelogram and the sum of two adjacent sides." And their conception, even of art, has been too often on the scale of Properzia de Rossi, who carved sixty-five heads on a walnut, the smallest of all recorded symbols of women's sphere.

All this might, perhaps, be overcome, if the social prejudice which discourages women would only reward proportionately those who surmount the discouragement. The more obstacles, the more glory, if society would only pay in proportion to the labour; but it does not. Women being denied, not merely the training which prepares for great deeds, but the praise and compensation which follow them, have been weakened in both directions. The career of eminent men ordinarily begins with college and the memories of Miltiades, and ends with fortune and fame: woman begins under discouragement, and ends beneath the same. Single, she works with half preparation and half pay; married, she puts name and wages into the keeping of her husband, shrinks into John Smith's "lady" during life, and John Smith's "relict" on her tombstone; and still the world wonders that her deeds, like her opportunities, are inferior.

Evidently, then, the advocates of woman's claims—those who hold that "the virtues of the man and the woman are the same," with Antisthenes, or that "the talent of the man and the woman is the same," with Socrates in Xenophon's "Banquet"—must be cautious lest they attempt to prove too much. Of course, if women know as much as men, without schools and colleges, there is no need of admitting them to those institutions. If they work as well on half pay, it diminishes the inducement to give them the other half. The safer position is, to claim that they have done just enough to show what they might have done under circumstances less discouraging. Take, for instance, the

common remark, that women have invented nothing. It is a valid answer, that the only implements habitually used by woman have been the needle, the spindle, and the basket; and tradition reports that she herself invented all three. In the same way it may be shown that the departments in which women have equalled men have been the departments in which they have had equal training, equal encouragement, and equal compensation; as, for instance, the theatre. Madame Lagrange, the prima donna, after years of costly musical instruction, wins the zenith of professional success. She receives, the newspapers affirm, sixty thousand dollars a year, travelling expenses for ten persons, country houses, stables, and liveries, besides an uncounted revenue of bracelets, bouquets, and billet-doux. Of course, every young débutante fancies the same thing within her own reach, with only a brief stage-vista between. On the stage there is no deduction for sex, and, therefore, woman has shown in that sphere an equal genius. But every female common-school teacher in the United States finds the enjoyment of her three hundred dollars a year to be secretly embittered by the knowledge that the young college-stripling in the next school-room is paid a thousand dellars for work no harder or more responsible than her own, and that, too, after the whole pathway of education has been obstructed for her, and smoothed for him. These may be gross and carnal considerations; but Faith asks her daily bread, and Fancy must be fed. We deny woman her fair share of training, of encouragement, of remuneration, and then talk fine nonsense about her instincts and intuitions—say sentimentally with the Oriental proverbialist, "Every book of knowledge is implanted by nature in the heart of woman"-and make the compliment a substitute for the alphabet.

Nothing can be more absurd than to impose entirely distinct standards, in this respect, on the two sexes, or to expect that woman, any more than man, will accomplish anything great without due preparation and adequate stimulus. Mrs. Patten, who navigated her husband's ship from Cape Horn to California, would have failed in the effort, for all her heroism, if she had not, unlike most of her sex, been taught to use her Bowditch. Florence Nightingale, when she heard of the distresses in the

Crimea, did not, as most people imagine, rise up and say, "I am a woman, ignorant but intuitive, with very little sense and information, but exceedingly sublime aspirations; my strength lies in my weakness; I can do all things without knowing anything about them." Not at all. During ten years she had been in hard training for precisely such services; had visited all the hospitals in London, Edinburgh, Dublin, Paris, Lyons, Rome, Brussels, and Berlin; had studied under the Sisters of Charity, and been twice a nurse in the Protestant Institution at Kaiserswerth. Therefore she did not merely carry to the Crimea a woman's heart, as her stock in trade, but she knew the alphabet of her profession better than the men around her. Of course, genius and enthusiasm are, for both sexes, elements unforeseen and incalculable; but, as a general rule, great achievements imply great preparations and favourable conditions.

To disregard this truth is unreasonable in the abstract, and cruel in its consequences. If an extraordinary male gymnast can clear a height of ten feet with the aid of a spring-board, it would be considered slightly absurd to ask a woman to leap eleven feet without one; yet this is precisely what society and the critics have always done. Training and wages and social approbation are very elastic spring-boards; and the whole course of history has seen these offered bounteously to one sex, and as sedulously withheld from the other. Let woman consent to be a doll, and there was no finery so gorgeous, no baby-house so costly, but she might aspire to share its lavish delights; let her ask simply for an equal chance to learn, to labour, and to live, and it was as if that same doll should open its lips and propound Euclid's forty-seventh proposition. While we have all deplored the helpless position of indigent women, and lamented that they had no alternative beyond the needle, the wash-tub, the schoolroom, and the street, we have yet resisted their admission into every new occupation, denied them training, and cut their compensation down. Like Charles Lamb, who atoned for coming late to the office in the morning by going away early in the afternoon, we have, first, half educated women, and then, to restore the balance, only half paid them. What innumerable obstacles have been placed in the

way of female physicians! what a complication of difficulties has been encountered by female printers, engravers, and designers! In London, Mr. Bennett was recently mobbed for lecturing to women on watchmaking. In this country, we have known grave professors to refuse to address lyceums which thought fit to employ an occasional female lecturer. Mr. Comer states that it was "in the face of ridicule and sneers" that he began to educate women as bookkeepers many years ago; and it was a little contemptible in Miss Muloch to revive the same satire in "A Woman's Thoughts on Women," when she must have known that in half the retail shops in Paris her own sex rules the ledger, and Mammon knows no Salic law.

We find, on investigation, what these considerations would lead us to expect, that eminent women would have commonly been exceptional in training and position, as well as in their genius. They have excelled the average of their own sex because they have had more of the ordinary advantages of the other sex. Take any department of learning or skill; take, for instance, the knowledge of languages, the universal alphabet, philology. On the great stairway at Padua stands the statue of Elena Cornaro, professor of six languages in that once renowed university. But Elena Cornaro was educated like a boy, by her father. On the great door of the University of Bologna is inscribed the epitaph of Clotilda Tambroni, the honoured correspondent of Porson, and the first Greek scholar of Southern Europe in her day. But Clotilda Tambroni was educated like a boy, by Emanuele Aponte. How fine are those prefatory words, "by a Right Reverend Prelate," to that pioneer book in Anglo-Saxon lore, Elizabeth Elstob's grammar: "Our earthly possessions are indeed our patrimony, as derived to us by the industry of our fathers; but the language in which we speak is our mother-tongue, and who so proper to play the critic in this as the females?" But this particular female obtained the rudiments of her rare education from her mother, before she was eight years old, in spite of much opposition from her right reverend guardians. Adelung declares that all modern philology is founded on the translation of a Russian vocabulary into two hundred different dialects by Catherine II. But Catherine shared, in childhood, the instructors of her brother, Prince Frederick, and was subject to some reproach for learning, though a girl, so much more rapidly than he did. Christina of Sweden ironically reproved Madame Dacier for her translation of Callimachus: "Such a pretty girl as you are, are you not ashamed to be so learned?" But Madame Dacier acquired Greek by contriving to do her embroidery in the room where her father was teaching her stupid brother; and her queenly critic had herself learned to read Thucydides, harder Greek than Callimachus, before she was fourteen. And so down to our own day, who knows how many mute, inglorious Minervas may have perished unenlightened, while Margaret Fuller Ossoli and Elizabeth Barrett Browning were being educated "like boys."

This expression simply means that they had the most solid training which the times afforded. Most persons would instantly take alarm at the very words; that is, they have so little faith in the distinctions which Nature has established, that they think, if you teach the alphabet, or anything else, indiscriminately to both sexes, you annul all difference between them. The common reasoning is thus: "Boys and girls are acknowledged to be very unlike. Now, boys study Greek and algebra, medicine and bookkeeping. Therefore girls should not." As if one should say: "Boys and girls are very unlike. Now, boys eat beef and potatoes. Therefore, obviously, girls should not."

The analogy between physical and spiritual food is precisely in point. The simple truth is, that, amid the vast range of human powers and properties, the fact of sex is but one item. Vital and momentous in itself, it does not constitute the whole organism, but only a part of it. The distinction of male and female is special, aimed at a certain end; and, apart from that end, it is, throughout all the kingdoms of Nature, of minor importance. With but trifling exceptions, from infusorial up to man, the female animal moves, breathes, looks, listens, runs, flies, swims, pursues its food, eats it, digests it, in precisely the same manner as the male: all instincts, all characteristics, are the same, except as to the one solitary fact of parentage. Mr. Ten Broeck's race-horses, Pryor and Prioress, were foaled alike, fed alike, trained alike, and finally ran side by side, competing

for the same prize. The eagle is not checked in soaring by any consciousness of sex, nor asks the sex of the timid hare, its quarry. Nature, for high purposes, creates and guards the sexual distinction, but keeps it subordinate to those still more important.

Now, all this bears directly upon the alphabet. What sort of philosophy is that which says, "John is a fool; Jane is a genius: nevertheless, John being a man, shall learn, lead, make laws, make money; Jane, being a woman, shall be ignorant, dependent, disfranchised, underpaid?" Of course, the time is past when one would state this so frankly, though Comte comes quite near it, to say nothing of the Mormons; but this formula really lies at the bottom of the reasoning one hears every day. The answer is, Soul before sex. Give an equal chance, and let genius and industry do the rest. La carrière ouverte aux talens. Every man for himself, every woman for herself, and the alphabet for us all.

Thus far, my whole course of argument has been defensive and explanatory. I have shown that woman's inferiority in special achievements, so far as it exists, is a fact of small importance, because it is merely a corollary from her historic position of degradation. She has not excelled, because she has had no fair chance to excel. Man, placing his foot upon her shoulder, has taunted her with not rising. But the ulterior question remains behind. How came she into this attitude originally? Explain the explanation, the logician fairly demands. Granted that woman is weak because she has been systematically degraded: but why was she degraded? This is a far deeper question,—one to be met only by a profounder philosophy and a positive solution. We are coming on ground almost wholly untrod, and must do the best we can.

I venture to assert, then, that woman's social inferiority in the past has been, to a great extent, a legitimate thing. To all appearance, history would have been impossible without it, just as it would have been impossible without an epoch of war and slavery. It is simply a matter of social progress,—a part of the succession of civilisations. The past has been inevitably a period of ignorance, of engrossing physical necessities, and of

brute force,—not of freedom, of philanthropy, and of culture. During that lower epoch, woman was necessarily an inferior, degraded by abject labour, even in time of peace,—degraded uniformly by war, chivalry to the contrary notwithstanding. Behind all the courtesies of Amadis and the Cid lay the stern fact,—woman a child or a toy. The flattering troubadours chanted her into a poet's paradise; but alas! that kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent took it by force. The truth simply was, that her time had not come. Physical strength must rule for a time, and she was the weaker. She was very properly refused a feudal grant, by reason, say "Les Coustumes de Normandie," of her unfitness for war or policy: C'est l'homme ki se bast et ki conseille. Other authorities put it still more plainly: "A woman cannot serve the emperor or feudal lord in war, on account of the decorum of her sex; nor assist him with advice, because of her limited intellect: nor keep his counsel, owing to the infirmity of her disposition." All which was, no doubt, in the majority of cases, true; and the degradation of woman was simply a part of a system which has, indeed, had its day, but has bequeathed its associations.

From this reign of force, woman never freed herself by force. She could not fight, or would not. Bohemian annals, to be sure, record the legend of a literal war between the sexes, in which the women's army was led by Libussa and Wlasla, and which finally ended with the capture, by the army of men, of Castle Dziewin, Maiden's Tower, whose ruins are still visible near Prague. The armour of Libussa is still shown at Vienna; and the guide calls attention to the long-peaked toes of steel, with which he avers, the tender Princess was wont to pierce the hearts of her opponents, while careering through the battle. And there are abundant instances in which women have fought side by side with men, and on equal terms. The ancient British women mingled in the wars of their husbands, and their princesses were trained to the use of arms in the Maiden's Castle at Edinburgh, in the Isle of Skye. The Moorish wives and maidens fought in defence of their European peninsula; and the Portuguese women fought on the same soil, against the armies of Philip II. The King of Siam has, at present, a bodyguard of four hundred women: they are armed with lance and rifle, are admirably disciplined, and their commander (appointed after saving the king's life at a tiger-hunt) ranks as one of the royal family, and has ten elephants at her service. When the all-conquering Dahomian army marched upon Abbeokuta, in 1851, they numbered ten thousand men and six thousand women. The women were, as usual, placed foremost in the assault, as being most reliable: and of the eighteen hundred bodies left dead before the walls, the vast majority were of women. The Hospital of the Invalides, in Paris, has sheltered, for half a century, a fine specimen of a female soldier, "Lieutenant Madame Bulan," now eighty-three years old, decorated by Napoleon's own hand with the cross of the Legion of Honour, and credited on the hospital-books with "seven years' service, seven campaigns, three wounds, several times distinguished, especially in Corsica, in defending a fort against the English." But these cases, though interesting to the historian, are still exceptional; and the instinctive repugnance they inspire is a condemnation, not of women, but of war.

The reason, then, for the long subjection of woman has been simply that humanity was passing through its first epoch, and her full career was to be reserved for the second. As the different races of man have appeared successively upon the stage of history, so there has been an order of succession of the sexes. Woman's appointed era, like that of the Teutonic races, was delayed, but not omitted. It is not merely true that the empire of the past has belonged to man, but that it has properly belonged to him; for it was an empire of the muscles, enlisting, at best, but the lower powers of the understanding. There can be no question that the present epoch is initiating an empire of the higher reason of arts, affections, aspirations; and for that epoch the genius of woman has been reserved. The spirit of the age has always kept pace with the facts, and outstripped the statutes. Till the fulness of time came, woman was necessarily kept a slave to the spinning-wheel and the needle; now higher work is ready; peace has brought invention to her aid, and the mechanical means for her emancipation are ready also. No use in releasing her till man, with his strong arm, had worked out his preliminary share in civilisation. "Earth waits for her queen," was a favourite motto of Margaret Fuller Ossoli; but it would be more correct to say that the queen has waited for her earth, till it could be smoothed and prepared for her occupancy. Now Cinderella may begin to think of putting on her royal robes.

Everybody sees that the times are altering the whole material position of woman; but most people do not appear to see the inevitable social and moral changes which are also involved. As has been already said, the woman of ancient history was a slave to physical necessities, both in war and peace. In war she could do too little; in peace she did too much, under the material compulsions which controlled the world. How could the Jews, for instance, elevate woman? They could not spare her from the wool and the flax, and the candle that goeth not out by night. In Rome, when the bride first stepped across her threshold, they did not ask her, Do you know the alphabet? they asked simply, Can you spin? There was no higher epitaph than Queen Amalasontha's—Domum servavit, lanam fecit. In Bœotia, brides were conducted home in vehicles whose wheels were burned at the door, in token that they were never to leave the house again. Pythagoras instituted at Crotona an annual festival for the distaff; Confucius, in China, did the same for the spindle; and these celebrated not the freedom, but the serfdom of woman.

And even into modern days this same tyrannical necessity has lingered. "Go spin, you jades! go spin!" was the only answer vouchsafed by the Earl of Pembroke to the twice-banished nuns of Wilton. Even now, travellers agree that throughout civilised Europe, with the partial exception of England and France, the profound absorption of the mass of women in household labours renders their general elevation impossible. But with us Americans, and in this age, when all these vast labours are being more and more transferred to arms of brass and iron; when Rochester grinds the flour and Lowell weaves the cloth, and the fire on the hearth has gone into black retirement and mourning; when the wiser a virgin is, the less she has to do with oil in her lamp; when the needle has made

its last dying speech and confession in the "Song of the Shirt," and the sewing machine has changed those doleful marches to delightful measures,—how is it possible for the blindest to help seeing that a new era is begun, and that the time has come for woman to learn the alphabet?

Nobody asks for any abolition of domestic labour for women, any more than of outdoor labour for men. Of course, most women will still continue to be mainly occupied with the indoor care of their families, and most men with their external support. All that is desirable for either sex is such an economy of labour, in this respect, as shall leave some spare time to be appropriated in other directions. The argument against each new emancipation of woman is precisely that always made against the liberation of serfs and the enfranchisement of plebeians—that the new position will take them from their legitimate business. "How can he [or she] get wisdom that holdeth the plough [or the broom]—whose talk is of bullocks [or of babies]?" Yet the American farmer has already emancipated himself from these fancied incompatibilities; and so will the farmer's wife. In a nation where there is no leisure-class and no peasantry, this whole theory of exclusion is an absurdity. We all have a little leisure, and we must all make the most of it. If we will confine large interests and duties to those who have nothing else to do, we must go back to monarchy at once. If otherwise, then the alphabet, and its consequences, must be open to woman as to man. Jean Paul says nobly, in his "Levana," that, "before and after being a mother, a woman is a human being, and neither maternal nor conjugal relation can supersede the human responsibility, but must become its means and instrument." And it is good to read the manly speech, on this subject, of John Quincy Adams, quoted at length in Quincy's life of him, in which, after fully defending the political petitions of the women of Plymouth, he declares that "the correct principle is, that women are not only justified, but exhibit the most exalted virtue, when they do depart from the domestic circle, and enter on the concerns of their country, of humanity, and of their God."

There are duties devolving on every human being,—duties

not small nor few, but vast and varied,—which spring from home and private life, and all their sweet relations. The support or care of the humblest household is a function worthy of men, women, and angels, so far as it goes. From these duties none must shrink, neither man nor woman; the loftiest genius cannot ignore them; the sublimest charity must begin with them. They are their own exceeding great reward; their self-sacrifice is infinite joy; and the selfishness which discards them is repaid by loneliness and a desolate old age. Yet these, though the most tender and intimate portion of human life, do not form its whole. It is given to noble souls to crave other interests also, added spheres, not necessarily alien from these; larger knowledge, larger action also; duties, responsibilities, anxieties, dangers, all the aliment that history has given to its heroes. Not home less, but humanity more. When the high-born English lady in the Crimean hospital, ordered to a post of almost certain death, only raised her hands to heaven, and said, "Thank God!" she did not renounce her true position as a woman: she claimed it. When the queen of James I. of Scotland, already immortalised by him in stately verse, won a higher immortality by welcoming to her fair bosom the dagger aimed at his; when the Countess of Buchan hung confined in her iron cage, outside Berwick Castle, in penalty for crowning Robert the Bruce; when the stainless soul of Joan of Arc met God, like Moses, in a burning flame,—these things were as they should be. Man must not monopolise these privileges of peril, birthright of great souls. Serenades and compliments must not replace the nobler hospitality which shares with woman the opportunity of martyrdom. Great administrative duties also, cares of state, for which one should be born gray-headed, how nobly do these sit upon a woman's brow! Each year adds to the storied renown of Elizabeth of England, greatest sovereign of the greatest of historic nations. Christina of Sweden, alone among the crowned heads of Europe (so says Voltaire), sustained the dignity of the throne against Richelieu and Mazarin. And these queens most assuredly did not sacrifice their womanhood in the process; for her Britannic Majesty's wardrobe included four thousand gowns; and Mdlle. de Montpensier declares, that when Christina

had put on a wig of the latest fashion, "she really looked extremely pretty."

Les races se féminisent, said Buffon, "The world is growing more feminine." It is a compliment, whether the naturalist intended it or not. Time has brought peace; peace, invention; and the poorest woman of to-day is born to an inheritance such as her ancestors never dreamed of. Previous attempts to confer on women social and political equality—as when Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany, made them magistrates, or when the Hungarian revolutionists made them voters, or when our own New Jersey tried the same experiment in a guarded fashion in early times, and then revoked the privilege, because (as in the ancient fable) the women voted the wrong way—these things were premature, and valuable only as recognitions of a principle. But in view of the rapid changes now going on, he is a rash man who asserts the "Woman Question" to be anything but a mere question of time. The fulcrum has been already given, in the alphabet, and we must simply watch, and see whether the earth does not move.

There is the plain fact: woman must be either a subject or an equal; there is no middle ground. Every concession to a supposed principle only involves the necessity of the next concession for which that principle calls. Once yield the alphabet, and we abandon the whole long theory of subjection and coverture: tradition is set aside, and we have nothing but reason to fall back upon. Reasoning abstractly, it must be admitted that the argument has been, thus far, entirely on the women's side, inasmuch as no man has yet seriously tried to meet them with argument. It is an alarming feature of this discussion that it has reversed, very generally, the traditional positions of the sexes: the women have had all the logic; and the most intelligent men, when they have attempted the other side, have limited themselves to satire and gossip. What rational woman can be really convinced by the nonsense which is talked in ordinary society around her,—as, that it is right to admit girls to common schools, and equally right to exclude them from colleges; that it is proper for a woman to sing in public, but indelicate for her to speak in public; that a post-office box is an unexceptionable place to drop a bit of paper into, but a ballot-box terribly dangerous? No cause in the world can keep above water, sustained by such contradictions as these, too feeble and slight to be dignified by the name of fallacies. Some persons profess to think it impossible to reason with a woman, and such critics certainly show no disposition to try the experiment.

But we must remember that all our American institutions are based on consistency, or on nothing: all claim to be founded on the principles of natural right; and when they quit those, they are lost. In all European monarchies, it is the theory, that the mass of the people are children to be governed, not mature beings to govern themselves. This is clearly stated and consistently applied. In the United States, we have formally abandoned this theory for one half of the human race, while for the other half it still flourishes in full force. The moment the claims of woman are broached, the democrat becomes a monarchist. What Americans commonly criticise in English statesmen, namely, that they habitually evade all arguments based on natural right, and defend every legal wrong on the ground that it works well in practice, is the precise defect in our habitual view of woman. The perplexity must be resolved somehow. Most men admit that a strict adherence to our own principles would place both sexes in precisely equal positions before law and constitution, as well as in school and society. But each has his special quibble to apply, showing that in this case we must abandon all the general maxims to which we have pledged ourselves, and hold only by precedent. Nay, he construes even precedent with the most ingenious rigour; since the exclusion of women from all direct contact with affairs can be made far more perfect in a republic than is possible in a monarchy, where even sex is merged in rank, and the female patrician may have far more power than the male plebeian. But, as matters now stand among us, there is no aristocracy but of sex: all men are born patrician, all women are legally plebeian; all men are equal in having political power, and all women in having none. This is a paradox so evident, and such an anomaly in human progress, that it cannot last for ever, without new discoveries in logic, or else a deliberate return to M. Maréchal's theory concerning the alphabet.

Meanwhile, as the newspapers say, we anxiously await further developments. According to present appearances, the final adjustment lies mainly in the hands of women themselves. Men can hardly be expected to concede either rights or privileges more rapidly than they are claimed, or to be truer to women than women are to each other. True, the worst effect of a condition of inferiority is the weakness it leaves behind it; even when we say, "Hands off!" the sufferer does not rise. In such a case, there is but one counsel worth giving. More depends on determination than even on ability. Will, not talent, governs the world. From what pathway of eminence were women more traditionally excluded than from the art of sculpture, in spite of Non me Praxiteles fecit, sed Anna Damer?—yet Harriet Hosmer and her sisters have climbed far up its steep ascent. Who believed that a poetess could ever be more than an Annot Lyle of the harp, to soothe with sweet melodies the leisure of her lord, until in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's hands the thing became a trumpet? Where are gone the sneers with which army surgeons and parliamentary orators opposed Mr. Sidney Herbert's first proposition to send Florence Nightingale to the Crimea? In how many towns has the current of popular prejudice against female orators been reversed by one winning speech from Lucy Stone! Where no logic can prevail, success silences. First give woman, if you dare, the alphabet, then summon her to her career: and though men, ignorant and prejudiced, may oppose its beginnings, there is no danger but they will at last fling around her conquering footsteps more lavish praises than ever greeted the opera's idol,—more perfumed flowers than ever wooed, with intoxicating fragrance, the fairest butterfly of the ballroom.

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NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

REPORT

OF A

PUBLIC MEETING

HELD IN THE

HANOVER SQUARE ROOMS, LONDON,

ON MONDAY, APRIL 28th, 1873,

E. B. EASTWICK, Esq., M.P., IN THE CHAIR.



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PUBLIC MEETING.

ON Monday evening, April 28th, a public meeting was held in London in the Hanover Square Rooms. Long before the hour at which the chair was taken, the hall was crowded in every part, and when at eight o'clock Mr. Eastwick, M.P., the chairman, came upon the platform, a most enthusiastic demonstration took place. Amongst those present were—R. Ward Jackson, Esq., M.P.; R. N. Fowler, Esq., M.P.; D. C. Heron, Esq., M.P.; Sir Harry Verney, M.P.; Wm. Johnston, Esq, M.P.; Duncan M'Laren, Esq., M.P.; Miss Gurney, Miss Le Geyt, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Arnold, Mrs. Sims, Mrs. Buckton, Mrs. Lucas, Mrs. J. Stansfeld, Rev. Dr. Fraser, Mrs. Jacob Bright, Miss Tod, of Belfast; Lady Belcher, Rev. A. G. L'Estrange, Thos. Webster, Esq.; Mrs. Webster, W. H. Ashurst, Esq.; Mrs. Sheldon Amos, Miss Wolstenholme, Colonel and Mrs. Brine, W. D. Christie, Esq., C.B.; C. H. Hopwood, Esq.; James Hole, Esq.; Sir John Murray, Lady Anna Gore Langton, Professor Newman, Madame Venturi, Mrs. Thomas Taylor, Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Garrett Anderson, Mrs. Westlake, Miss Beedy, M.A.; Rev. E. A. Fitzroy, Mrs. Lucas, Miss Hamilton, Mr. Hoskins, Miss Becker, Rev. B. Glover, Miss Crowe, Miss Stevenson, Miss Sturge, of Birmingham; Miss Boucherett, the Provost of Dumbarton, Miss Downing, Col. Richardson Gardner, Mr. Stone, Lewis Morris, Esq.; Mark Marsden, Esq.; Mr. and Mrs. Wakefield, of Dover; Miss Dick, of Burntisland; A. J. Williams, Esq.; Miss C. A. Biggs, Mrs. Eastwick, Mrs. F. Malleson, Miss Agnes Garrett, Miss Rhoda Garrett, F. A. Allen, Esq.; J. S. Symon, Esq.; Miss Apps and Miss Dunbar, of Dover; Miss H. Blackburn, &c.

The Chairman, after a few prefatory remarks, said this was the sixth anniversary of the great national movement for the promotion of women's suffrage, which began in 1867. It was his conviction that they had no reason to be dissatisfied with the progress they had made, or be doubtful of the ultimate result. One of the most common arguments that had been used by the opponents of the Bill which was now before the House had been cut from under their feet by the Ballot. (Cheers.) It used to be said, at every debate on this question, that the suffrage ought not to be conceded to women because it

would expose them to all the uproar and disturbance attending a contested election. Uproar and disturbance on such occasions were things of the past, thanks to the passing of the Ballot Bill. He never himself thought there was anything in that argument, but it was necessary to lay some stress upon it, because the great leader of debate, Mr. Gladstone, thought so much of it that he suggested, as a means of avoiding the difficulty, the Italian plan of giving women votes by deputy. The next encouraging fact was what had taken place in connection with School Boards. Mrs. Grey, who was a candidate at the School Board, went down when hundreds and thousands of working men were hurrying to the hustings, and they stood aside for her to pass, and took off their hats as they gave her their cordial wishes and support. (Cheers.) Very gratifying was it to reflect upon the great success which had attended the efforts of ladies desiring to obtain seats on the School Boards. Eighteen ladies had been elected on the School Boards for Scotland. Another gratifying fact to be mentioned was that in the great public school at Harrow fifteen of the masters had signed a petition in favour of women's suffrage; and in the University of Cambridge a large proportion of the tutors had subscribed to it, including all the tutors of Trinity College. In the debate of 1871, Mr. Bouverie said that the desire for women's suffrage had died out in America; the right honourable gentleman's expression was, "The women's game is played out." (Laughter.) Was it played out? One of the articles of the convention which nominated General Grant especially called attention to the women's suffrage movement, and urged its great importance. The men who stood at the very summit of literature and oratory in America supported the movement. Such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mr. Higginson, the essavist, Mr. Wendell Phillips, the great orator, and Judge Hoare. Mr. Emerson had said that the women's suffrage movement was an era in civilisation. In the great territory of Wyoming, which would, he hoped, become one of the states of the Union. the suffrage had long been given to women, and had been exercised by them most faithfully and successfully. Mr. John Stuart Mill, in the debate of 1867, said that if the law denied the vote to all but the possessors of £5,000 a year, the poorest men in the nation would now and then acquire the suffrage; but neither birth, nor fortune, nor merit, nor intellect, nor exertion could ever enable a woman's voice to be heard in the Parliament whose laws touched her interests as much as any in creation. (Cheers.) He (Mr. Eastwick) trusted those words would soon be applicable only to the past, and he earnestly appealed to the meeting to go on and maintain the struggle with the same moderation and patience that had characterised it hitherto, and which were the best guarantees of success. (Cheers.)

Mr. R. N. Fowler, M.P., wished to say why, ever since he had had the honour of voting, he had voted in favour of Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill. Sometimes it was said that the proposal was a great innovation in the institutions of the country; this was a proposition he utterly denied. The change, if change it were, had not been made recently, it was made by an Act which was passed as long ago as the year 1835; it was made by the Poor Law Act, under which ladies were allowed to vote in parochial elections, and he would challenge anyone to deny that the exercise of the franchise by ladies at such elections had not been attended with the greatest advantage to the administration of the great Act. We had therefore nearly 40 years' experience, and it had been an experience of a most satisfactory character. More recently we had the experience of the municipal elections, and the result had been equally satisfactory. Taking these facts into consideration it certainly was not now necessary to argue that the time had arrived for going a step further and applying the principle already conceded to Parliamentary elections. (Cheers.) He had not yet heard who was to lead the attack on Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill. On previous occasions it had been Mr. Bouverie, who upon this question had not acted consistently with his own principles or the traditions of his family. The passing of Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill he (Mr. Fowler) believed would be a general advantage to the country, and no sound or valid argument could be brought forward against it. The day could not be far distant when a general election would take place. It might be this year, or it might be next, but it could not be far distant. The friends of the woman's suffrage movement could not expect much from the present House of Commons, because, in view of its approaching dissolution, the votes were given more with reference to the hustings than anything else. The great fact to be borne in mind was that the country would soon be appealed to, and he would, therefore, entreat the ladies to use their influence, and the gentlemen to give their votes in favour of the candidates who would pledge themselves to support this great measure. (Cheers.) He moved :- "That to recognise sex as a ground of disqualification for voting in the election of members of Parliament is contrary to the principles of English representation, unjust to those excluded, and injurious to the whole community." (Cheers.)

Miss Becker, in seconding this motion, said the arguments in favour of the principles it embodied had been so well and so often put before the country that very little more was now necessary for those who had been so long working for the cause than to give some account of the progress made. The agitation had in fact progressed at a rate which could not be surpassed in the history of any other political movement.

With but small means at its disposal it had produced a great effect. Since September last upwards of 150 public meetings had been held in various parts of the country in support of Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill. They had all been addressed by ladies, and at all of them resolutions had been passed in support of the Bill. Meetings had been held in Manchester, Liverpool, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Dewsbury, and Birmingham, and in every instance the verdict had been the same, namely, a unanimous assent to the justice of the measure. Not only, however, had great public meetings so pronounced, but municipal councils had adopted petitions in favour of the principle. Upwards of 30 town councils had petitioned for the Bill, including such important bodies as the councils of Manchester, Edinburgh, Bath, Dewsbury, Middlesboro', and many other places. The members of these councils had had experience of Women's Suffrage in the election of those bodies, and had therefore recommended the Bill to the House of Commons. There had been in addition memorials to Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Disraeli, praying for their support to the principle of the Bill. They had been signed by upwards of 11,000 women; and it had been sought to have many places represented rather than many names from each place, and the memorials therefore represented a force of public opinion amongst women which ought to have great weight with the gentlemen to whom they were addressed, and with the nation. (Cheers.) The question was felt by women who were working and thinking to be one of deep practical earnestness. It was sometimes said that women had not sufficient political education to fit them for the franchise; she believed the amount of political education among women was greatly underrated by men, and that the political education of both men and women was not so good but that there was room for improvement. (Cheers.) But whilst men had every opportunity of improving their political education, women by the fact of their political disabilities were debarred from much of this educational process. (Cheers.) Sometimes that objection might be made by men who did not think it a desirable thing that women should obtain political education or think intelligently on political matters. She had nothing to say about these, but to those who did believe that women ought to have an influence in the country, whether directly or indirectly, she would ask what opportunities women had of acquiring political education while they were shut out from a vote? (Cheers.) Political education amongst women must be acquired in the same way as amongst men, and when women had more political power there would arise leaders amongst them who would bring to bear upon political matters not only the intelligence which was common to all, but also opinions especially advanced from a woman's point of view. It was

natural that women should speak more effectually to women than men do, but in the present state of affairs the women who thought on political matters were in a manner compelled to be silent on public questions. Women of all shades of political opinion were seeking the franchise; but if any woman who was prominent in this question desired to give effect to her sentiments she was told she must not do so because the suffrage cause would be injured. On this account, thoughtful women were compelled to hide their sentiments lest it should injure the cause. This had had a disastrous effect upon the growth of political life. There were many social questions which were of deep interest to women, and upon which they held strong opinions; amongst others she might mention the Bill to render legal marriage with a deceased wife's sister. A great many women had petitioned for that Bill, as some had petitioned against it; but it was hardly possible for a woman to take an active part on that Bill without giving offence to one or other among the Members of Parliament who are voting for the suffrage. She had even heard it said that certain members refused their support to women's suffrage because women had petitioned against the Deceased Wife's Sister Marriage Bill. Such a state of things could not be favourable to a development of political opinions amongst women, and it was a strong reason for removing their disabilities. Again, it had been said that the possession of the suffrage would expose women to various corrupting political influences. That objection applied equally well and with still greater force to the municipal franchise; municipal elections were very distinctly political, but the influences brought to bear upon municipal voters were mostly of the narrow, more degrading, and least elevating kind, whereas in Parliamentary elections we had something higher and broader. Under the existing state of things, therefore, women were exposed to the worst kind of political influence, and shut out from the higher influences of politics; and so long as women had the municipal and not the Parliamentary franchise they were at a disadvantage as compared to men. There was now a Bill before Parliament ostensibly to assimilate the municipal franchise in Ireland to that in England; yet the framer of the Bill had limited the franchise to men. She hoped their Parliamentary friends would take care that this omission was rectified, and that the women ratepayers of Ireland were allowed the same privileges as their sisters in England. (Cheers.) It was very striking to read in the debate on the Ballot Bill the extremely elaborate provisions made to secure the franchise to the illiterate voter. This was the cause of a feeling of shame to many intelligent women, who, though admitted on the School Board, are excluded from the franchise where the poorest and most ignorant of men were admitted. In old times there was a law called benefit of clergy; reading was so rare an accomplishment that when a man possessed it he could not be hanged, and could save his life by reading a verse. (Laughter.) If something like the converse of that law were adopted among women, and the same provision were made to enable a woman to vote who could prove to the satisfaction of a returning officer that she could read and write, the result would be gratifying. (Laughter and cheers.) Another objection was that the giving of a vote would involve women in considerable publicity and turmoil; but that objection was done away with by the granting of the School Board Franchise and the right of sitting on School Boards. The position of a voter in a constituency was not necessarily one of publicity at all. Any woman could go and give her vote under the Ballot Act with no more publicity than going to a place of amusement. The position of a candidate at a great popular election was, however, one of great publicity, and no person could be elected on a School Board who did not make their views known to the electors, and in some degree become personally acquainted with the great body of the constituency. The constituency that elected the School Board of Manchester was one of the largest in the three kingdoms, and in that constituency women were invited to become candidates; and it was perfectly ridiculous to say that women might do this and yet not be permitted to give a vote for the Parliamentary Members for Manchester. (Cheers.) As to the reluctance which some professed to feel at involving women in the excitement of political discussion, they were already involved in it by the elections to which she had referred; for there was no branch of politics which involved more fierce discussions than that in which the politico-theological element entered, as at School Boards, and to the full force of which women were exposed. It was surprising that the House of Commons should refuse women this vote. In spite of what the hon, member who preceded her had said, she confessed to being one of those who did expect something even from it, for she expected something like logical consistency in the arguments it brought forward. (Cheers.) And she did not see with what consistency the House of Commons could give women as much as it had given and withhold the rest. She had some faith in the logic of men—at least they were very fond of telling us they were guided solely by logic and reason, and not by emotion or prejudice. (Laughter.) The present was a peculiarly fitting time for passing Mr. Jacob Bright's Bill. We were on the eve of a general election. In the earlier years of the present Parliament it was urged as an objection to the passing of the Bill that the addition of so large a body to the constituency would require that Parliament should be dissolved in order that the opinion of the new constituency might be taken.

Now then was the opportunity; before appealing to the country let this new constituency be admitted, and then the next Parliament would represent a very much wider body of opinion. (Cheers) She would not say that the return of any member to the House of Commons would be influenced by the vote he gave on this question, and she felt very certain that no member would lose a single vote in consequence of having given a vote for this measure of justice (Cheers.) There was in Lancashire a short time ago an election in a large constituency. There were two candidates before the electors— Conservative and Liberal—and both were questioned as to whether they would, if returned, support Mr. Bright's Bill. The Conservative unhesitatingly replied that he would vote for the Bill; the Liberal returned an evasive answer. A Liberal elector said that ever since he lived in the constituency he had voted Liberal, but if the Liberal candidate did not promise to vote for Mr. Bright's Bill he would vote for the Tory, and there were six or seven others whose votes would follow his. (Cheers.) Now, she did not wish to threaten members. (Laughter.) She would appeal to their sense of justice and right, at the same time reminding them that they might conciliate a great deal of kind feeling amongst the women of their constituencies by voting for this Bill. She for one never believed that any men deliberately intended to do any kind of injustice or wrong to women. If the wrong was done it was through ignorance. Men tried to do what they thought good for women; but women were now beginning to ask that their own voices might be heard in the matter. Finally, she would say that this women's suffrage movement did not proceed from any kind of antagonism or rivalry with men; it proceeded, on the contrary, from the deepest and truest sympathy in their highest hopes and aspirations. (Cheers.)

Miss Rhoda Garrett supported the resolution.*

A gentleman amongst the audience here moved an amendment, the effect of which was that it is contrary to the interests of the State and woman herself that she should be admitted to any share in politics. A young lady in the body of the meeting seconded the amendment, which was supported by Mr. Mason Jones. (We regret that we have not reports of the speeches of these two gentlemen.) On the amendment being put to the meeting it was rejected by an overwhelming majority.

Lady Anna Gore-Langton said: It seems to me, that on this subject, the removal of the political disabilities of women, there exists some misapprehension. When it is mentioned in society, its promoters are accused of wishing to revolutionise

^{*} Owing to an unfortunate omission on the part of the special reporter, notes of Miss Garrett's speech were not taken, and the newspaper reports were too incomplete to make use of here.

domestic life, by setting women in authority over men. This is quite a mistake; we have no such intention. It would be folly, and would make women ridiculous. Speaking for women, I say that we have far too great respect for our husbands and fathers to wish for an instant, if even such a thing were possible, to deprive them of the headship of their families which God has given them. Happy wedded life, where husband and wife mutually aid each other, and share each other's interests and pursuits, is the greatest of earthly blessings, and is far too sacred to be interfered with. But such happiness is not intended for all. We do not ask for the franchise for young girls, or for wives whose hearts and whose hands are filled with domestic duties; but for those women who have the qualification which is required of men. Many circumstances of late years have combined to bring forward this claim. The spread of education and of cheap literature the quicker circulation of ideas—the more active political life of men, consequent on the lowering of the franchise, which has brought political discussions into the sphere of many more homes—the rapid increase of the population—above all, the surplus of women, who in 1861 were nearly a million in excess of the men—this has obliged many more women to work for their own support. In 1861 there were between two and three millions of women working for wages, or possessed of independent means, and since then the number must have increased. These women contribute by their industry to the well-being of the country; they are taxed the same as men, submit to the same laws. Is it just they should not have the same privileges? In the beginning of the last century, a legal authority said he conceived "that giving a vote for a representative in Parliament is the privilege by which every Englishman protects his property, and that whoever deprives him of such vote deprives him of his birthright." Englishwomen possess property, how are they to protect it? In old days, when might was right, women for the sake of protection were married very early in life, or consigned to the cloister. Even then, under certain circumstances, they were allowed to choose a champion to fight for them. In these days, when law is paramount, there seems nothing unfeminine in giving a vote for a representative in Parliament. The Ballot Bill has made elections more orderly, and therefore facilitates women voting; but if men dislike seeing their faces at the polling booth, why not allow women voting papers, such as are used at the University elections; they can be sent by post. When women set to work in various ways, they are confronted by a kind of trades union among men, which tends to lower their wages, and keeps them out of many fitting and remunerative employ ments. When they examine the laws peculiarly affecting their

sex, their property, and their children, they find them partial, one-sided, and more in favour of the men than they would be if the opinion of women was also consulted. Only a few weeks ago, a Bill passed through the House of Commons, though it did not become law, which was entirely one-sided, for while it permitted a man to marry his sister-in-law, it did not permit a woman to marry her brother-in-law. Was that fair? The consequences of any alteration of the marriage law would be so serious to women, that surely none such ought to be made, unless their free and independent opinion on the subject can be arrived at, and that can only be done by giving them the franchise. The objection is made that if women vote they must also sit in Parliament. That is not a necessary consequence. Formerly women voted for directors of the East India Company, as they now vote for railway directors; but we have not yet heard of a woman becoming a director. Besides, clergymen have the franchise, but are prevented by special Act of Parliament from sitting in the House of Commons. Women are now trying to improve their position by obtaining juster laws for their sex, better education, and the removal of many impediments to their work. They are trying by perfectly legitimate means to use that influence which they are said to possess to so great an extent, and of which men seem so fearful, to obtain what is now the dearest wish of many a female heart—the political franchise. Is not this a higher, nobler aim than amusement, dress, or finery? These latter men give them to any extent, even to their ruin. Time will show if they will help them to their higher aims. I quite allow there are many women happy in quiet, domestic life, amply provided and cared for, who say they do not want a vote, for it would be rather a trouble. They are quite content with their position; and so they ought to be, and long may they continue so. They have everything to make life easy and comfortable. But generous and liberal minded women will allow that charity does not consist solely in almsgiving. There is a feelingsympathy—by which we understand each other's hearts; it does more to bind us together, and to smooth away the distinction of classes, than even the giving of gold. Let us exercise that feeling, and imagine ourselves in the position of our less fortunate sisters, who are toiling on amid difficulties and temptations alone and unaided. In a short time, I think, many will then agree with the opinion I have long held, that in reason and in justice those women who have the required qualification ought to have the political franchise. I, therefore, move the second resolution, "That this meeting approves of the Bill entitled a Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women, and authorises its chairman to sign petitions in its favour to both Houses of Parliament."

Mr. Heron, M.P., seconded the motion. He had always been of opinion that the argument as regarded the property qualification in connection with this question was unanswerable, and that when a woman, either by the descent of property or by hard, earnest, and laborious work in the world, under difficulties and disadvantages that men could not dream of, had acquired property it should entitle her to the franchise in the same way in which it would entitle the possessor to a vote if he were a man. He never could understand the argument which would deprive her of it, unless she was, in the language of the opponents of the movement, physically unfit to exercise that very low privilege, the electoral franchise. By what was called the logical argument it was said that women were the creatures of impulse and passion, and that they were unable to understand the bearing of any logical argument. But if we were to go to logic and make that a test of the electoral qualification, who was there fit to vote, or even to be a member of Parliament. (Laughter.) There had been women, from Mary Wolstencroft downwards, who had been distinguished not merely as creatures of impulse and passion, but as powerful writers, clear and logical thinkers, able to express their opinions upon every subject as well as most men, and better than many. He would ask any opponent why on earth a woman should be deprived of the property qualification for the franchise? Women were allowed to exercise the municipal franchise, and in that way to influence the property of important cities; women not only voted, but sat on the School Boards, and had proved to be not the least influential, and certainly not amongst the worst members of the School Boards. (Laughter and cheers.) In the House of Commons there was an argument known as the pedestal argument: people said women ought to be placed upon so lofty a pedestal as never to be degraded so as to walk through the mire of a contested election-(laughter)—they must be put aloft to be admired, but must never exercise the rights and privileges of a free and free thinking British subject. The pedestal argument, however, had been very nearly exploded, because the gentlemen who used it never reflected, or, if they did think, put the thought aside, that while they said women should be placed upon a lofty pedestal politically, yet as regarded the ordinary daily life there was no domestic drudgery too severe, no work too hard for women. A favourite argument with opponents of this measure was that men were sent to fight and bear the hard burdens which the State imposed, and that women were exempt from them. He would ask that appeal to the common sense of the meeting whether in a great struggle affecting great nations the women did not suffer as much, nay ten times more than the men. (Cheers.) The mere excitement of battle was

nothing compared to the prolonged agony of those at home. In Paris, while the men in the field were receiving their daily rations, in the garrets and cellars of the besieged city the women were perishing of famine. Was not the name of Florence Nightingale embalmed in history as an answer to this peace and war question so often heard. (Cheers.) In every relation of life that he could discover, both as regarded their conduct and judgment, women, if admitted to the franchise, would be amongst the best electors of the British Empire. It was often said that most women were Conservative in politics. He said, if they desire to be Conservative let them, and if they choose to be Liberals let them. (Laughter.) He hoped it was not necessary to spend much time in proving to the meeting that there was no such very tremendous danger to the British Constitution if the few women who, by the descent of property or industry were entitled to the franchise, were allowed to exercise it, even though it involved walking through the mire of a contested election. And he would remind those who were continually speaking of the dangers of a contested election, that we had got rid of a great deal of the excitement and annoyance of the nomination and polling day by the beneficent operations of the Ballot, and there were now none of the scenes which of old discountenanced women from going to the polling

Miss Beedy, in supporting this resolution, said: A few years ago the English Parliament gave women the municipal franchise. Now we are asking you to see that the same arguments and same reasons that secured for women the municipal franchise hold with equal force in demanding for them the parliamentary franchise. If men own property on which they are taxed, or occupy houses for which they are rated, if they represent property and bear the burdens attaching to it, you say according to the constitution of the country they have a right to the franchise. No one inquires what their particular tastes or pursuits may be-no one asks whether they study language and history or science and mathematics; no one asks whether they are engineers or artists. These matters are not considered. If they represent property, it is admitted that they have a right to the franchise. Now we are asking you to admit that though the pursuits of women are necessarily somewhat different from those of men, that though their tastes and experience are somewhat different, yet that these facts should have no influence in excluding them from the rights that attach to the property that they represent. Some women are asking for the franchise as a defence to property; women who own large landed estates, or are heavily taxed, feel that they need the franchise to defend their individual rights. But a larger number of women are asking for the franchise as a

means to secure just legislation. (Hear, hear.) They see that wherever the interests of men and women conflict it is impossible for women to get full justice from men, just as it would be impossible for men to get full justice from women—(laughter and cheers)—that wherever the interests of one party is opposed to the interests of another party, it is impossible for either one to determine the strict line of justice between the two. A still larger number of women are asking for the franchise as a means of securing a wider sphere of employment for women, and better opportunities for education. (Cheers.) But I am sure that the demand that women are making is for the most part misunderstood. (Hear, hear.) A very common opinion is that women are putting themselves into antagonism with society that they are trying to grasp a new range of duties that will necessitate a neglect of the homes and the children—that they are attempting to invade the sphere that nature has appropriated to men. The very reverse of this is true. Women are only trying to get themselves into a position where they can do their half of life's work better than they now do. They are trying to put more competent women in charge of the homes. It is a shame to us that more scientific knowledge is spent on the food and rearing of cattle than on the food and physical habits of children. (Cheers.) But the one is in the hands of men trained to scientific observation and habits of reasoning, and the other is in the hands of women, to whom it is thought to be a mistake to teach science and mathematics. (Laughter and cheers.) It is a small thing that mothers are devoted to their children; they must learn that good intentions can never take the place of wise action. The child is in their hands, and both the length and quality of its life are very largely at the mercy of their wisdom or folly. Mothers need to know more of the world than they do; they need to know what dangers there are, where they lurk, and what paths lead to them, in order to be able to successfully guard their sons and daughters against them. Women are not trying to take the place of men; they only want to come up alongside of them, instead of walking behind them; they want to do their part of the world's work as well as men do theirs; they want to tear down the old notion of the inferiority of women. Some fear that if women are allowed to come into political life that it will make them coarse and unrefined. What is it to come into political life? What is it that women are aiming to do in this respect? Simply to study and examine all the questions that affect the interests of society, and when they have formed opinions upon those questions, to give expression to those opinions in the form of a vote for a man who will advocate those opinions in Parliament. Do you think Lady Burdett Coutts coarse and unrefined for taking just this sort of

interest in the welfare of society? and do you think she would be any less refined if she gave a vote to help a man into Parliament who would urge forward her schemes by wise legislation? I venture to assert, there is scarce a man or woman in the kingdom who would not rejoice to have the franchise conferred upon Lady Burdett Coutts. But I suppose we must admit that the women whom this franchise movement is aiming to produce will not be quite like the typical women of the past. Women who think are different from women who live only in their senses and emotions. They cannot have the same infantile trust, they cannot be the same free-from-care balm. But in considering the desirableness of any exchange, we must compare what is given away with what is received. The American Indians, you know, sold their lands to the white men for glass beads and red paint, and does it not seem as though women, in giving up what they might have for what they do have, are making a somewhat similar bargain? (Laughter.) But you say women do not want the franchise. I believe it is true that the class enfranchised by the Reform Bill of 1832 did not desire the franchise, and that the majority of those enfranchised by the Reform Bill of 1867 did not care for the political privileges that were given them; and it is still more true that the American slaves did not want their freedom. A few of them did—the brighter ones, those who hired their time from their masters and managed their own lives, did want their freedom. But the majority of the slaves did not, and it is not strange that they felt as they did. The slave lost favour by wishing to be independent of his master; and women know that they lose favour with most men by wishing to be more independent of men than they now are. (Cheers.) No, women, as a class, care nothing about the franchise for women; not even the majority of those for whom we are asking it desire it. They have not thought about it; they are accustomed to the leadership of men in all political matters. There are as many men who desire the franchise for women as there are women who desire it; and the majority of women will desire the franchise when the majority of men desire them to have it. There are some men who are so generous as to lament that when women assume a position of political equality they will no longer be able to show them the courtesy they now do. This is a very amiable objection, and I am disposed to think we value the amiability of these men more than their good sense. (Laughter.) When the anti-slavery contest was raging in the American Congress, and the question was being discussed whether slavery should be allowed to go into the new territory of Kansas, a South Carolinian made a touching appeal to the House of Representatives, saying, if he should decide to remove his residence to Kansas he should think it a great hardship and

cruelty not to be permitted to take his dear old nurse with him, the good old woman who had watched his cradle and petted his boyhood. A veteran abolitionist interrupted him, saying, "Take your dear old nurse with you. We do not propose to prevent you from doing that, but we mean you shall not sell her when you get her there." Now women, as I understand it, do not propose to avoid any of the courtesies that it is the pleasure of men to extend to them, but they do think it best to get women into a position where it shall not be in men's power to abuse them, if at any time, by any chance, they should not be in a courteous mood. (Laughter and cheers.) But it is said that women know nothing of politics. It is true that there are many questions before Parliament in which women have little interest, and concerning which they have little knowledge. There are some legislative questions that men understand better than women, and always will understand better than women; and there are other legislative questions which women understand better than men, and always will understand better than men; and it is in favour of these that we wish to utilise the experience and wisdom of women. And what are the questions that are occupying the attention of legislators at the present time? How to prevent disease, how to administer the charities, how to educate the people, how to make men sober and temperate. Are these questions in which women feel no interest? are these questions in which women have no counsel to give? I take great pleasure in supporting this resolution.

Mr. W. Johnston, M.P., supported the resolution briefly. He recommended the supporters of the measure before Parliament to prosecute their movement until what they required was given. He referred to the observations of Miss Becker as to the defect in the Bill which she had mentioned, and he would take care, when the proper time arrived, to move an amendment that would give Irishwomen the same privileges as Englishwomen enjoyed. (Cheers.)

The resolution was carried with acclamation.

Miss Sturge proposed the third resolution, viz.: "That this meeting expresses its best thanks to those Members of Parliament who have voted in favour of the Bill to Remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women, and hopes they will again support the measure when brought forward on Wednesday next." She always, she said, felt the poverty of language when she wished to move with any force a vote of thanks, and she was especially anxious that the present vote should be a cordial one. She wished as forcibly as she could to express her thanks to the gentlemen who had had the courage for so many sessions of Parliament to be in a minority. It did require courage to occupy that position, and perhaps it would require still more

courage to openly change your opinions. She hoped we should find the members who had already voted for this measure, which she so firmly believed was for the benefit of the community, would every one of them record their votes in its favour; she hoped the majority would have the courage to change their opinions, that she might be able to include them in the vote of thanks next time. (Laughter.) Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen last year spoke of the clouded existence of man, and she imagined it was in consequence of that cloud in which the majority of them had hitherto been involved that they were unable to see the question of Women's Suffrage as she would wish them to see it. (Laughter.) One of the gentlemen who had spoken upon the amendment which the meeting had rejected had gone back for an argument as far as Adam and Eve. Perhaps she might have recourse to her Quaker theology and quote the words of George Fox, who on one occasion, when some one wrote to him about the preaching of women, replied that before the fall Eve was equal to Adam, and that the New Testament restored that equality. (Cheers.) She had heard it said that women ought not to be entrusted with a vote, because they were liable to panic; but the conduct of certain opponents of the measure convinced her that panic was not confined to women. She assured the gentleman who had moved the amendment that there was no reason why they should be alarmed. Capacity, she believed, would find its own level anywhere; capacity was a divine law, and that man had little faith who fancied that God's law required bolstering up by the laws of man. (Cheers.) She would remind her hearers that progression was often liable to contract experience. A gentleman once told her that it was quite clear that it was not intended that women should speak in public, because of their voice. That was absurd, for Mr. Glaisher had stated that in a balloon a man's voice could be heard a mile, a woman's could be heard two miles. (Loud laughter.) One was continually hearing what had been termed the peace and war argument. It might be true that women could not go out as soldiers, but this was an argument that always reminded her that Dr. Watts, who was no mean authority, wished to confine fighting to dogs. (Renewed laughter.) She claimed the vote for women householders, who were paying their rates and taxes, on the ground of our common humanity. It all just came to this-either men were infallible or women had no souls. (Loud laughter.) At an old French Council in the thirteenth century the question was discussed whether women had souls, and it was carried by a majority of one. (Laughter.) The same question in a different form would come before Parliament when Mr. Jacob Bright introduced his Bill. (Cheers.) What had hitherto been the majority might again affirm their own infallibility,

and at the same time deny that women had mind and soul. She would remind them of this council of the 13th century which affirmed it by a majority of one; surely the present House of Commons might do as much for us as the French Council did for the women of the thirteenth century. (Laughter.) Liberty of conscience was a mockery without liberty of action; and women ought to be allowed the latter—allowed to act for the best according to their capacity. A gentleman wrote to her not long ago that he objected to women's suffrage because it would increase the power of priestcraft. Surely if a man's sense of right was to override a woman's sense of right that was mancraft and priestcraft too. She cared little for the sentimental pedestalism which was given to ladies, because it was generally taken from the level of womanhood to give to ladyism. (Cheers.)

Mr. W. H. ASHURST seconded the resolution. He referred to the official appointment given to Mrs. Nassau Senior, and said he was able to inform the meeting, on the best authority, that she did her work as well as any of her male competitors

could do it. (Cheers.)

The resolution was then carried unanimously, and on the proposition of Mrs. Arthur Arnold, seconded by Mrs. Buckton, a vote of thanks was passed to the chairman.—This compliment Mr. Eastwick briefly acknowledged, after which the meeting closed.

ADDRESS

BY THE

REV. CHARLES GREEN,

Vicar of St. Paul's, Beckenham,

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

DELIVERED IN

CHRIST CHURCH, LECTURE HALL,

TUESDAY, MAY 16th, 1882.

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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

Ladies and Gentlemen.—A clergyman will, doubtless, be thought by many to be coming somewhat out of his way in taking the chair at such a meeting as the present. It will therefore not be amiss if I briefly state the reasons which, as it seems to me, should array every minister of religion on the side of this movement for securing the extension of the Suffrage to women-householders. In so doing I shall not only be making my own position clear, but be putting before you at the very commencement of our proceedings a succinct, yet comprehensive, view of the real objects at which we are aiming. On the succeeding speakers will devolve the duty of taking up and enforcing particular points, with such illustrations and arguments as their special experience or sympathies may suggest.

Now, it will be universally admitted that a minister of religion ought always to be found on the side of justice and equity. But the claim we make that all women paying rates should be entitled to the parliamentary vote, is essentially a just one. Lord Chatham laid it down as a great principle of our constitution, going back as far as Magna

Charta, that "taxation apart from representation is tyranny." Do you call upon a man to contribute directly to the revenue of the nation? Then he has a right to say, unless specially disqualified, how the public money should be spent, and what laws should be inscribed on the Statute Book. It is on this principle that, within the last fifty years, both the great parties in the State-Radicals and Tories—have combined to extend the Suffrage. And we are now asking the question, why female-ratepayers should not have the benefit of the same great constitutional principle. Is it fair, is it common justice, that they should be held specially disqualified in company with criminals, idiots, and lunatics? Ladies and gentlemen, so irresistibly strong, so transparently reasonable, is our contention, that notwithstanding all the bitterness of party warfare, the leaders on both sides of the House have repeatedly spoken and voted in its favour. Here there is "neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free," but Lord Beaconsfield and Mr. Jacob Bright have found themselves in the same lobby, even Mr. Forster and Mr. Parnell could exchange embraces; and only the other day the St. James' Gazette and the Pall Mall Gazette were caught smiling with equal complacency over the success of the great meeting in St. James' Hall!

Again, should not a minister of religion always aim at both preaching and practising what is consistent with sound logic? Many people will perhaps say that this is just where our sermons so often fail—they are not logical! But in contending for the right of female-ratepayers to exercise the Parliamentary franchise, I think I may say that we occupy absolutely unassailable ground. Women are already empowered to vote in Municipal, Parochial, and School Board elections; the Legislature by recent Acts has given them that power for the simple reason that they are householders, and so may expect periodic visits from the tax-collector. Now, will any one explain to me by what rules of logic you can draw the line at the present

point, and say that a woman, because paying rates and taxes, should be held competent to assist in choosing Poorlaw guardians, and members for our School Boards, but shall have no voice in sending representatives to St. Stephen's? To my understanding it seems a rank anomaly; and all the more grievous when, as in some recent cases, women have been called to pay heavily for a parliamentary inquiry into electoral corruption, with which they had on personal concern, and might possibly have had some power to check, if invested with the franchise.

Again, ought not a minister of religion to be deeply interested in any movement which promises to give us a higher and purer standard of political morality? He takes a very narrow view of the Church's work who supposes that our main, if not exclusive, concern is to get people ready for another world. All that can sweeten man's present lot, all that tends to make homes more happy, neighbours more kindly, and the law of righteousness co-extensive with the varied relationships of social, civic, and national life—these are objects which no true-hearted clergyman can feel alien to the work in which he is engaged And therefore it is that I, for one, have been drawn to take an active part in this agitation for Women's Suffrage. I augur the happiest results from its success. You will hear it sometimes said that women know nothing of politics, and that women cannot reason. Well, be it so; though I would warn any adventurous members of my sex to think twice before challenging to dialectical combat ladies like Miss Frances Power Cobb, and some who are on this platform to-night. But, allowing all that may be asserted as to their lack of logical faculty, I contend that the intuitive judgments of women are often more to be relied on than the conclusions which we may reach by an elaborate process of reasoning. No man that has an intelligent wife, or who is at all accustomed to the society of educated women, will dispute this. Again and again you must

have known them decide questions on the instant, and with unerring accuracy, which you had been poring over for hours only to get deeper and deeper into a labyrinth of doubts. I hardly like to say that they achieve such feats by a sort of sagacity resembling the sure instincts of the animal races; and yet there does seem to be some ground for the remark of a witty Frenchman that, when a man has toiled step by step up a flight of stairs, he will be certain to find a woman at the top, but she will not be able to tell how she got there! How she got there, however, is of little moment. If the conclusions a woman has reached be sound, that is all that concerns us; and that they are very apt to be sound on the practical matters of domestic, secular, and religious life, nothing but prejudice or selfconceit can prevent us from acknowledging. And therefore, as there are many national subjects, such as the laws affecting marriage, pauperism, primary education, custody of children, public morality, sobriety, and so forth, on which the influence of women might be brought to bear with great gain to the country, I am anxious to see them entrusted with the parliamentary vote on the same conditions as those that enfranchise the members of my own

But once more, should not every minister of religion be a man of sound common-sense? I don't say that he always is so gifted. Some lamentable instances to the contrary might be quoted. But supposing him to be possessed of this invaluable quality, then certainly, in my judgment, he would have nothing further to do with the question of Women's Suffrage, if it included the claim that wives as well as husbands should be empowered to vote, or that female-householders should be eligible for election to parliament. I have reason to believe that many are prejudiced against our movement in consequence of an impression that these are really among the objects we are aiming to secure. Accept my assurance, however, that it

is an entire mistake. I have made careful inquiry of those best likely to know, and have searched through the official papers of the Society, but I find no traces whatever of any such extravagant demands. Our programme is exclusively confined to this one point, that single women and widows, being householders, and rated to the value of £10 in Boroughs, and £12 in Counties, should be entitled to record their votes for members of Parliament. Be pleased therefore to keep this question of Women's Suffrage entirely distinct from all that may be meant by that vague yet ominous expression, "Women's Rights." These "Rights," I believe, are generally understood to include the right of women to leave the fireside and the cradle, to don any article they please of male attire, to contend with man in every arena of public life, and, in short, to subvert all the old relations of the sexes, and introduce a new era when all our hens will be expected to crow, and matrimony will have gone out of fashion unless husbands are prepared to "knock under" and take charge of the babies, while their wives are making brilliant speeches on the platform! Now, it is quite possible that some who are working with us may go a considerable length in this direction. We might naturally calculate on their hearty sympathy, but, as an Association, we are not in any way committed to their extreme views, and, for my own part, I must express a strong repugnance to them. To me the question seems to admit of a very simple solution. Were men and women designed by creation for the same kinds of service, endowed with the same mental aptitudes, and fitted for the same species of success and distinction, or were they not? If the history of their formation teaches anything; if the facts brought out by daily experience prove anything; if organization reveals anything; if that law of the Divine operations, by which different contrivances imply a variety of purposes, establishes anything-they were not. Having this strong conviction, I feel able to look upon the present seething of opinion with much equanimity, and can bid you rest assured that the action of natural law, unaided by any mere artificial checks, will quite suffice to maintain the normal and healthy relations between men and women on which the welfare of society rests. The Poet Laureate, in fact, writing more than thirty years ago, anticipated all that subsequent thought and experience would suggest in those noble lines:—

"The woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free:

Leave her then space to burgeon out of all Within her—let her make herself her own To give or keep, to live and learn and be All that not harms distinctive womanhood. For woman is not undevelop'd man, But diverse: could we make her as the man, Sweet love were slain: his dearest bond is this, Not like to like, but like in difference. Yet in the long years liker must they grow; The man be more of woman, she of man; He gain in sweetness and in moral height, Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world; She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care, Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind: Till at the last she set herself to man, Like perfect music unto noble words; And so these twain, upon the skirts of Time, Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers, Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be, Self-reverent each and reverencing each, Distinct in individualities, But like each other even as those who love."

DEBATE ON THE WOMEN'S DISABILITIES BILL.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30TH, 1873.

SPEECH

OF

JACOB BRIGHT, ESQ., M.P.

Published by the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, 9, Berners Street, London, W.

1873.
PRICE ONE PENNY.

SPEECH.

Mr. Jacob Bright said: Mr. Speaker,—Sir, in rising to move the second reading of this Bill I am the last person to forget that it has already been three times rejected by the House. It might therefore be said, in fact it has already been asked, "why bring it forward again? Why not wait until another election before troubling Parliament again with a discussion upon this measure?" I think that powerful reasons may be given why I should not be influenced by that advice. In the first place it is a mistake to suppose that the same House of Commons which rejects a Bill will never consent to pass it. I could give many instances of greater or less importance to show that that is not the case. The Parliament which placed Sir Robert Peel in power in the year 1841 was a conspicuous example. In that Parliament my right hon. friend, the member for Wolverhampton (Mr. C. P. Villiers) asked again and again that the Corn Laws might be repealed, and over and over again the House of Commons rejected my right hon. friend's proposition. But in the year 1846 the same House of Commons which had refused to listen to him passed a measure repealing the Corn Laws. Then again in 1866 the House of Commons which refused to pass the £7 Franchise Bill, in the year 1867 gave us a franchise Bill of a much wider character. It may be said, however, that on the occasions to which I have referred there was an irresistible outside pressure which does not exist in regard to this Bill. It is perfectly true that no such outside pressure does or ever can exist with regard to this Bill, but, sir, there is a pressure before which the House might yield with quite as much dignity as it showed in yielding on the occasions to which I have referred; namely, the pressure of accumulating reasons which receive no answer, the pressure of opinion in favour of this Bill which is gradually growing

in volume, and which I think many hon. members will admit is making itself felt in their constituencies. I see my hon. friend the member for Bath on my left, and if he should speak during the course of this debate, perhaps he will tell the House what is the state of feeling in his constituency upon this question, because I noticed that the two candididates who came forward to contest the vacant seat for that constituency, both the Liberal and the Conservative candidate, have, as I am informed, given in their adhesion to this question—not that they were much if at all in favour of it before they came forward as candidates, but because they found that the opinion in the city of Bath is so strongly in favour of the principle of this Bill that they felt themselves bound to accept it. If, however, in giving notice of the second reading of this Bill I had been perfectly sure that the House would again reject it, I should not have deviated from the course which I have taken. We are accustomed in this House to discuss a Bill, to vote upon it, again and again endeavouring to carry it if we can, but if we fail to carry it we know that we have accomplished something else. We have taken the best means in our power to instruct the people upon a great public question. The substance of this debate will be carefully reported in the newspapers, the report will go to every town and village in the United Kingdom, and to every English-speaking country under British rule, and therefore we shall secure that, for at least one day in the year, there will be a general discussion on a question so deeply affecting the interests and privileges of a large portion of Her Majesty's subjects. But there is another reason for bringing forward this Bill, and which I think justifies me in again asking the House to discuss it. No year passes by in this country without producing changes which affect the position of a public question; changes which tend either to hasten or to retard the period of its settlement. Well, sir, such a change took place last year when the Ballot Bill was passed, and I think no one will be more willing to admit that than the hon. gentleman opposite, the member for the University of Cambridge. Men are no longer subject to criticism in giving their votes; they are not answerable to the public or to their neighbours. They have complete irresponsibility. Before the passing of the Ballot Act it was said that a vote was held in trust for those who had it not. That doctrine has been swept away. Now, two millions of men vote in secrecy and in silence. Women are driven further than ever into the political shade, and are more thoroughly severed from political influence than they ever were before. And, sir, if I needed any corroboration of this I need only point to the countless speeches which have been made in

this House to show that this view is correct. The passing of the Ballot Bill, then, has strengthened the claim of women to the Parliamentary franchise. But it has also done another thing. It has removed some objections to the proposed change. We were told that there was great turbulence on the day of election, and that there were scenes of such a disreputable character that no right-minded man would desire a woman to partake in them. The Ballot has now been tried in the largest as well as the smallest of the constituencies. It has been tried in England, in Scotland, and in Ireland, and whatever else it may have accomplished we have found that it has succeeded in securing peace and order at the poll. I believe no one will deny that a woman can now go to the polling booth and return from it with far greater ease than she experiences in making her way out of a theatre or a concert room. Anyone having introduced a Bill into this House very naturally looks with interest to the views of the leaders of the House upon that Bill, and although the right hon. gentleman the Prime Minister is unfortunately not in his place, I am entitled to make a few remarks upon his altered position in regard to this question. Two years ago the right hon. gentleman acknowledged that women ought to have a share in political representation; he made an objection to the personal attendance of women at the poll. That seemed to me to be the right hon. gentleman's chief difficulty. The Prime Minister also referred to the Ballot, and said he was as yet uncertain what effect it would have, whether it would produce order at elections or not. If the right hon, gentleman was here I think he would admit that the Ballot has had the effect of producing order at elections, and he would be no longer able to object to the personal attendance of women at an election upon that ground. The right hon, gentleman spoke of the representation of women in Italy, where it is understood they vote by proxy, and said if something of the sort could be contrived for this country he should not object to take such a proposal into consideration; but if women were to vote by proxy they would lose the protection of the Ballot; for, so far as I know, no one can vote by proxy and vote in secret. It appears to me, sir, now that the Ballot has become law, that the speech which the Prime Minister made two years ago puts him in such a position with regard to this question as to render it very difficult for him to say a single word against it again. There is another Bill before the House of Commons which deals with the Parliamentary franchise, and which is in the hands of my hon. friend the member for the Border Burghs (Mr. G. O. Trevelyan). That Bill proposes to equalise the county with the borough franchise,

and if it is carried will give an addition of 1,000,000 voters, whereas this Bill will give an addition of from 200,000 to 300,000 voters. I acknowledge the justice of this Bill of my hon. friend, but if justice demands that 1,000,000 of men should be added to the register, which already contains the names of 2,000,000, justice even more urgently demands the admission of 300,000 women, seeing that up to this time women have not a particle of representation. Now there are members in this House—political friends of mine—sitting near me at the present moment, who are pledged to support the Bill of the hon. member for the Border Burghs, but who persistently vote against this Bill, and yet, so far as I have been able to ascertain, there is not a single argument that has ever been used, or that ever will be used with regard to the County Franchise Bill which does not tell even with greater weight with regard to this Bill. The position occupied by those Liberal members who support the one measure and vote against the other seems to me to be one of great inconsistency; I am bound to say that they have not satisfactorily explained their conduct. We have been told that it is a great anomaly to give votes to persons on one side of the borough line and to refuse them to those whose houses are situated on the other side of the borough line; but, sir, I wish to bring about a state of representative equality between persons who are separated by no line whatever, but who are citizens of the same community. My attention was called the other day to a row of 20 substantial houses in a street in Manchester, and I was told that 16 of those houses had votes, 16 of those families were represented in this House. They had control over the taxes which they were called upon to pay, and had an influence in the making of the laws which they were all bound to obey. But four out of those 20 houses had no votes, four of those families were unrepresented, and the only reason why those four families are unrepresented in this House is because the heads of those four families are women. Now, sir, in municipal matters, and with regard to the School Board elections women, so far as voting is concerned, are placed in exactly the same position as men; and I must remind the House that women have been put in that position by Parliament because they have an equal interest with men in municipal and School Board questions. Those votes were given to women with the consent of the Liberal members of this House, and they were given for the reason which I have stated. But a more powerful reason exists why women should be entitled to a Parliamentary vote. We do not deal here simply with local taxation. We deal with the interests of men and women in the widest possible way; their property, their lives and

liberties are under our control, and hence the necessity of that protection which the franchise alone confers. When this County Franchise Bill comes in we shall be told that the vote will have a considerable influence upon the condition of the agricultural labourer, that it will have an effect upon legislation favourable to him. The land laws and the game laws will have to be dealt with; in fact if the County Franchise Bill becomes law the condition of the agricultural labourer will assume an importance hitherto unknown. All this is true, but will any hon, gentleman say that it is not equally true with regard to the Bill which I hold in my hand. I cannot discuss this question without referring to the County Franchise Bill. I am bound to refer to it because I want to know why that Bill is to be supported and this rejected. I do not want to be put off with reasons that will not bear reflection, but I should like to have reasons given that will have some weight with those who are agitating this question out of doors. It is a common belief on this side of the House, that should the Government meet another session of Parliament the County Franchise Bill will be one of their principal measures. Well, sir, how will the Prime Minister be able to accept that Bill and reject this. It has been said that when he once takes up a position he never goes back. I have explained the position which he has taken with regard to this Bill. He said, two years ago, "that the law does less than justice to women," and added, "if it shall be found possible to arrange a safe and well-adjusted alteration of the law as to political power, the man who shall attain that object will be a real benefactor to his country." That is the language of the Prime Minister. The Bill before the House is supported by a powerful organization. The petitions and public meetings in its favour grow from year to year. The inequalities in the law between men and women, owing to the fact that women are unrepresented in Parliament, are admitted on every hand. Over 200 members of the present Parliament have supported the Bill. These are considerations which should not be forgotten when the Government again undertakes to improve the representation of the people. There are many landowners in this House. If the County Franchise Bill ever passes through Parliament it must be with the consent of the landowners. If there be any of them present now I would like to ask them whether they think it right to give a vote to the agricultural labourer and to deny a vote to the farmer? The census of 1861 shows that there were about 250,000 farmers and graziers in England and Wales, and one-eleventh part of that number were women. The proportion of women farmers would be still greater if women did not labour under political disabilities. In England and Wales there are no fewer than 22,708 women

ladies who are able to meet the difficulties and expenses of Chancery, but with regard to the poorer class of women the measure will be of little use. (Hear, hear.) When I am told that women do not care for a vote I am reminded that two or three weeks ago a friend of mine informed me that he had been talking to a lady of high position in this country. He questioned her as to what she thought of the subject of women's rights. Her reply was "All I know is that I have no wrongs." This was told me that I might reflect upon it and see the error of my position. Sir, I did reflect upon it, and I came to this conclusion, that if that lady, instead of being surrounded by all that can make life happy and even brilliant, had been in different circumstances—if she had been seeking to obtain admittance into an educational institution which she was taxed to support but which shut its doors upon her-if she had been the widow of a farmer and had lost her home and her occupation because she could not vote—if her small property had been dissipated because it was too small to bear the expenses of a settlement and the trouble of a trust; or if she had happened to have lost her husband and a stranger had stepped in and deprived her of all authority over her children, requiring that they should be educated in a faith which was not her own-if that lady had been so placed as to have been the victim of any of these circumstances I think that she would not have been able to declare that she had no wrongs. (Cheers.) And if the members of this House were enabled to look at this question through the eyes of the humble classes—those women who have to meet the difficult struggles of life—I believe it would not be necessary year after year to ask that this moderate Bill should be passed into law; but that on the contrary a single session would suffice to bring about the result we desire. (Cheers.) I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

DEBATE ON THE WOMEN'S DISABILITIES BILL.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30TH, 1873.

SPEECH

OF

PROFESSOR FAWCETT, M.P.

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PRICE ONE PENNY

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Mr. FAWCETT: As my name is appended to the petition, and as I have not spoken upon the subject since the Bill was first introduced, I trust that the House will allow me to make a few remarks. With regard to the speech of the hon. member for the University of Cambridge (Mr. Beresford Hope), it is only necessary for me to say with reference to the petition to which he has very pointedly alluded, that I believe I have authority to state that there is not a single member of the University who signed that petition who is not perfectly satisfied with the way in which it has been got up, and the matter which it contains. He says it is objectionable that the petition should have been sent to him by a lady who called herself secretary of the London Society for promoting this cause. Now as one of those who signed the petition I must say that I do not think it could be entrusted to better hands than the hands of this lady, especially when I know she is the daughter of one of the most distinguished members of the University which the hon, member represents. I have only one other remark to make in reference to his speech. He says that if women had votes they would be withdrawn from their domestic duties, and that it would be impossible for them to devote the time necessary to enable them to study public questions. Now, in the name of common sense, does he wish us to believe that every man who has a vote is drawn away from the pursuits of his life and from his ordinary daily labour—that an artizan working in a mill—a barrister practising in a court—a doctor attending his patients, cannot properly study public questions without neglecting their ordinary employment. Allow me upon this subject to repeat an anecdote which was related to me a few minutes ago by an hon. member sitting near me, who represents a northern borough. It will show that the male electors who have votes, are not often, unfortunately, even in their leisure moments, engaged in

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women do not ask for this Bill, and that a great number of them are opposed to it. If this Bill contemplated making a woman vote who did not wish to vote, it would not find a more resolute opponent in this House than myself. But when you say that a majority of women are opposed to it, I say that it is impossible to prove it; and I say further, that the same argument, in an analagous case, you did not accept as complete. I remember perfectly well, when I first came into this House, that I heard it stated again and again that the majority of the working classes of this country were not in favour of the extension of the suffrage. It was said that it was only the active politicians among them, just as it is now said that it is only the active women agitators who are in favour of this Bill. Now, what do we observe? No doubt it never could be proved that a majority of the working classes were in favour of the extension of the suffrage, and any more than it can be proved now that a majority of the agricultural labourers are in favour of household suffrage in counties; and yet it was again and again stated that the majority of the working classes were in favour of household suffrage. The House soon after that recognised the justice of the claim for an extension of the suffrage to the artizan class, by having once recognised the abstract justice of the plea. But the argument which no doubt produced the most influence on the House is this, that at the present time the interests of women are far better looked after by men than they would be looked after by themselves; and it is said by the Home Secretary that if you could only prove to him that women's questions of a vitally interesting nature were treated with injustice in this House, it would be a conclusive argument in favour of voting for the Bill. Nothing could be further from my mind than to accuse this House of consciously doing anything which is unjust or wrong to women, but women and men may have very different views of what is best for women, and our position is this, that according to the principles of representative government it is only fair that women should be able to give expression to their wishes on measures likely to affect their interests. Take for instance the case of educational endowments. The Endowed Schools Commissioners have again and again said that one feeling they found prevalent in the towns is, that educational endowments should be so used that the wants of every boy should be satisfied before any attention is paid to the wants of women. What right have we to suppose that this is the opinion of women on this subject, considering their enthusiasm for education? What right have we to suppose that if they could exercise power in this House they would not demand an equal share in the educational endowments of the country? I wish to direct the attention

of the House to what seems to me a most important argument on this subject. Hitherto the question has been treated too much as if it simply concerned women of property. Now, you say that men can be safely entrusted to legislate for womenthat men can be safely entrusted in the constituencies to represent the wants of women. I say that any one who studies the industrial history of the country-any one who looks to what trades unions have done-cannot for a moment believe in this conclusion. What are the arguments in favour of trades unions. I am not opposed to trades unions. One of the first speeches I ever made was in their favour, but at the same time I do not conceal their defects. It has been again and again asserted that without the power of combining in trades unions it would be impossible for workmen to obtain a proper reward for their labour, and that it would be impossible to secure their just rights. This is their deliberate conviction asserted a thousand times over. But have they ever admitted a woman to these trade unions? They have almost invariably excluded women, and although they say that without these combinations it is impossible for labour to obtain its just reward, they take very good care to exclude women from them. I have known, on several occasions, when a trades union has organised a strike, that when the women who had had no voice in deciding upon the strike showed themselves anxious to take advantage of the labour market, the trades unionists stood outside the shops to keep women away from doing men's work. What took place in the Potteries? It is perfectly well known that for years and years men were so jealous of the competition of women labourers that they made it a rule in the trades union that the whole force of the union should be used to prevent women from using the hand-rest which the men invariably avail themselves of, and which greatly facilitates the rapidity and precision of the work. Let us look to our legislation for the future, and I ask the House calmly to consider whether looking at some of the measures likely to be brought forward, it is not of essential importance that we should take the opinion of women upon them. Probably there is no social measure existing in connection with the manufacturing districts which is of so much interest at the present time as the Nine Hours Bill, introduced by the hon. member for Sheffield (Mr. Mundella). I have no doubt that the hon. member has introduced that Bill with the purest motives; it is a Bill that affects vitally the interests of the unrepresented classes. Now what is this Bill? It is a Bill that limits the labour of women to nine hours a day. What must be the inevitable result of that Bill? It must do one of two things-either impose a legislative limit of nine hours a day over all

studying public affairs, but that they sometimes occupy themselves with much less honourable pursuits. I think that the anecdote will forcibly illustrate the injustice of the present system. My hon, friend told me that at a recent election, when he was canvassing the borough he represents, he, and a distinguished member of this House, who was then his colleague, in endeavouring to find two of the electors they wished to canvass, discovered them sotting in a public house. In fact they were drunk, and were certainly not devoting their leisure moments to the study of politics. After my hon, friend had an interview with his two drunken constituents, and was leaving them, a woman came out of her house and said, "I have paid rates for twenty years. How can you say that I ought not to have a vote when you have just been soliciting the votes of these two drunken men?" "Well," my hon. friend said, "I think what you say is very reasonable," and ever since then he has been a consistent supporter of this Bill. I wish now, in a few words, to refer to the speech of the right hon. gentleman, the Home Secretary. I am not going to be drawn into a discussion as to the relative ability of men and women. It is not necessary to assert that men and women are intellectually equal in all respects. Nobody can express an opinion on the point until the experiment has been fairly tried, and it never yet has been fairly tried. Give women the same opportunities for intellectual development as men, and then, and not till then, shall we be able to say what they can do. I was certainly astonished to hear the Home Secretary say that no woman had ever been a great painter. Did he forget Rosa Bonheur? He said further, that no woman had ever been a great musical composer. He is not perhaps aware, I think it came out afterwards by accident, of a story that shows that women do not always receive their due deserts. Women do their work quietly, and many a man who has attained great success would never have filled so distinguished a position if it had not been that some woman had helped him. Upon this very question of musical composition it has come out that one of the most admired pieces attributed to Mendelssohn was entirely the composition of his sister. That great composer also admitted that she had helped him in his other works to an extent which he could not describe. I must confess that the Home Secretary astonished me very considerably by going into an historical argument, in which he seemed to think that he had discovered, as a reason why women should not have votes, that it was men who had always defended the country, and that it was the barons who obtained the Magna Charta from King John. If this argument is worth anything it certainly amounts to this, that no one should have votes

except barons and soldiers. Repeating the argument of the right hon. member for Kilmarnock (Mr. Bouverie), the Home Secretary said, the great argument against the Bill of my hon. friend was that if it were carried it would ultimately lead to the giving of votes to married women and to women taking seats in this house. Before I reply to that argument let me say that it is an old one. Never was there a great change proposed, or a great measure of reform brought forward, but that some "bogey" was immediately called up to alarm and terrify us. When Catholic emancipation was proposed and it was advocated that Catholics should have seats in this House, one of the favourite arguments of the opponents of the proposal was, that if the Catholics were admitted to this House there was no reason why a Catholic should not sit upon the throne. One of the favourite arguments used by the opponents of household suffrage was that if household suffrage were granted there was only one other step, and that was manhood suffrage. We have not been intimidated or frightened by arguments such as this, but it seems to me that the Home Secretary and the right hon. member for Kilmarnock are indulging in doctrines which are dangerous, when they assume to think that property is no longer to be the basis of the qualification for a vote in this country. The right hon. member for Kilmarnock quoted with commendation a saying of the democratic Benjamin Franklin, that it is idle to suppose that property possesses the exclusive right to the franchise. Without presuming too confidently to predict what will happen, I have no hesitation in saying that these words of the right hon. gentleman the member for Kilmarnock, will next Easter Monday be quoted with rapturous applause, when 60,000 men gather together on the Town Moor at Newcastle to demand manhood suffrage. There is no logical reason why married women should not have votes if you demand manhood suffrage. But we who support this Bill do not wish to declare that we desire that the franchise should be based upon any other condition than it is based upon at the present moment, namely, property. Unless a woman can obtain a vote by property we do not wish to do anything either to admit her or to exclude her. It is therefore you who, if you throw this argument of property aside, will be lending an assistance to the agitation in favour of manhood suffrage which I believe you will heartily repent. I wish now, as briefly as possible, to go through the leading arguments which have been advanced in the debate upon this Bill. The reasons in its favour have been stated so often, and I am anxious to occupy as little as possible of the time of the House, that it appears to me to be the fairer course to deal with the arguments against rather than those in favour of the Bill. The first argument is that the majority of

the country—and in that case call it a general Nine Hours Bill, or it must inevitably place the most serious restrictions and impediments upon the employment of women. For how can a manufacturer, unless he employs women on the principle of half-time, say that directly the nine hours are up, every woman must leave, and then let the mill go on working for another hour or two without a woman being employed? The inevitable result will be to place grievous impediments in the way of the employment of women, and before we sanction such a measure it certainly seems to me that women should be consulted. It is, in my opinion, of the utmost importance that their opinion should be consulted. I am bound in candour to say—I don't know whether the sentiment is popular or not-that, looking to the past industrial history of the country, and seeing what the trades unionists have sometimes done to women, I am not certain that there is not at the bottom of the movement a feeling which is prompted by the jealousy of men with regard to the labour of women. But there is an argument, perhaps not avowed in this House, that is, nevertheless, producing a great influence upon the Liberal members, and it is one to which I wish particularly to direct the attention of hon. members. I have heard it said again and again, by Liberal friends of mine, that they cannot vote for this Bill because they think one of its consequences would be to hinder the disestablishment of the Church. They are of opinion that the majority of women are opposed to disestablishment, and that if this Bill is passed it will put back that question fifty years. I am anxious to speak on this subject, because I have always been in favour of disestablishment, and I shall always be in favour of it. But although these are my sentiments, it certainly seems to me to be an injustice of the grossest possible kind if we for one moment sanction the exclusion of women simply because we feel that they are so much in favour of the continuance of the Church that if they could exercise their vote the establishment of the Church would continue. Would it not be an injustice, almost amounting to a fraud, if the Church were disestablished on the plea that just a bare majority of the electors were in favour of disestablishment, when, at the same time, we believe that the feeling of women in favour of establishment is so great that the majority of the men would represent only a minority of the whole nation, and that taking men and women together the majority is not in favour of disestablishment but of establishment? It may of course be said that in some questions the opinion of men is more important than that of women, and that the opinion of 100,000 men in favour of a particular proposal represents more weight than the opinion of 100,000 women

against it. But can you say this with regard to such a question as the Church, or the question of the Nine Hours' Bill, or others I might enumerate? Surely you cannot say it with regard to the Church, for the spiritual welfare of women is of just as much importance as the spiritual welfare of men, and in a question whether the Church should be continued as an established Church or not the opinion of women ought to exercise the greatest amount of influence upon us. We ought to endeavour to trace out what is the effect of the Church establishment upon the great mass of the people, and to whom would you go to obtain this opinion? It seems to me that if I wished to ascertain what is the effect which the Church is producing at the present time I should go to those who are most practically acquainted with its working—those who see most clearly its influence among the poor—and I believe they are women and not men. Now, however much I may be in favour of disestablishment, it seems to me that to exclude women from the vote, simply because we think it would delay the reform we desire, is sanctioning a principle which is essentially unfair—essentially unjust—and is just as unreasonable as if the Church party were to try to disfranchise the Nonconformists because the Nonconformists have tried to disestablish them. It seems to me, further, that you cannot rest the exclusion of women upon the ground that they are unfit intellectually for the franchise. Last year you did that which showed conclusively that in your opinion, however unfit intellectually they might be to vote, yet if they possessed a certain property qualification they ought to have a vote. You cast to the winds the idea of anything like intellectual fitness when you were occupied night after night in elaborating various schemes for securing the representation of the illiterate voter. It is evident, I think, that "coming events cast their shadows before." I infer from the speech of the Home Secretary that the Government are about to join the Liberal members at this end of the House in support of the Bill of my hon. friend the member for the Border Boroughs (Mr. Trevelyan) in favour of giving the agricultural labourer a vote. But if we enfranchise the agricultural labourer, and refuse to give a vote to women, we shall be landed in this dilemma—we shall declare that although the labourer, however ignorant, ought to have a vote, no woman, however intellectual, ought to enjoy it. I will only in conclusion allude to one thing which, no doubt, has greatly prejudiced this Bill. It has so happened that my hon. friend the member for Manchester has been identified with another agitation, and it has also happened that many persons who are advocates of this Bill outside this House have also been identified with that agitation in favour of the repeal of the

Contagious Diseases Acts. It appears to me singularly unfair to let such a consideration as this in the least degree influence our decision. It would be just as unfair as it would be to let our decision be influenced on any question that can be brought forward by my hon. friend the member for Carlisle (Sir Wilfrid Lawson), because he happens to be identified with the Permissive Bill. I can only say that many of those who support this Bill differ fundamentally from the views held by the hon. member for Manchester in reference to the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts; and many of those who are the strongest advocates of the Women's Disabilities Bill outside the House are also opposed to the manner in which the agitation against the Contagious Diseases Acts has been conducted. Now I will only say in reply to the argument of the right hon. member for Kilmarnock that he seems to think that those who support this Bill wish to make women less womanly. If the right hon. gentleman can convince me that giving them a vote would make them in any respect less womanly, or men less manly, I would immediately vote against the Bill. He concluded by quoting a sentence from Addison, in which he says that the glory of a state consists in the modesty of women and the courage of men. I have yet to learn that this Bill is calculated to make women less modest; and I have also yet to learn that giving women a vote can in the slightest degree diminish the courage of men. It is probable, nay, almost certain, that this measure will not be accepted on the present occasion. I believe that the feeling in its favour is growing. I believe, if there are no more solid reasons than those which have been advanced against it to-day, it is certain to stand the trial of free discussion. It is possible that women exaggerate the advantages which the passing of this Bill will confer upon them, but I am most firmly convinced that the other consequences which are attributed to it by the opponents of the measure are infinitely more exaggerated.

THE POSITION OF WORKING WOMEN, AND HOW TO IMPROVE 1T.

It is seldom disputed that the rate of wages paid to women is, in many occupations, disgracefully low. This may not be so glaringly the case in the great mills and factories of the North, but, in addition to cases which privately come to the knowledge of everyone, disclosures are not unfrequently made in the newspapers, showing how sadly many working women need some improvement in their position.

Not long ago a case appeared in the London papers which must have horrified all who read it. A woman had been working in a white-lead factory near London; the factory was three or four miles from her lodging; she had to walk to and fro morning and night. She could not pay the smallest amount for riding, nor provide herself with proper food, for her wages were but 9s. per week for work occupying twelve hours each day. She bravely battled with her difficulties for some time, and managed to keep alive herself and three children, but, at last, nature could hold out no longer; she died, and her death, leaving the children unprotected, brought to light the fearful tale. Had she supported herself only, the facts might never have been known.

Not only are women frequently paid half, or less than half, for doing work as well and as quickly as men. The following statement, made by a large manufacturer on the occasion of a recent deputation to the Home Secretary, shows that they are sometimes paid much lower wages for superior work: "Skilled women, whose labour required delicacy of touch, the result of long training as well as thoughtfulness, received from 11s. to 16s., and 17s: a week, whilst the roughest unskilled labour of a man was worth at least 18s."—("Times," March 27).

Employers alone are not to blame for the evils of underpayment. There are many just and right-minded employers who would gladly

pay their workwomen a fair rate of wages; but, however willing they may be to do this, they are almost powerless so long as the women themselves make no stir in the matter. If they were to pay higher wages whilst other less scrupulous employers could, without difficulty, obtain the services of women at about a third or fourth of the fair payment, they would simply be unable to carry on business, because the unscrupulous employers would be able, by paying less for labour, to undersell them in the market. Employers have been known to express their regret that they could not pay their workers better wages because those workers made no efforts in that direction.

The present isolated position of working women reacts injuriously on their prospects in many indirect, as well as direct, ways. The object of this paper is to endeavour to point out some of these evils, and to urge on the earnest attention of all concerned in the question that which the writer believes to be the only true remedy for them. One important example of the indirect evils which now threaten serious results to women's power of self support is the aspect of working men towards women's labour, and their desire to place upon it legislative restrictions.

So long as women are unprotected by any kind of combination, and are consequently wholly at the mercy of employers for the rate of their wages and the length of their working hours, working men not unnaturally look with suspicion on their employment in trades in some branches of which men are engaged. The fear that the employment of women will lower their wages has led the men to pass rules in many of their trade societies positively forbidding their members to work with women.

They have also carried on and are still continuing, an agitation, in which they are aided by many benevolent persons who desire to improve the position of women, in support of a Bill now before Parliament, to limit the hours of women's work in factories and workshops. This Bill is intended to apply also to children, with whom working women are classed, thus conveying and endeavouring to perpetuate, the idea that women are entirely unable to protect themselves, a position, to a certain extent, degraded and injurious.

Women, more than ever, urgently need the protection afforded by combination, as it is possible that, if these suggested restrictions become law, further legislation in the same direction may be proposed, and at present the women affected by it have no means of making known their collective opinion on the subject.

There can be no doubt that it is desirable, in many cases, to shorten the hours during which women work, but if this is done by legislative enactments instead of by the combined action of the workers themselves, the result may merely be the reduction of wages, already often insufficient, and sometimes complete exclusion from work, thus becoming, in place of protection, a real and grievous oppression. Where there is combined action among the workers, as in the case of men, it has been clearly seen, of late years, that no such legislation is necessary.

It is true that working men, who are joining in these well-meant but mistaken endeavours to improve the position of working women, might offer the same kind of protection which they themselves adopt. They might invite women to join their trade unions, or assist them to form similar societies. But they do not seem to be inclined to do this. At three successive annual congresses of leaders and delegates of trade unions, the need of womens' unions has been brought before them, and each time some one present has asserted that women cannot form unions. The only ground for this assertion appears to be that women have not yet formed unions. Probably they have not done so, because they have not quite seen how to set about it.

The following is an outline of a plan, in some respects similar to that of the "National Agricultural Labourers' Union," for a general organisation of working women. This organisation might ultimately be divided up into societies of different trades, but, at first, it appears desirable to make the basis of operations as general and the rules as simple as possible:—

- 1. A central council or board, having branches composed of workers in any trade all over the country.
- 2. The name of the association to be the "National Protective and Benefit Union of Working Women."
- 3. A branch to consist of not less than twelve persons. Intima tion of a wish to form a branch to be made to the central council, by whom the following form would be forwarded:—

We, the undersigned, agree to form a branch of the "National Protective and Benefit Union of Working

Women," in	
and we hereby appoint	1
to act as secretary, and	
to act as treasurer to the branch,	

18

NAME. ADDRESS. TRADE.

- 4. On the return of the form, a supply of membership forms and cards, rules and subscription books, to be sent to the person named as secretary of the branch.
- 5. Subscriptions to be paid to a secretary of a branch each week, and payment acknowledged in the members' subscription books. In the first instance, until district boards could be formed, the secretary of each branch should be required to forward members' payments once every month to the central council, with a list of the names and addresses of the members paying. A detailed receipt would be returned to the secretary, which she should be required to produce on application, for the satisfaction of the members.
- 6. The subscription to be $1\frac{1}{2}d$, per week, and the entrance fee $4\frac{1}{2}d$,

- 7. The entrance fees to be devoted to the working expenses of the society, including cost of printing the rules, subscription cards and forms, with which the branch members and secretaries would be supplied. Any surplus at the end of each year to be paid over to the benefit fund.
- 8. The subscription fees to be deposited in a bank in the name of the society, at interest, as a fund for benefit and trade purposes, by trustees appointed by the central council, whose names and position would be sufficient guarantee against fraud. The subscriptions not to be drawn upon for any working expenses. The entrance fees to be deposited in a separate fund, and to be drawn upon by the treasurer, by written order of the central council only.
- 9. No member to be entitled to receive sick or out of work benefits until she has paid subscriptions for six months; the sum then granted to depend on the amount of funds accumulated.
- 10. Strict investigation to be made into applications for benefit payments.

It must be borne in mind that the main object in view is to accustom women to the idea of union. If this object is once gained more elaborate plans may before long be found necessary, and, as a knowledge of the strength of each trade in certain localities is arrived at, classified unions of women will be more practicable. To give an idea of the strength of working women as regards numbers, four trades may be mentioned which it may be hoped could ultimately support separate unions:—

Tailoresses (number in England and Wales, shown by Census Returns of 1871) ... 38,021

Earthenware manufacture , ... 15,953

Straw plait manufacture , ... 45,270

Bookbinders ... , ... 7,557

A general union, as a commencement, would afford excellent facilities for the formation of separate unions. By the classification

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of the different trades of the members by the central council, it would readily be seen when a sufficient number of members of one trade were enrolled to make a union of that trade strong enough to stand alone. There are now in New York some very successful unions consisting of, and managed entirely by, working women. Two of the largest are the "Parasol and Umbrella-makers' Union," and the "Women's Typographical Union."

The advantages of a general union at the first onset are very considerable, as by its means those women who were tolerably well paid would help those who were very badly paid. If the well paid and the ill paid workers were to form separate unions, the ill-paid ones would be at a much greater disadvantage than if they belonged to a union having a far larger number of members than they could muster alone.

By way of encouragement, women may be reminded of what has been done by that, until recently, worst paid and most isolated class of men, the agricultural labourers. A movement, commenced amongst them only three years ago, has already developed into a powerful society, numbering about 150,000 members. Many labourers, who were earning wages only just above starvation rates, have now increased their earnings by one third or more. If men whose circumstances were so unfavourable to combination as those of most agricultural labourers, have been successful in this effort, there is every reason to hope for the success of unions of women.

There is one point with regard to the low wages of women which may here be referred to. Any remarks on this subject are often met by a reply involving a common fallacy, viz., that "all cheap production is a benefit to the producers." Does it, however, benefit women, or indeed men either, that cigars, for instance, should be made for 4d. per 100, the price paid, according to the "Beehive" newspaper, to some female cigar makers; or that the production of cartridges, in which women are largely employed, should be cheapened; or that artificial flowers should be sold at $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per spray; that paper boxes for collars should be sold at so low a price that they are wasted and thrown away as of no value; or that jewel cases can be procured at a very small cost? Even in the case of articles of direct use to working women, cheap production is of but little more benefit. Wages of from 6s. to 12s. per week leave a very small margin for any purchases beyond those of the bare necessaries of life—food and fuel—and are often insufficient for a proper supply of these. Cheap production, which involves, for the producers, want, degradation, and even, occasionally, starvation; or which, when starvation is avoided, throws them upon the poor rates for maintenance, can surely not be beneficial to them or to the community.

At present only two advantages of union have been enlarged upon in this paper: the means of raising wages and of shortening hours of labour.

But were the position of working women all that could be desired with respect to both wages and hours of work, there are other benefits of union of the greatest importance. One of these is the means afforded for help in times of sickness or of temporary depression of trade. Women have suffered deeply from the want of such assistance.

At a time of great slackness of trade among the bookbinders, in 1871, caused by a delay in passing through the House of Commons the revised Prayer-book, it was stated that during sixteen months two of the men's unions had paid £2,500 in relieving their unemployed members, but that the women in the trade, having no union to fall back upon, had suffered the greatest distress.

The "Female Umbrella-makers Union of New York" has paid for sick benefits alone, during the three years of its existence, over 1,000 dollars (£200).) One member, a widow, was supported entirely by the union, during an illness lasting two years.

The union might also afford valuable aid to its members by instituting enquiries, by means of the central council, into any cases of imposition or fraud which might be brought to the notice of the council. There are many gentlemen who would probably be willing to assist such an association by giving legal advice in these cases. The Working Women's Protective Union of New York has taken up this work, and frequently with great success. In the case of machine workers, employers have sometimes refused to pay for the work, under the pretence of its being badly done, and have even required the forfeiture of the workers' deposit as compensation for pretended damage to the material. The union has investigated such cases, and, where expostulation with the employer has failed, has undertaken his prosecution at law. Such frauds are now becoming every day more rare in New York, because it is now known that a powerful society is ready to protect women in this way. So long as women do not combine they are powerless under dishonest treatment, because they are well known to be too poor to follow up the defrauders.

Another service the union might render is suggested by the mention of deposits required on work. Work women often find it very difficult to make these advances, and the union might assist its members either by lending the deposit money, or by becoming responsible for the return of the material.

Another important advantage is the feeling of strength and mutual sympathy and helpfulness afforded by close association with others in the same position and labouring under the same difficulties as ourselves. Out of such union, too, might grow many movements for still further improving the position of women, such as some kind of co-operative work-rooms, in which women, when temporarily out of employment, might find means of subsistence until they obtained permanent work; educational efforts, emigration clubs, reading-rooms, &c., &c.

The writer earnestly begs all persons interested in improving the social condition of women to communicate with her with a view to action in this matter, and especially invites information and suggestions from women engaged in trades.

EMMA A. PATERSON.

Address—

April, 1874.

MRS. PATERSON,

2, Brunswick Row,

Queen Square,

Bloomsbury, W.C.

LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY.

A REPLY

то

MR. FITZJAMES STEPHEN'S STRICTURES

NO

MR. J. S. MILL'S SUBJECTION OF WOMEN.

BY

LYDIA E. BECKER.

REPRINTED FROM THE "WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE JOURNAL."

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LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY.

The above words, which have hitherto been the motto of those who sought to establish the principles they affirm, have lately been adopted by an eminent man as the title of a book, the professed object of which is to oppose the development of the ideas they represent. The particular application of the principles implied by the words, which Mr. Fitzjames Stephen has set himself to controvert, is embodied in the writings of Mr. John Stuart Mill; and three books, the Essay on Liberty, the Subjection of Women, and the work on Utilitarianism, are selected as exemplifications of each of the three ideas from which Mr. Stephen feels himself impelled to express his "dissent in the strongest way."

We are not here concerned with the first and last of these subjects, although it appears to us that Mr. Stephen has not represented his opponent quite fairly, and has drawn inferences from the position he attributes to Mr. Mill which are not deducible from Mr. Mill's own language. We have never understood "Liberty" to mean—"the removal of all restraint on human conduct;" nor do we believe that Mr. Mill, or any disciple of what Mr. Stephen calls "The Religion of Humanity," interprets it in that sense. We think, also, that the method adopted by Mr. Stephen of drawing out a set of propositions in his own words, which he says are deducible from the work under consideration, and then setting himself to refute, not the original statements of his opponent, but

his own version of them, which to other eyes often appears strangely distorted, transcends the limits of fair controversy.

In reading Mr. Stephen's book one would think that he regarded liberty as a curse, and that he looked to restraint and coercion as the most effectual means of promoting the good of mankind. How such a faith is reconcilable with the profession of "Liberal" politics we leave to the next constituency which Mr. Stephen may canvass on such grounds to discover and determine. But there was a time when the trumpet gave forth a different sound. In 1862 the English law courts were called upon to decide a momentous issue in the cause of religious liberty. Dr. WILLIAMS, in the exercise of the freedom secured to the ministers of the Established Church, published an essay containing opinions then unpopular, and supposed by many to be contrary to law. He was prosecuted; and the penalty would have been deprivation of his living and his status as a beneficed clergyman. He was fortunate in an advocate who knew how to pierce the clouds of popular prejudice which had obscured the true issue, and to bring out the grand and fundamental principles on which the question hinged. Mr. FITZJAMES STEPHEN'S defence of Dr. WILLIAMS was subsequently published in a volume, and it doubtless formed an epoch in the mental history of all thoughtful persons into whose hands it fell, and who were previously unaware of the legal and historical facts on which the argument is based. Even at this distance of time, and when the immediate interest of the controversy has passed away, we turn to the book with renewed admiration for the noble thoughts and noble language in which it abounds. Freedom is its watchword. "Do not assume the functions "of a legislator, and that for the sake of restraining, and "not enlarging liberty." And he speaks of the cause he is

defending as "a cause which might dignify the greatest "genius that ever wore these robes, which might enlist the "warmest sympathies of the human heart, for it is the "cause of learning, of freedom, and of reason." We do not believe that the advocate will command these sympathies in an equal degree, when the cause he is defending is that of restraint, coercion, and force.

The portion of Mr. Stephen's later work with which we are most directly concerned is that in which he maintains the expediency of the legal subordination of one sex to the other. We advert to this, not because there is any novelty in the views advanced by Mr. Stephen, but because the grounds on which he bases his opinion are simply the old common-places; and it is instructive to find that so accomplished an advocate can neither discover any fresh arguments nor dress up the old ones in a logical manner. He says,—"The first point is to consider "whether it (i.e., the law) ought to treat them (i.e., men "and women) as equals, although, as I have shown, they "are not equals." Now, it appears to us that a fallacy underlies these words. The assumption implied in the question is that the law ought to treat as equals those only who are equals in moral, physical, and intellectual vigour. If this be so the law ought not to treat all men as equals, since there are among men all gradations of physical and intellectual vigour. But if the personal rights of all men are equal in all things that concern their individuality as men, notwithstanding all differences of personal strength and power, logic seems to demand that the personal rights of women and men shall be equal in all that concerns their individuality as human beings, notwithstanding any difference which may exist between them in physical strength. Another false assumption is that the recognition of equality before the law implies that the law is supposed to secure equality of condition among men, or as between men and women. But the equality for which we contend is aimed at no such conclusion. It is the equality which may be fairly demanded by those who are started on the race of life. It is the duty of the umpire in a race to see that all the competitors start on a footing of equality. It is no part of his duty to provide that they shall reach the goal in equal line.

Mr. Stephen has mentioned the inequality of age as one which is and which ought to be recognised by the law in bestowing unequal rights on persons of unequal age, and he places the inequality of sex on the same footing. But the inequality of rights between young and adult persons does not extend to all personal rights; there are certain rights secured to the youngest infant—to the unconscious babe-which the law protects as jealously as the rights of the strongest man. The law allows and secures property rights to the unborn child. The law protects with the highest sanction known to it the life of the new-born babe, equally with that of the full grown man. It is clear, therefore, that there are certain personal rights with which society and the law invest men at an age when they are utterly unable to assert or even comprehend them. If it were thought expedient to invest women with equal property rights with men, and with the electoral franchise, the law would be as competent to secure these rights to women—notwithstanding any inferiority in physical power—as it is to secure the property rights of infants, who are infinitely weaker than women, but who are in this respect treated by the law as the e quals of the strongest men.

The legal disabilities, founded on inequality of age, differ so essentially from those founded on inequality of sex, that no argument can be drawn from expediency in one case as to expediency in the other. The same essentially inherent personal rights are recognised in men of

all ages—but during the period when their faculties are immature they are disabled from the exercise of functions which require a certain degree of maturity of powers for their due performance. An infant cannot divest himself of property, or bind himself by contract; these disabilities are imposed for his own protection. An infant cannot exercise the franchise; this disability is imposed for the benefit of the State, which rightly requires, as a qualification for the suffrage, a presumed age of discretion for its exercise. No inference can be drawn from the fact that " perhaps a third or more of the average duration of human " life—and that the portion of it in which the strongest, "the most durable, and beyond all comparison the most " important impressions are made on human beings, the "period when character is formed-must be passed by " every one in a state of submission, dependence, and "obedience to orders"; to the conclusion that half of the human race should remain throughout their whole lives. in a condition of subjection. The influence exercised by this state of tutelage and obedience on the mind of an individual who knows that it is but the preparation for a period of his life when he shall become independent, and even be called upon to assume towards others the attitude of commander or guardian, will be widely different from that exercised on the mind of one who is brought up in the faith that it is a natural and permanent condition. There may be differences of opinion as to the duties and responsibilities which ought to be imposed by the State on men and women, just as there may be with regard to different classes of men; but there is an essential diversity of principle between those who would class women, as to personal rights, with children, who are necessarily in a state of tutelage, and those who would class them with men, who are dealt with as competent to direct their own actions and affairs. The question at issue between Mr. MILL and Mr. Stephen in this controversy is simply whether women are human beings with the full rights and responsibilities of humanity, or whether they are a superior kind of inferior beings, whose personal rights and duties must be regarded as subordinate to those of men. Whether, in fact, the ludicrous misapplication which is so commonly made, both in jest and earnest, of the phrase "lords of the creation," by using it with reference to the male sex instead of to the human race, is to be the rule on which the relative political and social position of the two sexes of humanity is to be based.

Mr. Stephen says "If society and Government ought to " recognise the inequality of age as the foundation of an "inequality of rights of that importance,"—(i.e. that of command and obedience)—"it appears to me at least equally " clear that they ought to recognise the inequality of sex for "the same purpose, if it is a real inequality." We deny the proposition on which Mr. Stephen bases his inference, and we deny the justness of the inference drawn. The relations of command and obedience which are admitted between parents and children are not based on mere inequality of age. They depend on the fulfilment of the conditions and performance of the duties of parentage. A child owes obedience to his own parents, or to those who stand towards him in the place of parents; but he owes no obedience towards other men merely because there is an inequality of age between him and them. The ground of the relation is the dependence of the child, who from weakness is unable to support and govern himself, on the sustenance and authority of the parent for maintenance and guidance. As soon as the child has gathered strength to depend on itself the "inequality of age" is not recognised in this country as furnishing the basis of a claim to obedience, although in some countries the filial relation is or was so recognised.

The sole reason for the subjection of infants to their parents and guardians is the fact that infants are unable to maintain and govern themselves. The subjection is not for the benefit of or for the sake of the parents, but for the sake of the maintenance and education of the children. It is temporary in its duration, and tends to train children by habit of obedience into the capacity for command. The subjection of women to men is different in its reason, in its character, and in its duration. Women are capable of maintaining themselves and of governing themselves, without other assistance from men than that which men render to each other in the ordinary relations of business and society. There are vast numbers of women who maintain themselves by their own exertions, who owe nothing to the personal protection of individual men; nay, who may have helpless or incapable men dependent on them. Mr. GLADSTONE stated in the House of Commons that "the number of self-depending women is increasing from year to year, especially in our great towns." We say with Mr. GLADSTONE that "this is a very serious fact;" and we may adopt Mr. Stephen's style of argument and say if it be true that there is a progressive increase in the number of self-dependent women the law ought to recognise that fact.

The subjection of women to men is different in character from that of children to their parents, inasmuch as it is maintained avowedly for the sake of securing to men the services of women as wives, toys, housekeepers, or domestic servants. Men who oppose the enfranchisement of women are not afraid or ashamed to imply that if women were free they would not consent to hold these relations to men, and therefore that is necessary to hold them in legal subjection in order to secure the permanence of domestic relations. The subjection of children to their parents is never advocated for the sake of the value of the children's

labour to the parents, nor for reasons analogous to what has been called the "cold mutton and buttons argument," which is still so popular with certain classes of men, neither do parents claim that vested right to the services of their children which some men claim in virtue of their sex to the domestic services of women.

The subjection of women to men is different from that of children to their parents, in that the one is temporary and disciplinary, the other permanent and lifelong. The temporary subjection of the infant to the parent is an accidental relation of two persons having inherently equal personal rights. The permanent subjection of women is affirmed to be a relation which pre-supposes inherently unequal personal rights. Therefore any inference from the expediency of maintaining the subjection of infants to their own parents to the expediency of maintaining the subjection of all women to all men is faulty as to fact and reasoning.

Mr. Stephen's proposition is that society and government ought to recognise inequality of sex as the foundation of inequality of rights. He illustrates this proposition by stating that if we were engaged in a great war it might be necessary to have a conscription both for land and sea service. He asks, "ought men and women to be subject to it indiscriminately?" and he implies that an answer in the negative should be taken as a confirmation of his proposition. But the question cannot be reduced to such a narrow issue. In case of a conscription men would not be subject to it indiscriminately, the maimed, the blind, the halt, and the aged would be exempt, at least, until all the able-bodied had been called out. Yet no one proposes to recognise a difference in the personal rights of able-bodied and infirm men, based on their liability to compulsory military service. In the next place a conscription could only take place in a great

national emergency, and, in such a crisis, women equally with men would be called upon to devote themselves to the service of their country, both by contributing the sinews of war, and by personal exertion and risk of some kind. There are more kinds of service, even of military service, than actual bearing of arms, and more kinds of force, even in warfare, than material force. When Nelson joined the fleet at Trafalgar he added one to its numerical strength, yet the frail one-armed man brought moral force so great, that it was said that every ship was doubly manned from that instant. When France lay prostrate at the feet of England's king, a woman brought force enough to an army and a nation to enable them to repel the invader; and though this be the age and France the land of pilgrimages to the scene of supernatural revelations said to have been vouchsafed to women, we may be pardoned for believing that the spirit which inspired the MAID OF ORLEANS was the womanly spirit of courage, patriotism, and self-devotion, that this spirit is of no particular age or country; and that in any great crisis touching the life of the nation the daughters of England, as well as her sons, would bear an equal if not a similar part in the services and the sacrifices which the nation as a whole was called upon to render. It would be as reasonable to say that because men do not hazard their lives in the duties of maternity they ought to be deprived of political rights, as to say that because women are not called upon to run the risk of being shot in the service of the country they are therefore not to be counted as citizens. As a matter of fact, we understand that the per centage of women who lose their lives in the dangers incident to them in the profession of marriage exceeds the per centage of soldiers killed in battle. Why should the risk of life be thought so honourable and heroic in the one sex as to form the basis for claiming a monopoly of a voice in the government, and so little worthy of honour in the other that the mere liability to be called upon to enter the condition of life which demands it is to be held as a permanent disqualification for the exercise of political rights?

Mr. Stephen has adduced military service as a subject on which inequality of treatment, founded on a radical inequality of the two sexes, is admitted. He claims education as another subject on which the same question presents itself. He says, "Are boys and girls to be edu" cated indiscriminately, and to be instructed in the same things? Are boys to learn to sew, to keep house, and to "cook; and are girls to play cricket, to row, and to be drilled like boys? I cannot argue with a person who says 'Yes.' A person who says 'No' admits an inequality of the sexes on which education must be founded, and which it must therefore perpetuate and perhaps increase.'

We may here remark that Mr. Stephen's professed inability to argue with a person who maintains a given proposition does not necessarily prove the proposition to be false. Plato held the doctrine that boys and girls ought to be educated indiscriminately and taught the same things. Were the philosopher to re-appear and maintain this doctrine, Mr. STEPHEN would dismiss him with the remark, "I cannot argue with Plato." But something more than this would be needed in order to prove that Plato was in the wrong. There are many doctrines, in themselves erroneous, which are believed by people who are sufficiently reasonable to be capable of being convinced by an opponent who has the ability to argue and to prove that they are unsound. There is no proposition so false and absurd that its falseness and absurdity cannot be demonstrated by argument. This does not imply the assertion that everybody can be convinced by the argument, because there are some persons

who are unable to follow a chain of reasoning, or to judge adequately of the value of evidence. If an astronomer were to say, "I cannot argue with a man who maintains that the earth is flat," such a declaration would go no way towards proving that the earth was round. The proposition that the earth is round was established by men who knew how to argue with those who believed that it was flat; and the principles which are to serve as the basis for just legislation must be established by the same methods as have served for the discovery and recognition of the laws of nature.

In the passage we have quoted Mr. Stephen appears to play fast and loose with the word "education" in a manner which is more convenient for his purpose than conducive to the elucidation of a sound principle. It is remarkable that the things which he selects as appropriate respectively to boys and girls lie altogether out of the province of "education" in the proper sense of the word. The subjects he selects for girls are matters of purely technical or industrial instruction. Those for boys refer to physical education. There are some persons who think that boys would be no worse for being trained to use their fingers in some occupation which might beguile their leisure hours and produce some useful result. There are more who believe that the bodily training afforded to girls is miserably insufficient, and that they would be mentally and physically benefited by the introduction into their schools of athletic exercises similar in spirit and purpose, if not exactly identical in kind, with those practised by boys. But setting aside these considerations, we can afford to make Mr. Stephen a present of the admission that every girl should be taught to sew, to keep house, and to cook, and every boy be taught to row, to play cricket, and be drilled, without prejudice to the proposition that boys and girls ought to be educated alike, and to be instructed in the same things. We object

to the use Mr. Stephen makes of the word "indiscriminately," for we suppose he would not allow that all boys should be educated indiscriminately, and instructed in the same things. Since the whole field of human knowledge is too vast to be mastered by any one mind, there must be discrimination in selecting the particular subjects of instruction for each youth with reference to individual tastes, capacities, and circumstances in life. But the main purposes of education are the same whatever be the differences in its method and appliances. These are, the acquisition of information, the cultivation of habits of observation and reasoning, and the application of the knowledge and reasoning so acquired to the general purposes of life. There is no difference between boys and girls as to the manner in which they must severally acquire the mastery over any special subject of study. As there is no royal road, so there is no female road to learning distinct from that which must be traversed by men. We do not understand whether Mr. Stephen means to affirm that there are some branches of a liberal education which women have no right to cultivate. But it would seem that he does mean this when he "admits an inequality "between the sexes on which education must be founded, "and which it must therefore perpetuate and perhaps "increase."

Now we think Mr. Stephen should not have left matters in this undefined state. If only in compassion to those women, if such there be, who are content to accept his limitation of their mental sphere, as one beyond which no woman ought to pass, he should have condescended to explain somewhat more clearly what are the subjects of study to which he considers women have unequal rights with men. The old-fashioned notion was that boys should be taught classics and mathematics, and girls modern languages and accomplishments. The rule has become

so far modified that it is no longer deemed unfeminine for a woman to understand Latin, or effeminate for a boy to know French. The old landmarks are removed, and the oracle sets up no new ones in their place. We should like to know also whether supposing the field of education is to be partitioned between boys and girls, whether male trespassers on the feminine portion are to be warned off as inexorably as girls who may show a desire to wander in the forbidden masculine ground? We are persuaded that could such a separation be effected between the education afforded to boys and girls respectively, that the consequences would be disastrous in the extreme to the mental culture of both; that there is no foundation for the assumption that the law ought to recognise an inequality between the sexes as to the right to education, that the existing inequality with regard to educational endowments and appliances is unjust and injurious in the highest degree, not only to the girls themselves, but to the community of which they will hereafter become the mothers; and further, that no human being has a right to prescribe to another human being the limit which must not be passed in the cultivation of the mental powers either as to direction or extent. Equal opportunities should be afforded to all children, without distinction of sex, for acquiring such education as may be within reach of their means, and no differences as to general culture should exist between the men and the women who associate together in the same rank of life. Individual inequalities of the widest kind there always will and must be, but there should exist no general inequality between the intellectual culture of men and women founded on difference of sex.

Mr. Stephen says, "Follow the matter a step further "to the vital point of the whole question—marriage. All "that I need consider in reference to the present purpose

"is whether the laws and moral rules should regard it as "a contract between equals or as a contract between a "stronger and a weaker person involving subordination for "certain purposes on the part of the weaker to the "stronger." Now, we say that the special relations of man and woman in marriage are not the vital point of the whole question as to the political and personal rights of women. Women are women before they are wives, and have rights independent of and antecedent to the latter relation. If it is just to place the wife in the status of legal subjection, to whom does the unmarried woman owe obedience? We say that the personal and political rights of unmarried women ought to be equal and similar to those of unmarried men, and that the conditions of the marriage contract ought to be determined by the free consent of both the sexes who are parties to it, and not arbitrarily imposed by one sex on the other by physical force. But Mr. Stephen says, "If the parties to a contract of marriage are treated "as equals it is impossible to avoid the inference that "marriage, like other partnerships, may be dissolved at "pleasure." To us it appears that instead of being impossible to avoid, it is impossible to draw such an inference from such premises. It would be equally easy, and equally untrue to say—if marriage is regarded as a contract between a stronger and a weaker person, involving subordination on the part of the weaker, it is impossible to avoid the inference that marriage might be dissolved at the pleasure of the stronger party. The fact is the permanence of the marriage contract does not depend upon the strength or the pleasure of either of the parties to it, but upon the law of the land; and the law would be equally powerful to enforce its permanence, whether it were regarded as a contract between equals or as a contract between persons of unequal antecedent rights. The law secures the permanency of the marriage tie by refusing its

sanction to other engagements contracted by one party during the lifetime of the other, and by enforcing on appeal the compulsory "restitution of conjugal rights." This sanction could be maintained quite as well whether marriage was considered as a contract between equals or unequals in personal rights.

unequals in personal rights. Mr. Stephen is good enough to allow that "No one "contends that a man ought to have power to order his "wife about like a slave, and beat her if she disobeys "him." We are very much obliged to him for the concession, but we do not see how it is to be defended on his own principles. We are afraid that as a matter of fact a great many men do order their wives about like slaves, and beat them if they disobey, sometimes even if they do not disobey. What answer would Mr. Stephen make to a man who treated his wife in this manner, and who turned his own arguments on him? If physical force is the foundation of personal rights, the man who beats his wife establishes his right to do so by that which Mr. STEPHEN considers the foundation of all law. Put a case in which a man orders his wife to do something which she considers that he has no right to command. Here the issue is a difference of opinion, and a conflict of will, between husband and wife. Granted that the wife ought to obey her husband and give way. But suppose she will

finding all persuasion useless, give way to her rather than resort to physical force. Is the first course justifiable? and if not, why not, on Mr. Stephen's principles, when the man has no alternative between submitting to his wife's will, or coercing her by physical force? Suppose that it is a case in which even Mr. Stephen would admit that the wife was in the right and the husband in the wrong, as

not, what has the husband a right to do in such a case?

After exhausting all peaceable means of persuasion, he

may either beat his wife till she obeys, or he may, on

in the instance he adduces of the captain giving an order to the lieutenant which the latter, who is the better seaman, knows to be wrong. There is no doubt that the captain in such a case would be justified legally and morally in the employment of any degree of physical force necessary to enforce obedience in case of contumacy on the part of the lieutenant. He would betray his trust if on being satisfied that his own judgment was right, he were to refrain from putting his subordinate in irons, or even proceeding to stronger measures in a case of emergency. But is there any corresponding right in a husband to enforce his commands by similar means? Mr. Stephen says "no;" but what would he say to a man who addressed his wife, stick in hand, in the following words quoted from "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"—"It is impossible to lay down prin-" ciples of legislation at all, unless you are prepared to say "I am right and you are wrong, and your view shall give " way to mine, quietly, gradually, and peaceably, but one of " us two must rule and the other must obey, and I mean "to rule"—and who applied this reasoning practically by means of the stick?

It may be said that this is an extreme case, but the soundness of a principle can only be tested by applying to an extreme case. If it breaks down when pushed to its legitimate conclusion it cannot be a right one.

There are two principles on which the subjection of women to men in marriage can be maintained. The one considers the parties to it as having antecedently unequal personal rights; divides the people into two classes according to sex, and decrees that the one class shall be subject to the other irrespective of the personal relations of contract between individual men and women. The other considers that all human beings, whether male or female, have the same inherent personal rights. As the principle is more directly expressed by a reviewer of Mr. Stephen's

book in the Quarterly Review, "That women have an "equal right with men to recognition as persons, and to "every civil right following on that recognition, is no longer "likely to be disputed in any quarter." In passing we may be allowed to express our surprise that such an assertion should be made in reviewing a book, one of the main objects of which is to dispute the proposition that women have equal civil rights with men. The recognition of equal antecedent rights between men and women is perfectly compatible with the recognition of subordination for special purposes of women to men in the marriage relation, just as the recognition of the equal personal rights of all men is compatible with the recognition of subordination for special purposes of some men to others in the relations of commanding and subordinate officers and men, and masters and servants. There is nothing degrading in such a relation, nothing humiliating in the obedience so rendered. It is a case of voluntary association for a special purpose, which can only be carried out by allowing legal authority to rest somewhere, and the obedience is limited to matters which concern the business of the partnership. The rights of masters and servants are unequal in the affairs of the household; they are equal in matters outside this domain. A man may lawfully order his coachman to drive him in a given direction, but if the coachman be an elector the master may not lawfully order him to vote for a particular candidate. A husband may lawfully order his wife to do certain things; he may not lawfully order her to go to a particular church, or profess any particular creed, against her own convictions. A man whose wife is a physician, or a member of a school board has no authority over her with respect to the treatment of her patients, or the administration of the Education Act. It is perfectly possible to maintain the expediency of the subjection of wives to husbands for the special

purposes of family government, along with the recognition of the equal rights of men and women who do not hold these relations to one another, and of husbands and wives in matters unconnected with family affairs. The Quarterly reviewer, to whom we have previously alluded, says, very justly, that there are two questions about women's rights which have been a good deal confused—the reviewer says by Mr. MILL and his friends—we say by Mr. Stephen. The first—which the reviewer says should never have been a question at allis whether the legal nullity of women under the old Roman and under the feudal law, should be the legal doctrine of days of more advanced civilisation; the second is whether marriage involves or does not involve a subjection of woman to man which is natural and necessary, and not legal and artificial in its origin. Mr. Stephen's arguments are addressed mainly to the latter question, and when he has, as he believes, proved his case, he says he has established the general proposition that men and women are not equals, and that the laws which affect their relations ought to recognise that fact.

Mr. Stephen appears to base his argument on the general proposition that the law or the Legislature ought to take a survey of all sorts and conditions of men, to observe whether there is any actual inequality in their relations or conditions, and whenever it finds any existing inequality it should "recognise that fact," by legislation based on the inequality, and designed to perpetuate it. We do not know whether Mr. Stephen is or was an advocate of negro slavery, but the arguments he advances for the maintenance of the subjection of women would have applied equally well to the maintenance of slavery in the United States. He might have harangued the Abolitionists in the style he uses about Mr. Mill's claim for equal rights for women. "Ingenious people may argue

"about anything, but all the talk in the world will never shake the proposition that [white men] are stronger than "[negroes] in every shape. They have greater muscular and nervous force, greater intellectual force, and greater vigour of character. This general truth has led to a division of labour between [white men] and [negroes] the general outline of which is as familiar as the general out- line of the differences between them. These are the facts, and the question is whether the law and justice of man ought to recognise this difference."

Mr. Stephen grossly misrepresents Mr. Mill's doctrine by the gloss which he intrudes into it. He speaks of "Mr. Mill's doctrine that the law of the strongest, or the " law of force, has been abandoned in these days." The words in italics are an interpolation which alter the meaning of the doctrine. Mr. MILL's words are—"We "now live in a state in which the law of the strongest " seems to be entirely abandoned as the regulating prin-"ciple of the world's affairs"—a very different proposition from that which Mr. Stephen combats. We understand Mr. MILL to mean that the state of society in which the law of the supremacy of the will of the strongest individuals over the lives and the wills of the weaker members has given place to a state of society in which the force of law is supreme alike over the strong and the weak. The maintenance of personal rights no longer depends on personal strength, but on the force of the law. Mr. MILL maintains that the subjection of women is the relic of a condition of things in which law, or the collective force of society, was weak, and individuals were strong, and that it is unsuited to a state of society in which the law has irresistible force, and the individual is powerless before the law. In days of old a powerful noble or an audacious bandit not unfrequently openly and successfully defied the power of the law and the

Government. In these days there is no safety for the law breaker, save in concealment or flight. The illustrations Mr. Stephen has given by way of confuting the doctrine he foists on Mr. MILL do in fact so admirably confirm that on which he really founds his claim for the enfranchisement of women that we give them here. He illustrates the state of society, which Mr. MILL calls "the law of the strongest," by the condition of Scotland in the fourteenth century, as portrayed in Scott's novel "The Fair Maid of Perth." "My name," says one of the characters, "is the Devil's Dick, of Hellgarth, well-known in "Annandale for a gentle Johnstone. I follow the stout "Laird of Wamphray, who rides with his kinsman the "redoubted Lord of Johnstone, who is banded with the "doughty of Earl Douglas, and the earl, and the lord, and "the laird and I, the esquire, fly our hawks where we find "our game, and ask no man whose ground we ride over." Mr. Stephen says that the first impression on comparing this spirited picture with the Scotland we all know is that the fourteenth century was entirely subject to the law of force, and that Scotland in the nineteenth century had ceased to be the theatre of force at all. We say that the impression, from Mr. MILL's point of view, would be that in the fourteenth century Scotland was subject to the law of the strongest, "the good old rule, the simple plan, that "those should take who had the power, and those should "keep who can," and that in the nineteenth century, the reign of the strongest had given place to the reign of law. Under the first rule women could not have assured to them equal rights with men, because they have not equal personal strength to maintain them. Under the second rule women can have equal rights secured to them with men, because the maintenance of rights assured by law does not depend in any way on personal strength. Mr. Stephen says, "Look a little deeper, and this impres-

"sion" (i.e., the impression that Scotland in the fourteenth century was subject to the law of force, and that Scotland in the nineteenth century has ceased to be the theatre of force at all) "is as false, not to say childish, as the sup-"position that a clumsy row-boat, manned by a quarrel-"some crew who can neither keep time with their oars "nor resist the temptation to fight among themselves, "displays force, and that an ocean steamer which will "carry a townful of people to the end of the earth at the "rate of three hundred miles a day so smoothly that, "during the greater part of the time, they are unconscious "of any motion or effort whatever, displays none." The fact that a supposition is childish ought to be a guarantee even to Mr. Stephen that a reasoner like Mr. MILL never could have made it. The simile is another apt illustration of the doctrine really maintained by Mr. MILL. While the motive power of the ship of the State was vested in individual rowers, and the direction of the voyage determined by the greatest number of the strongest arms, without reference to law or reason, it is evident that women, however deeply interested in the result of the venture, could have exercised no effective control over the guidance of the craft. But in the case of the ocean steamer owned, say, by a company of shareholders of both sexes, whose voice in the direction of the voyage is determined, not by the degree of physical strength, but by the amount of the shares they hold, women shareholders could exercise power on exactly the same terms, and at neither greater nor less disadvantage, than men.

Mr. Stephen says, "The force which goes to govern the "Scotland of these days is to the force employed for the "same purpose in the fourteenth century what the force of a line-of-battle ship is to the force of an individual "prize-fighter. The reason why it works so quietly is "that no one doubts either its existence or its crushing

"superiority to any individual resistance which could be offered to it." We recognise this fact with gladness, for it is the basis of the possibility of the recognition of the equal rights of women and men before the law. Let the collective moral and physical force of the whole community of men and women be organised in support of laws which declare equal personal rights to all human beings, and the laws so supported will prove adequate to assure and protect in the exercise of these rights even the weakest man, woman, or child in the community, and to repress the usurpation of lawless power by the strongest baron who might awake out of a Rip Van Winkle's sleep in the belief that he still lived in the good old times.

There are many passages in Mr. Stephen's book which convey the impression that he thinks the change that has taken place in society since the days of the "gentle Johnstone" a matter for regret. Apparently he does not think political power worth having unless a man can grab a large share of it, and use it in his own way. Speaking of the recent extension of the suffrage he says, "we have " succeeded in cutting political power into very little bits, "which with our usual hymns of triumph we are con-" tinually mincing, till it seems not unlikely that many " people will come to think that a single man's share of it "is not worth having at all." He says again, "Political " power has changed its shape, but not its nature. The "result of cutting it up into little bits is simply that the " man who can sweep the greatest number of them into "one heap will govern the rest. The strongest man in " some form or other will always rule." We may admit this last proposition while giving an emphatic denial to the first. Granted that under any form of representative government the strongest man will always rule, there is an essential difference in the nature of the political power exercised by a representative and a despotic

ruler. The difference is occasioned by that same sweeping process which Mr. Stephen dismisses so unceremoniously. When political power is distributed in very little bits over a large number of persons, the bits cannot be swept into a heap by force, even by the strongest ruler. He must give or offer some advantage to the possessors of them, or must persuade them that he is the fittest man to rule, before they will cast their bits within the sweep of his brush. And if he disappoints their expectations they can disperse the heap as readily as it was swept together, and his power dissolves like summer snow. The wide distribution of political power renders its possession by the people more secure. It may be easy to rob one man of five pounds,—it would be impracticable to rob a thousand men of one penny each.

The "mincing" process by which political power has been sub-divided and spread over so wide an area, and so many classes and interests, both facilitates and necessitates the distribution of a share to women. It facilitates it, because under the conditions on which it is dispensed it is easy to give to women an equality of political rights, without giving them such an actual share in the government as would seriously interfere with the existing order of things, or have the effect of superseding the general conduct of the affairs of government by men. Even under universal suffrage it is probable that the greatest amount of actual political work would continue to be done by men, at least for a long time to come. Under household suffrage, where the men voters so greatly outnumber the women, there would not be the slightest probability of the disturbance of the present method of government. The extension can therefore be made without inconvenience and without risk.

The general distribution of political power necessitates the giving of a share to women, because every extension of

the franchise to classes hitherto excluded lowers and weakens the status of the classes which remain out of the pale. Agricultural labourers in counties, and women householders everywhere, are now excluded from influence over the Government. They possess none of those "little bits" of political power which those who would govern the country need to sweep into a heap by means of persuasion, and offers of just measures and legislative protection. The larger the body of unrepresented persons in the country, the stronger is that body. If the unrepresented body consists of two distinct classes having interests not always in common, and sometimes apparently antagonistic, as in the classes of employers and employed, it is evident that if one class is admitted to the safeguards of representation the one left out is in a worse position than before. It has obtained another master in place of a fellow-sufferer, and its interests will have less chance than ever of being considered, as they will have to withstand the rivalship of those belonging to the class just admitted to a share of these magical and all-potent "bits" of political power.

It is because each "bit" is so small that it is safe to assign a bit even to the uneducated and indifferent elector. No man or woman, however stupid or silly, could do much mischief with the infinitesimal share of power comprised in his or her particular "bit." It is perhaps for this reason that so many intelligent women and men are slow to appreciate the value of a vote. Because the mere possession and occasional exercise of a vote seems a small thing in itself, is actually an infinitesimal factor in the sum of most persons' experience, they imagine that it is an equally unimportant matter to the interests of a class. One drop is an infinitesimal item in a shower, yet it would not be safe to say that the shower is unimportant because each drop composing it is a very small thing. It matters little or nothing personally to any individual woman

whether she has a vote or not. It is of vital consequence to the interests of women as a class that they should have representative government.

We have limited our remarks on Mr. Stephen's book to those portions having especial reference to the enfranchisement of women. But it is not only liberty for women which Mr. Stephen deprecates; he seems also averse to the application of the principle of liberty to men. In commenting on "the opinion that laws which recognise "any sort of inequality between human beings are mere " vestiges of the past, against which as such there lies the " strongest of all presumptions" he takes exception to "the " assumption that the progress of society is from bad to " good; that the changes of the last few centuries in our "own, and in other leading nations of Western Europe, "have been changes for the better," and while not altogether denying it, he says he cannot assent to it. "Even if the inequality between men and women is a "vestige of the past, and likely to be destroyed by the " same process that has destroyed so many other things, "that is no reason for helping it on. The proper reflec-"tion may be 'the more the pity." "The waters are out, " and no human force can turn them back, but I do not "see why, as we go with the stream, we need sing "Halelujah to the river god." "It is useless to lament, " or even to blame, the inevitable." We gather from these and similar utterances scattered through the book, first that Mr. Stephen considers the movement for the enfranchisement of women to be a part of the general movement of society towards the abolition of class distinctions and legal inequalities, next, that he regards, not simply the enfranchisement of women, but the stream of modern progress of which it forms a part, with dislike and distrust, and, lastly, that he believes the change to be inevitable, and the result of forces which no human power can withstand.