

Women's Suffrage Pamphlets 1870-1877.

Claylands Debating Society, London: Mr. Mill's

"Subjection of Women from a Woman's

Point of View

Manchester 1870

Objections to Woman Suffrage. A Speech

by Captain Morse, R.N.

London 1874

The Citizenship of Women, Socially Considered by P.S. Gordon 1874.

7. Annual Report: Manchester National Society

for Women's Suffrage

Manchester 1874

Mr. Fitzjames Stephen on the Position of Women

By Mallicent Barrett Fawcett

London 1873.

Woman Suffrage: A Reply by J.E. Cairnes LL.D.

Manchester 1874.

Woman Suffrage, The Counterfeit & the True Reasons

for Opposing Both by Rear-Admiral Massie

London 1874.

A Plea for the Ladies by N.J. Gosson

Dublin 1875.

Annual Report: National Society for Women's

Suffrage

London 1875

8th Annual Report: Manchester National Society

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A LADY IN THE GALLERY
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A letter to the Rt. Hon. John Bright, M.P. from

A Lady in "The Galaxy" London 1876.

An Answer to Mr. John Bright's Speech on the

Women's Suffrage by Arabella Stone London

Female Suffrage by W.T. Blair London 1876.

Latest Intelligence from the Paris Venus Manchester

Annual Report: National Society for Women's

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Society for Women's Suffrage Manchester 1876

The Bible and Women's Suffrage by John Cooper Manchester 1877

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- A Few Words to Temperance Women upon
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- The Physical Force Objection to Women's Suffrage
Man and Woman. A Demon by Rev. Brooke Lambert, Toronto 1877.
- The Last Ballad by Charles Kingsley
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Civil Rights in Japan by Michiru S. Nagasaki London 1877
- The Present Aspect of Women's Suffrage Considered
By Arabella Shore London 1877
- 10th Annual Report. Manchester National
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- The Condition of Married Women
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CLAYLANDS DEBATING SOCIETY, LONDON.

MR. MILL'S "SUBJECTION OF WOMEN,"

FROM

A WOMAN'S POINT OF VIEW:

BEING

A FEW SUGGESTIONS OFFERED FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF THE
MEMBERS OF THE ABOVE SOCIETY, BY ONE OF ITS
INVITED GUESTS, AT THE MEETING OF
FEBRUARY 1ST, 1870.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION BEFORE THE MEETING:

"CAN THE CLAIMS ADVANCED ON BEHALF OF WOMEN
BY MR. J. S. MILL BE ADVANTAGEOUSLY
GRANTED IN THIS COUNTRY?"

Published by Request of the Club.

MANCHESTER: JOHN HEYWOOD, 141 AND 143, DEANSGATE.

71^M
HEAVY

INTRODUCTORY REMARK.

It seems necessary to explain that the following remarks contain merely a few ideas hastily thrown together for the purposes of a Debating Society, and are not intended to invite such literary criticism as might be due to a sustained effort, or a theory deliberately and carefully worked out. Should the friends who wished me to place my suggestions in a permanent form before them for their further consideration, find them less satisfactory in print than when orally delivered, I am sure they will do me the justice to remember the limitations of time and space incidental to the circumstances of a drawing-room discussion, which requires saliency of expression rather than close, detailed reasoning.

BARN ELMS, BARNES,

February 14, 1870.

THE

"SUBJECTION OF WOMEN,"

ETC., ETC.

"Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses O!"

As I have been honoured by a special invitation to attend this discussion, in which I fear I am expected to hold a sort of brief on behalf of my sex, I have taken the liberty (which is perhaps scarcely allowed by the rules of this Society) of reducing what I wish to say on this occasion into a written form, in order to save your time and patience as much as possible—the art of debating not being one of the accomplishments vouchsafed to women by the public opinion of this country.

It is a little difficult for ladies to take part in a discussion like the present, which so vitally touches our interests and feelings; since if we express our real opinions, instead of merely putting the Society off with courteous platitudes suitable for the atmosphere of a drawing-room, some things must be said which will naturally appear ungracious to the representatives of the male sex here present, many of whom stand to us in the relation of husband, father, or friend.

Let me disclaim at the outset however, all personalities of whatever kind; and while advocating to the full the granting of all the claims advanced on our behalf by Mr. Mill, let me state most distinctly that any remarks which I may make of an unpleasant character, are directed against a system founded I believe on a mistaken theory, into which both men and women are born, and for which the men of the present generation can only be held responsible in so far as they persist in it, after its evils have been clearly pointed out.

It is however inevitable, that if I speak honestly as the representative of a considerable and daily-increasing number of my sex, my tone should be one of complaint. Englishmen are as a rule however

robust enough to bear a little plain speaking; and certainly they do not scruple to give women both by word and pen, the advantage of such cursory inappreciative criticism as occurs to them in the midst of what they consider more important pursuits, however uncomplimentary their hastily-formed opinions may be. I use the word inappreciative advisedly, for I believe that woman is to this day the most unknown of all the visible forces of creation; and that while man dredges the deep seas, or spectroscopes the far realms of space in quest of occult knowledge of various kinds, his nearest companion walks by his side in uncomprehended majesty, and apart from the exercise of a few functions, recognised to be indispensable for the continuance of things, may be summed up in the present day as the last lingering focus of prolonged disabilities; a dangerous un conjecturable kind of being, to be shut in by restrictive fences of all sorts—mental, physical, legal, and social; otherwise, general perdition and breaking-up of the social framework.

For my part I strongly conjecture that woman is the highest known order of intelligence, but in an undeveloped, immature condition; and that the poet Burns divined a very deep truth, (a deeper truth than he would perhaps have endorsed in his less inspired moods,) when he sang of Nature—

“ Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses O ! ”

I do not expect that any of you will agree with me in this opinion, nor do I affirm it dogmatically or as capable of demonstration. I fully admit that the evidence is incomplete, and must be so by the conditions of the problem; since women have never been allowed to put forth their power in their own way, and by virtue of their own inherent laws, but have always been subject to powerful deflection through masculine control. Yet there are some reasons to justify my view of the case, which if this were the subject before the meeting, I should be happy to adduce. Meantime I may point out that men appear to have a presentiment of a similar kind, either latent or carefully suppressed, else why are they always so reluctant to undertake competition on equal terms with women? The latter, except where great physical strength is required, are always ready to stand the test of open competition. No one has ever dared to ask for privileges, protection, or favour in their behalf. The most that is ever asked for them is a fair field and no favour, and that arbitrary restrictions against the use by them of their own faculties should be withdrawn. Now it is notorious that men as against women, have had to call in the power of

special legislation. They have had to be helped, and protected, and endowed, and privileged, and promoted, and combined in large numbers. Even now with all these advantages, many would not be content unless women were driven out of the field altogether, so afraid are they of standing the test of competition.

Now it seems to me that all the claims advanced by Mr. Mill on behalf of women, may be shortly summed up, in the very moderate request of Diogenes to Alexander, viz., “Stand out of my sunshine”—in other words, abolish sex as a disability, as you have already abolished colour, race, and religious beliefs. He points out that the legal subordination of women to men—the only legal subordination of one class to another obtaining in civilised countries—is a pure anachronism, a relic of the primitive law of brute force, an anomaly, and a cruelty—unjust to the weaker, and demoralising to the stronger class. He shows also, that the kind of power and influence possessed by woman, is no adequate compensation to her for her loss of freedom; and that human beings having been proved by a long and sad experience, not to be fitted to be trusted with absolute despotism, the despotic power offered to every male person over his unfortunate mate, is bad for both—training man to rapacity and selfishness, and woman to irresponsibility; to which I must add on my own account, that good men, of whom there are many here present, who uphold the despotic theory, but abjure the use of it in their own circle, must be held responsible for the evils which happen under it when administered by bad men; since whoever consents to entrust power to unfit agents, must be held morally responsible for the consequences.

Among the detailed claims made by Mr. Mill for us are:

(1.) The extension to women of the franchise, so that they may be able to act at once immediately and effectively from their own unbiassed stand-point, whenever they perceive the laws of their country are injuriously affecting their interests. That this is necessary is proved by the fact, that many of the ancient rights, privileges, and courtesies formerly enjoyed by women in England, have become obliterated by modern legislation. Some instances showing the necessity of exercising this power, may here be cited. “Before the passing of the Municipal Corporation Act of 1835, women ratepayers had rights equal and similar to those of men, in all matters pertaining to local government and expenditure. On the passing of this Act, the whole of the women ratepayers resident in the newly-incorporated municipal boroughs were summarily disfranchised, without any reason being given, although they had held them from time immemorial, up to the year 1835. The women ratepayers outside these new corporations meanwhile retained their

ancient right. So that there was one law for those within, and another for those without the boundary. This was set right last year, but could never have happened had the interests of women been properly represented. Again, "by the recent decision of the Court of Common Pleas, it is now law, that the same words in the same Act of Parliament shall, for the purpose of voting, apply to men only; while for purposes of taxation, they shall be made to include women, which as the *Times* says, commits the nation to the dangerous doctrine that representation need not go along with taxation." Innumerable instances might be brought to show did time permit, that the interests of the female are invariably being postponed or set on one side in favour of those of the male sex; and this not so much from ill-will, as from negligence, want of thought, and its being no one's business to look after them.

(2.) Another measure consequent on the establishment of Mr. Mill's claims, would be the throwing open of the universities, and all educational institutions and endowments of all kinds, to women, on the same terms as to men. It is thought that if women are inferior to men, which they undoubtedly are in a large general knowledge of facts, and such precision of thought as can be acquired by wise systematic training, this inferiority is presumably due to the small amount of capital and labour expended on their culture, and not to their own incapacity; since it is invariably found in practice, that wherever women enjoy advantages similar to those of men, the ignorance and mental slovenliness complained of, disappear; whereas when men have been subjected in any large degree to the deteriorating influences which women are expected to, and do survive, they become pre-eminently distinguished for the very faults usually ascribed exclusively to us.

(3.) The third consequence would be the opening out to women of all the professions and modes of earning an honourable livelihood at present monopolised by men, leaving the question of relative competency and fitness to be decided, not by foregone conclusions, but by the test of success in open competition. In other words, it is proposed to abolish monopoly and the trades-unionism of sex, and apply the principle of Free Trade to talent, as it is already applied to corn, cotton, and manufactured commodities.

(4.) The fourth and last main proposition which I shall adduce, is the proposed equality of all persons, and therefore of married persons, in the eye of the law. This assumes that rights of property shall no longer be infringed or abolished, simply on the ground that the owner is a married woman. It is also considered advisable that both parties shall be free to make such contracts on marriage, as may be suitable at the time; or that in the absence of such

contract, women shall no longer be compelled to forfeit their property, or their right to will it, by laws made without their assent.

I suppose all this will sound very revolutionary to those who have not yet given much consideration to the subject. The fact is however, it is not so revolutionary as it sounds, and is only the application to women of principles which have been in operation for some time in relation to all other classes of the community, and which have been found on the whole to answer very well. Moreover, the length of time which must elapse before women can successfully pursue careers hitherto closed to them is great, since they have at present no training, appliances, or organisation, and very little capital; so that while the men of the present generation are quite safe in their position, future generations will have ample time to adjust themselves gradually to such alterations in the distribution of labour, capital, and political power, as would naturally arise under the new *régime*. Besides, the prejudices of English society which have slowly accreted round the present restrictive system, will retard still for some time the growth of women, and prevent the seed-germs of their thoughts from producing their full and harmonious results, so that beyond freeing genius from unnecessary obstacles, no sudden change need be feared or expected.

It is difficult however, for even the sweetest nature to retain its full sweetness, if constantly kept in the combative, aggressive state. I think therefore, that continuous opposition and restriction will tend to produce a large influx of the genus, strong-minded woman. Society perhaps needs that its present hard surfaces should be rasped and filed by these mysterious agencies. At any rate I am much addicted to comforting myself and my friends by the reflection, that this transmutation of our softer graces into the corrosive sublimates, is gradually forming the subsoil out of which will grow a nobler, more full-blooded, more gracious womanhood in the future, that will not need to impair its sweetness, by impinging against the rough surfaces which its grim great-grandmothers have had painfully to scoop out, in order that the slow-coming softer life within might have room to grow. It is quite a mistake however to suppose, that either Mr. Mill or any one else, wishes by any means whatsoever, to convert women into men; on the contrary, we think the world is considerably overweighted with masculinity. Our theology, politics, and prevalent opinions on all topics, are almost painfully and exclusively masculine. It is to give freer play to the purely *feminine* elements that we advocate the present changes; and though we propose tentatively to adopt what have been hitherto masculine forms and methods, it is not because men have adopted them, but because

men have found them to *answer*, that we give the preference to known and tried, rather than to unknown, untried paths. It is quite possible they may not fully answer for women; but all experiments hitherto made in the same direction have been attended with reasonable success; and in a boundless wilderness of possibilities, we take the path which leads within the experience of humanity, to a well-ascertained goal. Our capacity for general, as distinguished from what may be called functional work, may be great or it may be little, but it is at all events comparatively untried, and always under unfavourable circumstances; we cannot therefore allow man's loud assumptions of superiority to go unchallenged, so long as he steps into a heritage of privileged monopolies, and from that vantage-ground proceeds to dictate the terms of contest, and then to award himself the easily-won crown of victory. We can only look on and wonder, in various frames of mind, but we are not convinced. No woman, unless the slave-taint has eaten into the very core of her humanity, ever feels that she was created inferior by nature. Some can be found to acquiesce in the proposition, if carefully disguised in elegant, high-sounding phrases of the Martin Tupper style; but the statement of the bare, undraped hypothesis always revolts their nature. I have seen even the most submissive woman flush up into anger, when the current platitudes, so complacently accepted by her when dressed up in elegant phrases, have been analysed in her presence, and reduced to their ultimate values. I think we are as a nation too apt to forget that woman is like man, "a symbol of eternity imprisoned into time;" and that the repression of her human life into the conventional forms of an earlier period of her growth, is both impolitic and cruel. For my part I agree with Miss Cobbe, in thinking it "unreasonable to suppose, that the most stupid of human females has been called into being by the Almighty, principally to the end that John or James, should have the comfort of a wife. Believing with her that the same woman a million ages hence, will be a glorious spirit before the throne of the Highest, filled with unutterable love, light, and joy, we cannot satisfactorily trace the beginning of that eternal existence, to Mr. Smith's want of a wife for a score of years here upon earth, or to the necessity Mr. Jones was under, to find some one to cook his food and repair his clothes." I protest most emphatically against man's hastily-formed assumption of native superiority, being used as an argument in favour of excluding women still further from their fair share of this human life. So far the part she has played in it, has been that of a *veiled* divinity, with thoughts undreamt of by the world; opinions unrecorded; wants, to meet which very meagre provision has been made; aspira-

tions, which find no adequate outlet in the conventional life assigned to her; and infinite solitudes in her nature, unvisited as yet by the unheeding foot of her so-called master, or the glib sarcasms of even the smartest of reviewers. It is this sense of the greatness of their own nature, and the inadequacy of all human theories now extant regarding it, that is rousing the women of every civilised country in Europe to demand, as by right divine, their place and title to stand and work in God's earth; shackled no longer by short-sighted measures of social and political expediency framed on the prejudices of a bygone age, but free to work out their inward force into outward fact; subject only to the impartial, unvarying laws of nature, the great regulators of all human effort.

The most popular argument adduced against the granting of Mr. Mill's claims in favour of women, is founded on their alleged inferiority of intellect, as shown by the paucity of great names among their ranks; but the retort is obvious. Let sex cease to be a disability, except in so far as nature makes it so—(and I am far from maintaining that there are no natural disabilities),—and it will be time enough to institute comparisons between the relative value of the achieved work of the two sexes, at the end of some six thousand years; man then having had the advantage of double that time for the exercise of his special powers, if he should prove to have any—a point which is not yet fully established.

The points of advantage I conceive to be established in man's favour so far as our present experience goes, and which I offer to your consideration, are as follows:—

(1.) Men have always as a class, taken the initiative in the outwardly active concerns of life—the first rude contact of spirit with matter unorganised for its uses—and will probably always continue to do so; inasmuch as from the rougher and firmer texture of their *physique*, the conditions under which their full activity is possible, are more often realised than has hitherto been the case with the delicate and complex organisation of woman, which requires a much larger sum of conditions, and a much rarer conjuncture of favouring circumstances, to draw forth a parallel condition of activity.

(2.) Besides taking the initiative, man has in his life the advantage over woman of the principle of continuity; by which I mean that he can choose the work for which he judges himself to be best fitted, without control from the other sex, and can go on with it without break or serious interruption to the end of his life; thus gaining the cumulative effect of habit, consecutive thought, concentration, and daily-widening experience—marriage, so far from being a drawback to him in his profession, actually

operating as an additional and powerful stimulus, and often giving him a valuable permanent helper, recognised or unrecognised, who can increase the value of his work without competing with him for the resulting rewards of fame or wealth. Although it may be said that the support of the family devolves upon him, still this need only intensify his efforts in the original line chosen, since it is out of the proceeds of this chosen work he does support it, when he is not possessed of inherited property, or is unable or unwilling to seize his wife's for that purpose. Then again his success does not depend on his beauty, personal fascination, or transient charms, but on his doing his work well; so that the element of caprice or chance, is excluded from being a *power* in his life.

(3.) Man's work is essentially of a kind which admits of combination, co-operation, the application of capital, and the use of mechanical power. Without going at length into this subject, I may say that very wonderful results are obtained by the union of these forces—*plus*, man's native ability. For let it be remembered, that nearly all great works or inventions are the cumulative products of many minds, acting in one direction during long periods of time; each one of these intermediaries laying a substratum for further operations, and transmitting force and a well-understood basis of operations to its successor. It is impossible to estimate the immense addition to man's native individual working power, which he derives from the combined application and evolution of the foregoing principles.

These three advantages then I think man has always hitherto had over woman, viz. :—

- (1.) Active physical force of a kind that is easily available.
- (2.) Continuity, or the power of concentrating that force persistently in one direction, and acquiring distinction by its exercise.
- (3.) Combination or co-operation with his fellow-men and the mechanical forces of nature, so as to multiply *ad infinitum* his original working power.

Now how stands the case with woman?

- (1.) She comes at first into an unfostering world, where she is apparently not very welcome, and which is probably already occupied by the superior being above alluded to; or who at all events by his priority of working power, seizes the vantage-posts—the main arteries of authority—and holds them against her. She is apparently the only utterly defenceless being in creation—a mass of soft pulpy flesh, keen susceptibilities, and fine sensitive nerves; endowed indeed with force of some kind, or she must long ago have

perished in the struggle for existence; but with a subtle, delicate, refined, and veiled force, not readily realisable by herself, and not perceptible at all by the strong rude faculties of her rougher and more aggressive companion, who in general I must say, can only discern what is very palpable indeed. He, in the ruder stages of his growth, only sees that she is not so strong an animal as himself; and recognising at that early period only the law of physical force, and the brute instincts of nature, thinks he can appropriate this lesser man, and adapt her to the purposes of his life. Accordingly his primitive notion of attaining this end, appears to have been to knock her down with clubs, run off with her, and make her into a despised slave and drudge. Later on we find him shutting her up in various ways, according to the manners of the period—first in the cave, the hut, the tent; and still later, the gynecœum, the harem, the fortress, the cloister, the kitchen, nursery, or drawing-room. He there prescribes to her the course of conduct proper to her sex, making her obedience the condition of his favour; and by ignoring some portions of her nature, and unduly cultivating others, he succeeds in producing a certain, or rather an uncertain result—a kind of hybrid or cross, between what a woman might have been had she been free to develop herself according to her own laws, and his crude, semi-barbarous conception of a being subordinated to his will, and only living in just such grooves as he deems best suited to further his own views. Having succeeded thus far, he then thinks and says he knows women—can write poems, novels, plays, and trenchant articles, and can talk—O how glibly!—about them.

Meanwhile the true real woman has completely eluded his grasp, and has only further shrouded herself in impenetrable mystery. He has but evoked out of the feminine elements, from which a more potent daring spirit, having insight into their nature, and proud belief in his own, would have wooed and won the living complete woman—he has but evoked I strongly surmise, a succession of what may be called *female Frankensteins*, who to my thinking, are as likely as not some of them to turn again and rend him. At any rate, there is for him no permanent satisfaction to be got out of them—they may answer a temporary purpose, and are perhaps good enough for the treatment they receive; but they are ever likely to be uncomfortable problems to themselves, and incomprehensible by every one else. They are signally unbalanced, inharmonious beings, only partially created, and very far short indeed from the conception of the poet, viz. :—

“The perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, to command.”

Some one has propounded the idea that woman is "*a great idea—spoiled.*" It strikes one as rather odd that no one should ever have seriously proposed to *realise the idea*; and as all plans of one-sided coercion have failed, to try at any rate what a free, liberal, generous treatment might do; or whether the divinity in woman might not be trusted to develop itself naturally, in accordance with its own laws.

I have said that the conditions under which the special powers of woman can be transferred from the passive to the active state, are very complex. They have never been analysed, and very rarely been realised; nor are they realisable by her own efforts alone so long as man shares the same world with her, and pursues his past and present course with regard to her. She is endowed with a kind of force exceedingly susceptible to undue influence; and directly it is so subject, like the delicate tests and instruments of our philosophers, ceases to possess any special value. But free play for the operation of woman's finer powers, involves not merely the abolition or superseding of physical force, but its voluntary and intelligent self-abnegation, such as we see already among our finer kinds of men. It implies that just as our scientific men isolate or allow for, all disturbing causes, before reading their instruments and registering the results, so man shall of his own free will, stand reverently on one side, renouncing his notions of masculine superiority, subordination of sex, marital supremacy, and all theories of that sort; that his vision shall be purified to recognise of woman, that though her path through this wondrous wilderness of things may be different from his, yet is—

"Her nature not therefore less divine,
She worships at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with her when man knows it not."

To compress one's Ariel within the clefts of physical force, or narrow theory, can hardly be said to be turning the powers of that subtle being to the best account. Such a course may gratify the low low of power lurking in the mind of a Caliban; but it takes a Prospero to detect the quality of the imprisoned force; to turn it to humanity's uses by evoking the free service of a loving heart; and to joy in the joy of newly-awakened power flushed with life, energy, and activity after centuries of thralldom and oppression. For my part, I think no very high prerogative to play the part which man has hitherto played towards woman. I can conceive of life being keener and more intensely vivified for both, by the free play of spirit upon spirit, with all their infinite diversities of action and re-action, than by a relation of authority combined with want of insight on the

one side, and subordination purchased by suppression of life on the other.

Passing on to the second parallel I have instituted between the lives of the two sexes, I have pointed out the possession of the element of continuity, as another decided advantage possessed by man over woman. The life of the latter is being constantly disrupted by authority, caprice, marriage, death, and artificial barriers. Women are always bound to obey somebody, until indeed they have outlived all who can make any claim to command; and then it is too late to begin an original course of action. Marriage too breaks up all our previous life, and substantially puts an end to all special pursuits, reducing professional to mere desultory amateur excellence; and of necessity takes some twenty or thirty years out of the very prime of our working power, for its own purposes. It has this advantage, that it reduces the number of wills to which we had been previously in subjection, and which were often contradictory to each other, to *one* will, and that generally a reasonable one. When we consider moreover the rate at which the population has been pouring into the world, and into England in particular; every single unit of this vast mass being born in a perfectly helpless condition, and at the cost of unspeakable anguish and sorrow to woman, besides being dependent on her for the first ten years of its life for daily and incessant care, and this in a highly civilised community, the requirements of which are excessive, I think a fair deduction ought to be made for these vast demands upon her, before she is hastily assumed to be inferior to man for not having yet overtaken him, and stood side by side with him in the first ranks of intellectual effort, or for not having propounded or originated new systems of philosophy, art, or religion. And here I may remark, that the systems of philosophy promulgated by man, are only the written-out conjectures of his own mind; they have yet to be verified; and as they are mostly incompatible with each other, the value of them in their present stage is doubtful. The same may be said of religion. There are many ingenious systems in existence, but *we* at any rate believe, that with the exception of Christianity and a few underlying principles common to most of them, and shared by women, they are all inadequate conceptions of the truth, if not altogether false. Moreover the great Founder of Christianity is alleged to have sprung from the mysterious union of the divine and *feminine* natures. Christians however have hitherto been but a very small section of the human populations, and within that section the majority are supposed to believe falsely. It is doubtful if even the residuum of the elect have fathomed its deeper depths; so that on the whole, if measured by the standard of severe truth, I do not think we have

much reason to congratulate our masculine superiors, on the results they have yet achieved in these directions.

With regard to art, no less an authority than Goethe has declared that no great work can be produced merely at odd times, which owing to the disruption of their lives already pointed out, is all that women have to give. Art is a goddess demanding the intense devotion of a lifetime. Will it suit the world that the artistic natures among women should forsake the vocation which they are taught is their only true one, and devote themselves consecutively and singly to their art? Shall they forsake the living child for the ideal creation? and will man meanwhile, give the necessary time and care to the family, lending the artist wife a helping hand now and then, and cheering and encouraging her by his unceasing sympathy? We know very well he would not. Yet the male artist enjoys all these advantages, together with many others from which the female artist is excluded. Will the comparison of achieved work therefore, ever be a fair one?

I am of course aware that there are now, owing to a variety of causes, a large number of unmarried women; but in the first place they are expected to prepare for the duties of married life all the same, other careers being withheld from them for that purpose: indeed they are introduced into a world which has made little or no provision for any other life for them. Most of their early life—their seed-time of preparation—is lost for other purposes in this way. Secondly, as they never know whether they shall be married or not, or when, the question is never definitely settled until it is too late: hence they are constantly distracted in thought and aim, so that there is very little more unity in their lives than in those of their married sisters; added to which, they have to waste their strength and energy in maintaining their right to work at all. They find themselves fenced out—not admitted to *this*, and shut out from *that*; obliged to seek in foreign countries the instruction denied at home, or restricted in their personal liberty by considerations of propriety. They are also harassed by poverty, unable to buy the books and instruments suitable for their work, unaided by favouring institutions, unstimulated by hope of promotion, and soured by want of social consideration. Yet even with all these drawbacks, we find them winning a very fair place in the careers open to them. Perhaps the fable of Atalanta has more deep truth in it than would readily be acknowledged. Even newspaper criticism has almost ceased to say, "Very well done for a woman"—a phrase which betrays something of the profound depth of vulgarity apparently inherent in the average Anglo-Saxon conception of the sex. How long shall we have to wait before we shall hear the more

spirited and chivalrous reproach, "*You* a woman! and can do no better work than that!" or before we can convert the term "old woman" into a title of sacred honour and reverence?

Among all the true things that Mr. Mill has said of us—and one is almost lost in wonder that a man should be found capable of so accurately divining the situation—one of the most true is, that women have little or no *consecutive* time, and have to do their thinking at odd moments. The demands upon their attention are incessant, and make up in number for what they want in importance. So various are they, so conflicting, and so unexpected the quarters from whence they come, that life from this cause alone is apt to lose all its coherence, and become a mere rope of sand; added to which, there is the bewildering duty laid upon us of being agreeable to every one, at all times, even to people of diametrically opposite tastes; of being always well-dressed and presentable, and able to do a multiplicity of incongruous things with a lady-like air—for no one ever excuses a woman for doing *badly* whatever she has to do). I think when these things are fairly taken into consideration that even the most confirmed misogynist would admit that our life is by no means an easy one, although to him so barren of valuable results; and that there is a great want of fixed principles in it, which the gratification of the caprices of his sex does not furnish.

Moreover our success does not depend upon merit or well-directed effort, but upon what humanly speaking, we call chance—upon physical beauty or personal fascination, and the *chance* of these pleasing some one who has the rewards of success to distribute. We never know beforehand whether we shall be duchesses or washerwomen, or what intermediate rank we shall be called to fill: whether as rich men's wives, we shall need accomplishments, cultivated talent, and arts of domestic government; or whether as poor men's wives, we shall have to be up early and late, and scrub, bake, scour, and scold, in order to keep things and people lively and smart about us; or whether as single women, we shall be thrown entirely on our own resources. We are expected to turn our hands to any or every thing at a moment's notice, however previously unfitted or unprepared we may be. Thus every separate woman often has to be in her own person, a sort of Jack—(or rather perhaps Gill) of all trades. She is called upon to be wife, mother, cook, housemaid, nurse, sempstress, laundress, governess, housekeeper, doctor, and many other things; or if she has qualified herself for any or all of these duties, she may be called upon to do something quite different; for what society wants of her is not concentration of her energy in one direction for a special purpose, but versatility, or the power of making general talent and common sense available

in any direction, for the necessities of common life. This system has its advantages for the human race, but they are purchased at the cost of a great waste of feminine power, which thus becomes diffused and dispersed over a large surface, in a comparatively unproductive manner, instead of being developed into the special and striking results which win for great men their world-wide fame. This being so, is it just to enforce this dispersive kind of life upon women, and then hold them inferior for not producing the results of a totally different or concentrative kind of life? Does not man rather owe to her a deep debt of gratitude; and if he intends to keep her to this mode of distributing her energy, either by force or the combined influence of opinion, should he not at least honour her in it, and not look down so scornfully from the vantage-ground, only made possible to him by the vast sum of her underlying efforts? The fact is, men are in this country at the present time, losing influence with women. Many of the latter and those not the worst, resent very bitterly, the cold exclusiveness, the intellectual Pharisaism, the ungenerous language, the coarse and vulgar allusions, the supercilious sneer, and the insulting patronage, in which many men indulge themselves in speaking of women. Need it be wondered at, that women of refinement and delicacy decline more and more to become dependent upon men; and casting an eye upon the neglected grandeurs of their own nature, should begin to realise something of life's personal dignity, and to propose to themselves, at any sacrifice of popularity, aims which do not include man as the central figure. Much has been said of the comparative difficulty of marriage in these days, and it is always assumed of course, that it is men who hang back, because women are not good enough for them. There are however other reasons, which it would perhaps be cruel to set forth on this occasion; not however that this is likely to be a permanent evil, at which we need be alarmed. Nature for her own purposes, has taken care that the gravitation of the sexes towards each other shall be so great, that this temporary estrangement will probably lead them—

"Only to meet again more close, and share
The inward fragrance of each other's heart."

The third parallel of advantage on the side of man is, that his work admits of the principles of combination, co-operation, and the application of mechanical force.

Now this is obviously not the case with women. We are planted out in separate and detached centres, isolated by the very terms of marriage, and handed over separately into the almost

absolute power of beings fully charged with notions of their own supremacy—who stand by one another in regulating the main currents of life and action, and who may, according as their natures are fine or otherwise, assume any relation to us, from that of a tender and loving protector and friend, down to that of a brutal, incessant jailer. Combinations among women therefore except for purposes prompted by men, are well-nigh impossible; and most men would prohibit them absolutely, to all women whom social arrangements have made dependent on their power and favour. I do not find fault with this—perhaps it is inevitable; I merely point out that the cumulative effects produced by co-operation and division of labour are lost to women themselves by this method, and that a less sum total of aggregate results is turned out year by year, which in estimating the comparative value of the work done by the two sexes, should be allowed for.

Then again, it is only worth while to apply mechanical force and expensive elaborate machinery where large numbers share the results. It is obviously impolitic to set up a steam-engine to slice the family cucumbers. Accordingly the women of each family do their necessary work in the old primitive individual ways, very little assisted by modern appliances. Besides, mechanical force will not rear and train children—(patent incubators notwithstanding). It will not study individual tastes, will not supply sympathy, or tact, or beauty, or the power of being agreeable. It will not furnish sprightly talk, or taste, gentleness, grace, love, self-sacrifice, or any of the special qualities for which the world looks to its cultivated women. The taunt which Tennyson puts into the mouth of one of his characters is therefore unjust:—

"When did woman ever yet invent?"

It is well said, "Necessity is the mother of invention." If therefore, the nature and emergencies of a person's life do not furnish the necessity, invention remains dormant. If the mother do not exist, clearly the daughter can never be born. Besides women show a great deal of inventive faculty—(more than men, I think), each in her own individual emergencies. That it has not hitherto been utilised or brought to a focus in some large striking result, calculated to dazzle an admiring world, is scarcely her fault, since the aims set before her have been such as cannot be furthered by the exercise of inventive effort on a large scale.

Having briefly pointed out what I conceive to be the special advantages enjoyed by man over woman, and which will enable him to hold against her every position which nature intended him to hold,

even after woman's freedom is fully established, I will now try to show very briefly, a few of the reasons why Mr. Mill's claims for women might be advantageously granted in this country. Some of these he himself gives, and as I fully endorse them, they only need to be summarised. Others can perhaps only be approached from the woman's point of view; and I hope at any rate to indicate the possibility, of there being special counterbalancing powers of a very high kind in woman's nature; at present mostly latent, but which when properly developed and united to those of the other great section of the human race, would speedily place the latter in possession of truths "which men (alone) are toiling all their lives to find."

Mr. Mill's list of benefits to arise from the proposed changes may be summarised as follows:—

(1.) The advantage of having the largest and most pervading of human relations regulated by justice instead of injustice, and the consequent weakening or abolition of the self-worship and self-preference which at present deteriorate the quality of the masculine character.

(2.) The doubling of the mass of mental faculties available for the higher service of humanity—the supply of high intellectual power being at present much less than the demand.

(3.) The increased happiness to women themselves of using their higher faculties, and finding outlets for their activities suited to their dignity in the scale of creation.

(4.) The higher direction given to the influence already possessed by women, and its rescue from the small, narrow, personal aims which now too often prevail, as the natural consequence of a meagre education and a too-limited outlook.

(5.) The higher and increased sympathy between the two sexes, in consequence of having more subjects of interest in common, and more various bonds of companionship; thus allowing scope for friendships, and mutual benefits of a more general kind than those involved in love and marriage.

To these considerations I would add the following:—

(1.) The restoration of marriage itself to its true value. At present, owing to the unequal stress brought to bear upon the two sexes in this matter, women are almost compelled to marry at whatever cost to themselves, and without much reference to suitability. They are therefore often induced to accept husbands who from various causes, fail to satisfy their natures. The amount of trouble and sorrow from this cause alone, quite apart from the question of positive cruelty and ill-treatment, or the drudgery, sickness, and poverty incidental to unfavourable conditions of the married state,

and which love alone can redeem from sordidness, is I believe for women very great. It is an evil which presses peculiarly on woman, though man may be a sufferer to some extent from the same causes; but he has other departments in which to lead his life, where his energies may receive full play; and in any case, he does not in marriage take for himself a life-long master for night and day. But if the woman does not find in the man she marries, the husband to whom she can ally herself heart and soul, her whole life is spoiled, for she is denied activity in all non-domestic departments of her nature, so that the latter becomes impoverished, and languishes a prey to inanition and despair. Also one unhappy marriage may often prevent two happy ones; since if both had been free to unite themselves according to the laws of natural preference, each might have found the one being whom none other can adequately replace. Besides, the loss of personal dignity and self-supporting independence, is of itself an irreparable misfortune. We have to bear in mind that the number of women in the present day is excessive; that marriage is an uncertain contingency; that the arts of domestic management, though indispensable and inestimable in family life, have little or no money value in the great labour market of the world; and that consequently, women brought up to these alone and then thrown upon their own resources, must run the gauntlet of starvation through all the various ranks of poor gentility. They are daily thrown upon the world in large numbers, utterly unprovided for, which makes their lives a burden to themselves, and sometimes leads to worse evils. A woman also brought up to pursue marriage as her only means of living, is in a despicable position, which ought to be and is intolerable to all fine, free natures. Under such a state of things as this, all the higher kinds of love have a strong tendency to vanish. Perhaps the Anglo-Saxon race is not capable of holding the finest relations to women, and it will take a higher ethnological development of the human race to elicit the full delicacy and sweetness of the various possible relations between the two sexes. Be that as it may, when we see the public disrespect with which women are treated in England, the injustice underlying her laws, the irreverence with which women are constantly spoken of, the meagre provision made for their wants, and the ridicule of their claims, however mildly and temperately put forth, to share in the fuller life of an advancing civilisation, we may well blush for our countrymen, and despair of our country.

(2.) Another advantage resulting from the proposed changes will be, that women will then be able to test their own powers, and find out what they can, and what they cannot do. At present they are troubled with the restlessness of untried and undirected force;

for they feel that their capacities have been settled for them on the narrow platform of man's prejudices, rather than on the broad grounds of actual truth.

(3.) I think women would be pleasanter and more interesting to one another, if they were not always striving for the same things and if each could lead a richer and fuller life of her own. At present we are compelled to endure each other's society unfurnished with general subjects of interest, and without any ideas or knowledge to share, except such as are already possessed about equally by all. Hence we are driven to personal topics, which are always apt to degenerate into gossip and slander. Now we find that those women who are cultivating at every disadvantage, that large and unknown tract of territory which we hope some day to call our mind, are much more genial and pleasant as companions. They are not exacting nor supercilious, and never hang heavy on the hands of their entertainers. Knowing also the value of time themselves, they respect that of their neighbours. Moreover the inordinate sacrifices imposed upon women sometimes induce not only intellectual starvation, but a kind of moral sourness in the blood, which from being supplied with impoverished materials, does not nourish the character into generous contours; so that their sympathies become narrow, their judgments severe, and their general style of virtue pre-eminently unattractive. Men can escape from the poignancy of their society into space, but their fellow-women suffer unknown martyrdom at their hands, longing vainly for the means of escape.

Passing by many minor advantages which time will not allow me to recapitulate, the chief gain arising to the human race by the release of the higher feminine faculties from thralldom, would be I conceive, the gradual disappearance of the alleged inferiority of women. I think it is premature to affirm, that because the faculties of man are those which are first wanted, and are the most obvious, that therefore they have the highest ultimate value—priority in time not being equivalent to superiority of value. Moreover I believe the sum total of human faculties to be necessary for the discovery of the great system of truths, and the perception of the harmonious relation of its scattered parts, which together we sum up in the one word—truth: just as the whole of the coloured rays must unite to produce white light.

Some of the special qualities which characterise the purely feminine contributions to the sum total of human faculties, may be casually indicated I think to be as follows:—

(1.) The increased fineness of the nervous system which after a long ascending series of gradations, finally culminates in woman,

and which may fairly be expected to render her able to register more subtle and delicate results, and probably in higher regions, than can be the case with beings of a less fine nervous structure.

(2.) Greater activity of brain, which enables her to seize moments for action, which would be otherwise lost to humanity for want of sufficient promptitude. I am disposed to conjecture moreover, in spite of theories to the contrary, that the size and weight of her brain are *relatively* to her stature, greater than those of man, and the quality finer; but this is not yet sufficiently established. I have here before me a table taken from Professor Huxley's "Man's Place in Nature," which shows the results furnished by Professor Wagner, after carefully weighing more than 900 human brains taken indiscriminately, and in which the heaviest brain was that of a woman—a most unlooked-for result! The scale runs as follows:—

| | Grammes. |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| A Woman's Brain | 1872 |
| Cuvier's | 1861 |
| Byron's | 1807 |
| An Insane Person | 1788 |
| 200 Human Brains, mostly Male | 1200 to 1400 |
| 450 do. do. exceed | 1400 |
| Lightest Sound Male Brain | 1020 |
| Idiot Male Brain | 970 |
| Lightest Sound Female Brain | 907 |
| Idiotic Female Brain | 720 |

So far therefore as this experiment carries us, woman would seem to have the wider range of faculty, as she is both at the top and bottom of the scale. Tennyson also suggests the same idea; for he says that the difference between the highest and lowest man is as the difference between heaven and earth; but the difference between the highest and lowest woman, is as the difference between heaven and hell!

Now with a finer nervous system, greater activity of brain, and no well-ascertained deficiency in even its positive, much less its relative size, weight, and quality—and these characters being found existing even with all the disadvantages under which women have lived in all ages—we may I think naturally look for the following results:—

That while she will not be so well able as man to deal with matter in its first adaptations to humanity, she will be more able to detect its hidden laws and subtler manifestations. I believe she sees more into the heart of a thing than man sees, and that she is related by many subtle and mysterious relationships to laws and phenomena, which are impervious to him, but which her present amount of culture does not enable her to explain and translate

into his language; for mastery over the instruments of expression, whether in art or literature, is the final result of long and persistent effort, and very high training. I know women are often accused of being too voluble, but that very volubility only proves the want of training in the use of language; since the hasty snatching up of any or all of the inadequate instruments within our reach, does not at all compensate for the absence of the one efficient term which would briefly and exhaustively express our meaning.

I think it will be discovered also if it is not already acknowledged, that woman stands in a finer relation to the spiritual world than man, and that she will therefore be able to decipher more correctly than he, the intricate manifestations of spiritual power, which up to the present time have had no adequate interpreter. This fine intuition, combined with that insight into character, and that subtle range of sympathy which she is even now acknowledged to possess, must make her a power in the future to which the past and present can furnish no parallel.

Time will not allow me at the present moment to go into this subject very deeply; I will therefore in conclusion, only point out the marked affinity of the feminine faculties for truth in all its bearings. Whoever has thought it worth his while to note the characteristics of the feminine mind, must have observed the remarkable manner in which even ordinary women arrive at correct conclusions. So far as I have examined this peculiarity in other women, and analysed it in my own mind, we appear to be able to mentally run along several chains of cause and effect at the same time—(or so swiftly as to be almost simultaneous), and to grasp the central truth with the firm precision of an intellectual athlete, and this even with very inadequate knowledge of the matter in hand. So well known is this characteristic in its lower applications, that even Hodge will rarely decide on a matter of importance without consulting a wife, who is comparatively ignorant of the subject; and I have heard him say with invariable advantage—only you see he calls his wife's power "*instinct*," a point on which I decidedly differ from him. I believe it to be really the finest and subtlest kind of reasoning known, and if applied to the higher kinds of truth, it would place the world in possession of such a momentum of spiritual and intellectual force, as would speedily drive back the worst remaining foes with which humanity has yet to cope, and solve the manifold problems which have hitherto baffled all efforts to grasp them. To man is given dominion of a certain kind; but to woman is given a power analogous to that said to have been wielded by that long-lost weapon, the potent spear of Ithuriel,

by virtue of one touch of which, all forms of error shrink into their native darkness, and resuming their original shapes, leave the truth in clear undimmed radiance. I believe that woman will never rise to her true dignity until with "spirit-thrilling eyes, so keen and beautiful," she directs humanity's highest thinking; that she can never hope to rule matter in its grosser forms, or rival man in mechanical or engineering power; but that when by his aid, the heavy weight of superincumbent materialism is lightened, and her own long locked-up forces thereby liberated, she will conquer for the human race realms of thought undreamt of now; she will gradually come to wield firmly the delicate sceptre of all fine and subtle influences; and having wrested the precious jewel of humility from out of her long fiery years of trial, suffering, and servitude, she will no longer be denied her fair name and place in God's creation, but be finally recognised at her true value, as the most real, most pathetic sovereign to whom the world has yet paid its homage.



OBJECTIONS
TO
WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

A SPEECH

BY

CAPTAIN MAXSE, R.N.

AT THE

ELECTORAL REFORM CONFERENCE,

HELD AT THE

FREEMASONS' TAVERN,

17TH NOVEMBER, 1874.

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1874.

Price One Penny.

The following Speech is published at the request of several gentlemen who heard it. It was made in opposition to an amendment moved by Miss LYDIA BECKER to admit all householders to vote, including women.

F. A. M.

—*363—

I desire to oppose the amendment which has been moved. In doing so, I will first consider it as a proposal in favour of genuine Woman Suffrage—as the first step towards the fulfilment of this—and I will then consider it in its true character as a proposal for the extension of property representation, and as a class measure.

Let me say that I am not a prejudiced opponent of Woman Suffrage: it has taken me some years of hesitation to arrive at my present position. I was never in favour of Mr. JACOB BRIGHT'S Bill, which would only have enfranchised single women of property, but I have been in favour of a *bonâ fide* Woman Suffrage measure. I have, however, gradually formed the opinion that if women exercised direct political power, the effect would be most injurious to society.

I am anxious the Conference should not mistake the ground of my opposition. I entirely repudiate the

ordinary arguments which are used against Woman Suffrage. Whatever tends to increase the mental independence and brain power of woman tends to benefit man. His greatest chance of happiness lies in her sympathy and co-operation. Their interest is identical. But having said this, I am bound to consider whether to give them by artificial means the power of governing men is likely to increase their union. I say by artificial means, because it will be admitted that they have not naturally the power of governing men, for natural government rests on force. I do not presume to justify the ways of nature, but it is clear that she has made women comparatively weak and obviously dependent upon men. Artificial circumstances should not blind us to a natural law. The physical dependence of women on men, combined with their difference of organization, is the justification of government by men. I hold it to be the duty of men to protect women, and to represent their interests in Parliament. We shall commit a fatal error if we set women up in political hostility to men. I am quite aware of the ready retort: it will be said, "This is the invariable argument of those who oppress the weak;" but that an argument has been wrongly used in many cases, is no reason why it may not have a wise and pertinent use. Of course the popular appeal in this case is to abstract right. "If you may govern

me why may I not govern you?" The question of the right of governing is entirely one of expediency. Women who advocate Woman Suffrage would not probably concede the right of voting to minors; yet, following their own argument, I might urge that I know one or two young men of nineteen who have far more brains and wisdom than many of their seniors—I defy women to base their refusal of the franchise to minors upon any other ground than that of expediency.

It is said, however, that men have not represented the interests of women in the legislature. But if women have been badly represented in Parliament hitherto—so have men! The highest interests of neither have yet been represented in the legislature: we have all suffered alike from a selfish class rule. The object of our present movement is to represent all classes and the women in them.

Sir, my concern in this question is the benefit of the entire community. What is likely to be the effect of Woman Suffrage? Now we have not to consider whether clever women are superior to stupid men—that triumphant platform appeal which is constantly made. It matters little whether the majority of voters do not equal the genius either of Mary Somerville, George Eliot, or Harriet Martineau. We have to consider what is the standard of collective thought among women. It

is my opinion that the collective thought of women—that is the opinion of the majority of women—will be adverse to enlightenment and progress. I must decline to regard the ladies who demand Woman Suffrage as the mental representatives of their sex. They are entirely exceptional women. Their independence of thought and rare public spirit elevate them above their sex. It is not unnatural that, comparing themselves with many men, they should claim a share of government. I need hardly say I have no prejudice against women who think for themselves, and who are therefore strong-minded. I welcome the presence of mental strength in women, all the more because it is so rare; and so far am I from sharing popular objections to Woman Suffrage that, while I would not give women the vote, I would most willingly remove their disability to sit in Parliament, and assuredly remove all disabilities which now prevent their serving in many professions and trades—holding that Nature may be very well left to mark the limits of their work; but I appeal to these ladies not to compare themselves with men, but rather to compare their aspirations and ideas with those of the majority of their own sex.

They will find that the tendency of most women is favourable to arbitrary government and clerical supremacy. They seem to be incapable of sympathizing with

great causes—they have a strong predilection for personal institutions. As a rule they are completely without interest in great national questions. Theirs is essentially the private life point of view. If I thought that their natural apathy concerning politics would lead them to abstain from voting, I should not so much dread their political power: but unfortunately they have a vivid sense of the value of all property, and the vote would be regarded as property intended for use; and subject as they are to religious appeals it would be frequently used—as the woman vote is now frequently used in School Board elections—under the influence of the Clergy. Of course I am familiar with Mr. MILL's argument, that if women do not interest themselves in great questions it is because we have never encouraged them to do so—and that political responsibility will educate them. I for my part doubt this. The conscience of women towards the public is feeble, and when the conscience is feeble responsibility is no educator. I observe, certainly, a number of male voters whom it appears impossible to arouse to a sense of their public duty. Then what a risk we are called upon to encounter in order to test the assertion! The process of education must occupy time: it may take two or three generations to awaken public spirit in the majority of women, and to educate them out of their instinctive submission to

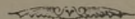
whatever is and their dread of ideas which have not the sanction of custom; and in the mean time what is to be our fate? The hands of the clock are to be put back that women may pass through men's accomplished experiences, and we are to be delivered over for a long period of uninterrupted Tory rule! The School Board elections, I am of opinion, afford no test of the fitness of women to govern, for they have merely represented a conflict of religious sects, and there are probably as many women voters in one sect as in another, and it is quite possible that the invariable defeat of Secularist candidates, who have had no priests to back them, has been partly due to the opposition of women.

But whatever views we may hold about Woman Suffrage, the proposal before us deserves rejection upon different grounds. It is a proposal not so much in favour of Woman Suffrage as it is in favour of the extension of property representation. The effect of embodying it in legislation will be that propertied widows and spinsters will possess the franchise not on account of their sex, but on account of their property, while marriage will stand out as a political disqualification. The ladies say that they take the franchise as they find it; but they are bound to recognize that the present electoral law was constructed solely with a view to male suffrage, and that it cannot be made, without

some special wife qualification which they do not propose, to include woman suffrage. It will on the contrary preclude the possibility of a genuine woman suffrage being obtained, for when the constitutional argument based upon property qualification has been satisfied, it is probable that all agitation will cease, and if the lady leaders imagine that those they enfranchise will follow them further, I venture to think that they will find themselves singularly mistaken. A curious illustration of their indisposition to acknowledge their lead occurred not long since at Southampton. If there is one subject upon which the woman franchise leaders are agreed more than another, it is, I imagine, that the Contagious Diseases Act should be repealed. Well, a municipal contest was fought out at Southampton upon this very question, and a large majority of women burgesses supported the councillor against whom opposition had been started, on the ground that he was a supporter of the obnoxious Act.

But the most objectionable feature of this proposal is that—under a delusive plea, it represents a class measure, for the propertied single women exists mostly in the upper and middle classes: it will therefore operate unfairly towards the working class and afford additional means of class oppression. It is not surprising that the Conservatives have taken charge of

the measure proposed: they are always anxious to increase property representation and would enfranchise boys if boys held title deeds. But we consider that property is already over represented. Upon these grounds I oppose the amendment and earnestly entreat working class politicians, in the interest of the working class especially, to offer it their uncompromising opposition.



THE
CITIZENSHIP OF WOMEN

SOCIALLY CONSIDERED.

By L. S.

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THE CITIZENSHIP OF WOMEN.

WHAT is the position of women in England at this day? It has, doubtless, risen with advancing civilization at war with old traditions; it has been improved by very slowly improving education; it is ornamented and disguised by masculine compliments; and it is surrounded, in drawing-rooms, by chivalrous homage, meaning thereby politeness, as well as by an abundance of outward comfort and luxuries. Yet—legally, and therefore, more or less, socially—it is merely a modification of ancient barbarism, ordered on barbarian principles, mitigated in their working but still barbarian. The progress made in other directions, the changes other institutions have undergone, make this fact still more conspicuous, the position of women still more exceptional.

In the early ages of the human race advantage was taken of woman's physical weakness to make her literally a slave; she is now—in civilized nations, that is—merely in "subjection." In old time—and not such very old times either—she was reviled and despised for the defects fostered in her by slavery; she is now more gently branded by the law as an inferior, in company with "criminals, lunatics, and idiots;" and complacently told by men—seriously, with the most complimentary intentions it may be, and with full conviction—that this legal inferiority, this positive subjection, imply and result in a social superiority, first formulated by "chivalry" (only women of the drawing-room class being recognised under this theory) and form the safeguard of that higher moral excellence she is credited with along side of a lower mental capacity.

But this legal position of woman does, I think, tell on herself and on society in general, in quite a different way, whilst at the same time the unconscious, or half-conscious, efforts she has herself made hitherto, according to her more or less of education to resist these evil influences, produce the strangest incongruities. It

has fostered grievous private and individual wrongs; and, worse still, it helps yet, as the principle on which it was founded has helped for ages, to lower the tone of that society it is supposed to benefit. Many thinking men and women, in continually increasing numbers, have begun to perceive this; and a good many others have been from time to time aware that there was something a little wrong in matters of detail—something here and there that might be amended. To these latter, and, we believe, to English legislators in general, it has always seemed easier to modify the evil workings of a vicious principle than to abolish it altogether. Such minds do not even seek to distinguish the authority of old-established prejudice from the sanction of nature and reason. It seems to them more natural to grant privileges than justice, indulgence than liberty. It has not occurred to them to ask themselves whether, after all, woman may not be allowed a voice, or at least the fraction of a voice, in the ordering of her own position in the world, of her own dearest interests and liberties.

It would be useless, most unjust, most unphilosophical, to bring a railing accusation against men on this account—especially unphilosophical because such, or such like, has been the course of action of all irresponsibly dominant classes since the world began, until the eyes of both ruler and ruled have been at last opened to a sense of its injustice. And, further, it would be most ungrateful to those noble and generous minds amongst them whose hearty sympathy and active efforts to obtain justice for women—that is, in fact, justice to all society—deserve the most ample acknowledgment. It requires—and this is true of every one of us, man or woman—much imagination, much sympathy, much reflection in the first instance, to shake off the influence of ancient prejudice instilled into us from birth and inherited from ages. Many minds are wholly incapable of this effort. How many unconscious and even benevolent oppressors, throughout the long history of class and race-dominations, down to the modern slave-holder (for there have been kindhearted slave-holders, we doubt not), have been able to comprehend, or to how many has it even occurred, that traditional acquiescence on the part of the subjected does not necessarily constitute a natural or religious sanction; that a time may come when it is actually not enough to tell the subject-class that they have everything they want or ought to want, that they ought to be thankful to be taken care of, for they cannot take care of themselves, that they are by nature inferior? There comes a time when irresponsible power appears in a different light to those on whom it is exercised from that in which it is seen by those exercising it. It is long,

indeed, before both parties become equally aware that *both* are injured by it; that justice, in such cases as these, "blesses both him that gives and him that takes," much in the moment of giving, more in its after results.

This domination of one sex over the other—that is, of one half the mature human race over the other half—has lasted longer than most others, because the physical force is permanently on the side of the first. And this, indeed, is sometimes itself considered as a decisive reason why women should not plead right and justice: they cannot enforce them; therefore nature means that they should not have them any further than man finds it convenient to allow. But to refuse justice because it cannot be enforced is not in other relations of life reckoned the highest morality.

To many men, conscious in their hearts of nothing but kindness, indulgence, and generosity to the women they associate with; to many who see, or think they see, fairly happy marriages all round them; who see how often women "get their own way," as it is called, by the good nature of their own particular rulers, by cajolery, by unconscionable teasing, by temper, by the obstinacy of their prejudices—those prejudices that men have fostered in women as "so feminine"—or even by superior good sense; to those who have perceived that society, even as it is, can produce noble-minded women, and have possibly worshipped such in their hearts, or who ask for nothing better than to be allowed tenderly to protect some tender creature whom they love—to these it may seem exaggerated, unreal, and ridiculous to talk of the domination of men over women—at least in England and in most civilized countries. I think, with all deference to the feelings of such men, it is because the evils it has produced and is still producing are so deep-seated and complex, and extend so far beyond their own especial social surroundings, that they have escaped their notice; their very position of legal superiority, of which they are scarcely conscious, so habituated are they to it, having blinded their eyes.

And so are many, many women's eyes blinded; many who, happy in their own circumstances, have never dreamed, any more than their masters, of questioning the authority of old tradition; have never connected the vices of the society around them, or their own shortcomings, in any way, however indirect, with the position women hold in it. These will generally seem unconscious that their contentment with their own condition, their ignorance how far even it might be higher or more useful, do not necessarily constitute an argument for other women in other circumstances. They will perhaps protest, when female suffrage

is spoken of, against women "stepping out of their right place." The question, however, is, what, after all, is woman's right place, the precise line beyond which it is profanation for her to step? Is it necessarily, precisely, and only the line pointed out by men—the point fixed by them in different ages, countries, and even classes, being different? Obediently as such women have adopted the traditional teaching of men, yet the question will arise, is it not just possible that men too have a little stepped out of their place in imposing these limits on women? It is allowed that they have done so, in more barbarous times, are they not doing so still?

Others again—multitudes—married and single, and of all classes, are conscious of something wrong in their own and others' lots, are pained by a vague uneasiness or suppressed bitterness, whilst without the culture needed to guide them clearly to one source of the evils,—we say *one*, for we are of course aware that the countless inequalities and iniquities growing up with a complicated civilization, and pressing so hardly even on many men, must have many sources. The evils however from which women suffer are especially aggravated by their legal position being essentially unchanged, whilst all things are changed around them.

In arguing for the principle of female citizenship, I must observe that the suffrage has no inherent magical or divine property in it to remove as by a charm all the evils of which we complain; yet, under our present institutions, the extension of it to women is the only way of expressing that principle, and is, I believe, an absolutely necessary balance to the increasing number of men now admitted. I am not, however, anxious to dwell much in this essay on the directly political aspect of the question, nor yet on the terrible wrongs and miseries of women under its legal aspects, but rather to call the attention of candid minds to various social considerations deeply affected by their political and legal position. For all these, I maintain, are interdependent, acting and reacting on each other.

In carrying out this view, I may seem sometimes to be wandering rather far afield; but I hope that some few, both of men and women, will perceive that these apparent wanderings do in fact all lead up very directly to the point at which I am aiming.

Before going further in this direction, however, I will just notice the chief objections that have been raised to the emancipation of women, objections mostly of detail, raised by those who, unable to grasp a large general idea, instinctively fix their eyes successively on the supposed difficulties in carrying it out. Some

of these objections—most of them, in fact—serve to display the curious ingenuity of the human mind in imagining hindrances to any alteration of an established order of things, the first feeling being always, not, how can we see our way to grant this? but, how shall we discover a sufficient number of objections to justify our refusal?

The objections in question have been answered over and over again; and it is a curious fact that in this discussion masculine opponents to the emancipation of women seem to have changed their traditional parts with women. Women urge a principle, men stumble at the details. Or they do acknowledge the principle, but decline to carry it to its legitimate results. Women ask for justice, men offer privileges; women advance reasons, men answer with their own feelings and instincts; women meet assertions with evidence in disproof, men re-assert them without attempting further proof.

Here, however, is the first, perhaps only, objection which really deserves attention, that the majority of women do not desire the suffrage.

I answer, that the minority which does desire it is a constantly increasing one (not adequately represented even by the increasing number of signatures to petitions). I must further point out that a large portion of the majority, which does not desire it, has simply not been educated to think about it, and has passed a great part of life without the subject having been brought before it at all; whilst the minority, that does desire it, includes very many women of the highest intellect and cultivation, who have thought deeply on the subject, and many who, feeling for themselves and their neighbours the need of better protection than masculine legislation has hitherto allowed them, gladly welcome the faintest hope of emancipation. Next, as to those who desire the suffrage without signing petitions for it, few men can realize, without some effort of the imagination, the pressure put upon women in all cases where their views differ from those of the masculine public. There is, to begin with, their own tenderness for the prejudices of those with whom they live, not to say positive prohibition by fathers and husbands—such arbitrary interference with the independence of mature minds being so sanctioned by law and custom that it is hard, even for those who suffer from it, to resist it. Next, we must take into account that intense shrinking from masculine sarcasm and mockery which has been so carefully fostered in women that they have justly been said to "live under a gospel of ridicule." And it is part of the argument that this moral coercion *has* been lavishly employed to supplement the legal subjection of women, much of their boasted

acquiescence in what *we* consider a faulty state of things having been thus produced. Few can realize, I repeat, without some reflection, some sympathetic insight, how much silent revolt goes on in subjected classes before they openly rebel. In men this silent revolt is generally held to be dangerous, and worth inquiring into; in women, for obvious reasons, it is not. And with women it will be longest maintained, and with more corroding bitterness in proportion, in spite of the persuasions, half contemptuous, half flattering, which now, more frequently than before, alternate with sneers.

Others again—thinking and conscientious women—are still undecided to put their names to the movement, deterred by an overstrained sense of their responsibility; but these may at any moment conclude in its favour, and cannot be reckoned in the majority against it.

I am ready to allow that there are women—and doubtless even some thinking and cultivated ones amongst them—(oftenest, however, such as profess no knowledge and reason on the subject, only “instincts” and “feelings”) who deprecate female suffrage altogether; many more who are absolutely indifferent, and all of these are apt to conceive that their own individual dislike or indifference is argument enough against extending the suffrage to those who do desire it, reason enough for withholding even their sympathy. Of all such women I would speak with respect and indulgence; yet may I not point out to them, and to the men who appeal to their authority, that it is scarcely reasonable that numbers of the thinking, the cultivated, the sensible, the practical, the suffering and oppressed amongst women should be denied their desire in deference to the “feelings and instincts,” the individual disinclination, or indifference of the others? Many, too, of these others are precisely those whom the present demand for the female franchise would not affect personally. I hold, nevertheless, that even these, the indifferent—all in fact—would be directly or indirectly benefited in time by the change. Those who do not want the franchise need not exercise it—that is their own affair, as it is of men, who in like manner may decline to vote, though we hold that the choice ought to be given to them nevertheless. I doubt, however, whether these very female dissentients will not be glad, when the time comes, to use their own votes after seeing how easily and quietly other women have used theirs before them. And what is more, I suspect the masculine objectors will be equally glad to profit by these votes.

Finally, the argument that women do not want the franchise and would be better without it, is in spirit the same as that by which slaveholders have always justified slavery. We do not

hold that the negro's ignorance of the moral evils of his position was an argument for keeping him in it.

Of the other objections it may almost be said, that to state them is to refute them. First of these we will take men's “instincts and feelings.” To us it does not seem more fair to decide the question of justice by the “instincts and feelings” of men than, as we have said, by the “instincts and feelings” of some women, as against the reason and practical needs of the others. And these “instincts and feelings” have been cited as authoritatively in sanction of restrictions which would *now* be thought barbarian, as of those still enforced and not yet thought barbarian.

Again, it is said that women are unfit for the vote, because they are women. It is true that the training enforced upon women, directly and indirectly, for ages, by men, whereby their characters and minds are in some sort the artificial creation of men, has seemingly had for its object to make them unfit for the powers men exercise. Women have, in consequence, for ages made no combined effort for emancipation; but exactly as they become aware of the real nature of this traditional training, does this supposed unfitness lessen, and the best way at this moment completely to fit them to exercise those powers is to grant them.

What mental or moral “fitness” is sought for as a qualification for the masculine voter, except by that rough sort of classification which does not exclude the drunkard, the wife beater, the illiterate, the liberated convict, and the semi-idiot? And when you place beside these Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale, George Eliot, and many more whose names we all know, as well as the numbers of women who show every kind of practical fitness in common life—to say that *these* are unfit because they are women, and *those* are fit because they are men, is very like begging the question.

But there are special unfitnesses urged against women. I cannot condescend to dwell on the argument that they are incapable of giving their vote for want of physical strength, or that the chronic state of “blushing and fear” prescribed for them by Mr. Bouverie would make it improper and impossible for even a middle-aged woman to face the bustle of polling-places, otherwise than by observing that if it were wished to grant women votes, means might easily be found for making it possible to deliver them. But I will mention one other (I think the only special) unfitness alleged against them (except indeed their want of training in political and official life, which they share with a large number of franchise-holding men). This special unfitness resides in their greater “impulsiveness,” “excitability,”

and "sympathy," which are supposed to include and imply "unreasonableness" and "injustice." Till, however, it is argued that Ireland, for example, is naturally disqualified for the suffrage because the Celt is more "excitable," "impulsive," and "sympathetic" than the Saxon—or indeed till, as I must repeat, moral or intellectual qualifications are made a *sine qua non* in any class of masculine voters whatever, this objection can hardly stand. I will, therefore, only suggest that the co-operation of impulse and sympathy with the more solid and matter-of-fact element in legislation may not be wholly without its political advantages.*

Next, it has been alleged that already too many *men* have the suffrage, as a reason for withholding it from women. Even granting the fact, it is not just to say that, because A has had too much given him of a good thing, therefore B shall have none at all, especially when B even requires it as a protection against A. At all events, the extended suffrage has been granted, and cannot now be withdrawn—one reason the more, as I have implied, why women should desire it in their turn, since they now see the drunkard, the wife-beater, the illiterate called, in much larger numbers than before, to legislate indirectly for their dearest and the most delicate domestic concerns, those alike of the most refined and cultivated as of the most helpless and uneducated of their sex.

Here, naturally, comes the assertion that "women are virtually represented by men." Indeed, on every proposed extension of political rights, it has been usual for the classes who thought their interests opposed to it to urge that *they* virtually represented the others. This assertion is disproved by the whole course of class legislation in all ages and everywhere; and the harshness of masculine legislation for women certainly forms no exception to the rule.†

If I am reminded that some classes of men are still unrepre-

* It has been argued that the supposed excitability of women will drive them downright mad, if they are allowed to vote. Mrs. Anderson has met this droll suggestion by affirming, from her own professional experience, the good effect, more interesting occupations, more important objects in life have on women's health, bodily and mental. If a woman finds her interest in politics bringing her to the brink of insanity, she will perhaps, under proper medical advice, be able to refrain; but that is her own affair. We do not legislate to prevent *men* from going mad if they choose.

† Take, as one instance, the laws of the custody and guardianship of children, whereby the married (only the *married*) mothers, they whose sex's special and highest function is said to be the maternal, are denied any legal right over their own offspring past the first few years of infancy, as against the will of the father, whatever or whoever he may be, living or dead.

sented, I answer (putting aside the possibly near approach of universal household suffrage), that *all* women of *all* classes are unrepresented, are all declared to labour under an irremediable birth-disqualification. Individual *men* of the unenfranchised classes can rise to acquire a vote: a woman never can. And women only ask for the vote on the same conditions as those on which it is conferred upon men.

Let us consider here the confessed difficulty of protecting wives in certain classes against the violence of their husbands, as bearing on the plea of "virtual representation." I would not brand any class of our countrymen with hard names, least of all those who have so long suffered, in common with women, such grievous legislative wrongs, such cruel deprivation of education, and are even now struggling to emancipate themselves, scarcely conscious yet that the women's cause rests on the same ground as theirs. But it is too sadly notorious to be denied that, in these working and labouring classes, public opinion and the growth of education have not yet banished drunken habits and consequent brutality, and that the difficulties in the way of adequate legal interposition are almost insuperable. Compare the penalties inflicted in these cases with those in which a wife has assaulted a husband, or one man another man. *Here* there is no difficulty in carrying out the full severity of the law. I do not assert that those who administer it do not *wish* to enforce it in behalf of women, though judges and juries do sometimes give us cause to suspect them of considering an assault by the inferior on the superior, by the weaker on the stronger, as more heinous than one with the conditions reversed.

The wife is, in these classes, so helplessly in her husband's power, so trained to feel the violence of her master as a part of his conjugal superiority, that she very often dares not, perhaps actually does not, resent his brutality. It seems to us that at least one approach towards remedying this state of things would be to surround her social status with every equal right and dignity the law can give her. Law should not aim at rendering her *more* helpless, *more* dependent than inferior strength would naturally make her. The same barbarian prejudice which excludes all women from every political right also subjects the wife to a law which has been called "the most barbarous in Europe." It has naturally taken its full effect on the uneducated classes, that is, it has degraded both man and woman together. That almost superstitious, dog-like patience and loyalty which lead a wife to submit to a beating without complaint, and which some men tenderly praise as the *ne plus ultra* of wife-like excellence, might, I think, be exchanged for a nobler form of devotion by making her her husband's legal and social equal; and one in-

direct step towards this will be giving women some share in making the laws which concern themselves.*

A favourite objection is, that the exercise of the suffrage will interfere with women's duties. It cannot be seriously meant by this that the taking up of a few hours every few years in delivering a vote will hinder a woman—even the most hard-working—in her daily duties more than it would a hard-working man. Indeed, in the present case, it is only asked for unmarried women and widows, many of them possessed of ample leisure and sufficient means. But is it meant that the possession of this franchise would so much more excite and unsettle their minds, and throw them so much more violently into political agitation in the quiet intervening years, than men, as to unfit them for those duties which we are assured it is their nature to perform, and which they find their chief happiness in? This argument rests on the following assumptions:—That it is the business of the legislature to provide more rigorously for the performance of women's private duties than men's; that their good sense and conscience will be found less trustworthy in proportion as they have liberty to exercise them; that whilst we legislate to prevent the race in general from following blindly its natural instincts, we must also legislate to prevent women from *forsaking* theirs at the first opportunity; and, finally, that women (unlike men) have no rights, only duties. Assuredly to a noble soul the word "duties" has a higher inspiration than the word "rights;" only some of the highest duties cannot be so well performed without rights. The circle of a slave's duties is very small, and that of a woman's—though she is no longer in England a slave—has been restricted to a point that future generations will view with wonder.

Again, some who do not so much object to the admission (taken by itself) of the unmarried possessing the legal qualifications, cannot see their way to the admission of wives, and consider that objection conclusive against the admission of any, as this would be granting privileges to the recognised "failures" of society while they are withheld from their recognised superiors. I can but say, that if to grant the suffrage be an act of justice, you ought not to refuse it to some because you cannot yet see your way to extending it to all. This theory of the inferiority of women in general to men, and the special inferiority to be enforced by legal subjection on the married amongst them,

* This is the more needful since legislation for women, whether so called protective or other, is more and more taking the shape of restrictions on their personal liberty.

who are yet declared to be the superiors of the single, involves some curious contradictions.

And further, these objectors fear that if you grant the suffrage to the single having the proper qualification, wives will by-and-by demand it as well—either by a change in the qualification for a vote, or in the marriage law. I answer, let that question be discussed when the time comes. It is neither just nor generous to refuse a rightful concession for fear other concessions may be asked for. Meanwhile the supposed moral difficulty of granting the suffrage to wives still rests mainly on the old assumption that women only wait the opportunity to discard their natural duties and affections; that men can be safely trusted with absolute authority over their families, but women not even with the exercise of an independent opinion; that wives at present neither have, nor in fact ought to have, any difference of opinion from their husbands (except on trivial points), but certainly would, if they were once permitted to act on their opinions; and that they will necessarily seize the vote as an occasion for quarrel; also on the assumption that it is the business of the State to provide against these little domestic difficulties in married life (but only, of course, by laying restrictions on the wife). I can scarcely suppose, however, that any man blessed with an affectionate wife seriously anticipates that, once possessed of a vote, she would make it her business to thwart and oppose him. If his wife is not an affectionate one, I fear the legislature cannot help him, and I am very sure it is not its business to do so. I think this fancied difficulty would be best met in the case of a wife not quarrelsomely disposed, but having an independent mind, by her husband's good humouredly reconciling himself to her possible difference of opinion in politics as he often has to do in matters of theology. But if such differences of opinion do so seriously affect the happiness of married life, let them be more carefully considered before marriage.

There is also the contradictory assumption that the wife's vote will be merely a double of her husband's, thus giving him two votes instead of one. Between these last two assumptions of perverse opposition on the one hand, and undue submission on the other, we may fairly strike a balance, and hope the State will fare none the worse in the end for the female married vote, should it be granted.

To be serious, I do not believe the harmony and dignity of married life—not even the dignity of the husband—can be best promoted by legislation to prevent quarrels; or by the theory that, as has been said, husband and wife are one, that the husband is

the one, and that the two ought to have only one opinion in politics between them—viz., the husband's. If we are accused of overlooking the practical difficulties which might arise in adjusting the votes of husband and wife, we answer that we may leave these to the moment when it is actually proposed to extend the franchise so far: if the principle is once conceded, a way will be found of carrying it out; for the rest, husbands and expectant husbands may defend their rights hereafter when they are attacked.

Having said thus much, I must add my own distinct opinion that the sooner this notion of marriage in any way disqualifying women for the exercise of personal rights or responsibility to the State is got rid of, the better for all parties. And I believe, moreover, that, when once the vote is granted to single women, married men will themselves begin to perceive this, and will desire that dignity for their wives which has been attained to by others.

The same answer will apply to the objection that women, when once admitted to the vote, will (logically) be eligible to a seat in Parliament. I think we may confidently leave this question also to be decided on its own merits by some future generation, and by the constituencies concerned.

Lastly, there is the objection—the most formidable of all to some minds—that all female aspirants to the suffrage are “strong-minded women,” and that “strong-minded women are very disagreeable.” If by “strong-minded women” is meant women of masculine character and idiosyncrasies, I believe as many of these might be found on one side as on the other, if it were worth while to inquire. If “strong-minded” means having a highly enlightened understanding, large ideas, and an ardent desire for the improvement of other women, I may suggest that these objectors would often be surprised to find how very charming such persons can make themselves. I dare say that the agitators for the abolition of slavery made themselves very disagreeable when urging their engrossing topic in season and out of season. People engaged in a great struggle will not always pause to consult the conventional rules of good taste, yet the cause may be a good one nevertheless. But I cannot gravely discuss this objection any further.

And now come two more serious reproaches addressed to women. “They have done so much mischief.” “They are agitating from a love of power.”

The accusation of “doing mischief” means, I imagine, only that women are not infallible in their judgment, any more than men (why is a human liability to mistake *more* disqualifying to

women than to men?), or that there are points on which the objectors differ from some women, or that there always will be points on which some men will differ from some women, it being assumed, of course, that women will always be in the wrong. If the objectors mean that women, having power given them by the legislature to do mischief, will do a great deal more than men in the same position have ever done, that is in fact begging the whole question. No past experience can be appealed to as decisive, since women have never been placed in the position supposed; although the absolute denial of all direct legitimate exercise of power sometimes drives intense and ardent natures into exercising it by methods less wholesome than a recognised responsibility would employ. But even granting this—alas! have men never done mischief, terrible mischief, during the long ages of masculine domination? Take, as one instance, the legislation for Ireland up to this century, and more recent times still; could any female legislation be more blind, unjust, inhuman, and—mischievous?

Is the world, as governed by men, a thing even now to congratulate ourselves upon? and may not women think that even a slight co-operation of their own with the other sex in the councils of the nation—we are not now speaking of admission to Parliament—might have prevented, might still prevent, some of this mischief?

The reproach that “women are agitating from love of power,” does not come with quite a good grace from that sex which has hitherto monopolized all power, exercised, as we think, with such grievous injustice to the other. But, in fact, the reproach is undeserved. Those who make it show such a misunderstanding of the deeply conscientious feelings and convictions on which this new movement is founded, as almost disqualifies them from discussing this question with us at all. Power to protect themselves from injustice women may be allowed to desire. But a still stronger motive is the belief that the welfare of society requires a different position for their whole sex.

Finally, recurring from all these details to the broad principle with which we started, that justice to women is morally the same as justice to man, I will only add, let this be acknowledged in the full meaning of the word, and all the ingeniously devised objections founded on woman's assumed inferiority to man fall at once to the ground. In the original fallacy, other false principles are involved, as that absolute perfection, moral and mental, is more needful in female than in male electors, and that to guard against possible inconvenience to men is a more pressing obligation than to remove an actual wrong to women.

I now come to those selfish inducements held out to woman herself to acquiesce in her present subjection, first glancing, however, at the half-triumphant warning that, with the privileges of citizenship, she must accept its burdens. That special burden which, I believe, the true Briton regards as the weightiest, that of taxation, she bears already, without the very privilege attached to it by divine right, as understood in Britain—to wit, the electoral franchise. This, though a flagrant departure from a cherished principle, I do not complain of as her hardest practical grievance; because in this case men, in fighting their own battle, must necessarily also fight that of women, and in some sort, therefore, do really represent them.

I must also advert to that appeal to women themselves on which men seem most triumphantly to rely. They say, that, if they are obliged to grant women equal social and legislative rights, *i.e.*, justice, they will no longer receive from men that so-called "chivalrous homage" which they regard apparently as sufficient compensation for every disadvantage and every humiliation attending the whole sex, in and out of drawing-rooms, and which they think women cannot reasonably look for except as a tribute to their legal inferiority and helplessness—that, in short, every virtue of which we can imagine women possessed, every gift of grace, beauty, and intelligence, joined, too, as they must *still* inevitably be, to inferiority of physical strength, will fail to secure for her man's respect and tenderness, unless she will accept him as her master and irresponsible political ruler. How is this? Is the spirit of "chivalry" a spirit of bargain? and a very one-sided bargain? Or, putting aside the idea of deliberate bargain, is this a faithful picture of man's nature—at least of Englishmen's, which is our chief present concern? Is it contrary to his nature, for instance, to yield kindly aid to inferior strength unless it will meekly confess to mental inferiority and will promise obedience? Is it contrary to his nature to be just and generous at the same time? We believe that men do themselves injustice in affirming this.

As for those outward symbols of "chivalrous homage" with which we are all familiar in drawing-rooms and such-like scenes, it is certainly, at first sight, hard to connect the forfeiture of these with the elevation of some women, or all women, to citizenship. But though it might be quite possible to do without these little privileges for so great an object, yet, truth to speak, the force of custom in regard to social etiquettes, even those generally felt to be burdensome and absurd, is so great that probably such harmless ones as these will long survive. I incline to think it will be long before all gentlemen remember to press out of drawing-rooms before their lady-acquaintances, to help themselves

first at table, to stand by whilst the objects of their former homage step out of their carriages, or into boats, without offering a hand, or in railway travel to remember not to be charmed by the looks or conversation of a lady fellow-passenger till they have satisfied themselves that she has not a vote. Seriously, I incline to think that men will observe all this innocent little ceremonial—which is partly a civilized regulation to secure orderliness in social intercourse, partly an assumption of a difference in physical strength, which, false or true, will not be affected by the possession of a vote—till women forfeit men's respect by forfeiting their own, a result not certain to follow from their acquiring a sense of higher responsibility to the State. These things will last probably till all society is placed on a different, perhaps simpler and nobler footing, by other concurrent changes in civilization and education still far distant. But what is best in our social humanity need never disappear—mutual courtesy, kindness, such consideration between the sexes, and such help and sympathy from each to each, as are surely no more to be grudged from men to women, in any case, than from the younger and stronger man to the old, and infirm, and respected of his own sex, however his equal in political rights and political intelligence.

On the other hand, there is surely something more real, more trustworthy in manly heroism, manly devotion to duty, than even in that "chivalrous homage" so admired as the most perfect compensation for female subjection, the most satisfactory modification possible of barbaric female slavery, and which generally expects in return some natural little gratification to its own self-love or vanity. I am not going to quarrel with it for thus seeking its reward—only it must not boast itself too much. We may be sure, too, that the spectacle of any brave, honest work, whether of the hand or the brain, done for love or duty, kindles the heart and imagination of the true woman, and exalts her respect for her partner, far more than that other spectacle of man making or upholding laws to secure to himself his wife's obedience, the possession of her property; and his own undivided control over his and her children, far more than his assurance that he classes her politically with idiots, lunatics, and criminals, in order to increase his own respect for her, and because she likes it—or, at least, ought to do so.

If these "chivalrous" opponents have the faith they profess in woman's native grace and refinement; if they do not believe these qualities to be entirely the creation of certain artificial restrictions on her liberty of action, which no education of thought and reason can supply the place of; if they do not believe she is dignified and refined solely by accessories and

surroundings, having *within herself* under no circumstances the power to dignify and refine *them*; if they do not hold this strangely "unchivalrous" and dishonouring doctrine of woman's nature, then how is it that they suppose all these precious attributes can be got rid of so very easily? They can scarcely believe she will lose them by learning to take an interest in the concerns of her country, and to express that interest every few years by a conscientious vote, in the delivering of which she may be as well protected as in witnessing the procession of a royal bride, a race, a play, or an opera. If there should appear, in any woman's ardour on these subjects, anything ungraceful or exaggerated, there is probably some such defect in her natural organization manifesting itself alike in all her doings. On the whole, a woman will be in politics pretty much what she is—by her natural temperament—in all other spheres.

But in fact such objectors, however "chivalrous," however kind-hearted—as many of them truly are—*have no faith* in woman, no faith in the goddess they worship with flattery, incense, and gay pageantry; and it would be well if they would frankly confess this. Then we should know exactly where to meet them. In the meanwhile, till man can acquire this faith, this generous trust, society will make small moral progress—and need we remind the shallowest student of human nature that to make human beings trustworthy, you must take courage to trust them?

That women's tender interest in those they love would be deadened by these enlarged views of political and social life, that they would thus grow somehow more selfish and less useful to men in consequence, is a prejudice such as has been held to justify even harsher restrictions, and one I think unworthy to influence for a moment a generous mind. That the blind idolatry with which they have often injured, sometimes ruined, their idols, will be exchanged for a feeling more elevated and elevating, is very likely; but we need not regret *this* transformation.

There is a refined and tender side, as I shall again and again admit, to these remonstrances. The ideal of graceful, clinging weakness, the "smiling domestic goddess"-ship (divorced indeed both from intellect and good sense), so admired by Thackeray, the sacred pedestal-worship of poetic theories, have such a charm for some manly imaginations, that the suggested introduction of some newer type is as terrifying to them as the threat of a new railway or row of houses to the inhabitants of a rural paradise. I predict, however, that amongst the many varieties of the female type we hope to see developed, whatever is really good and beautiful in their own favourite one is likely

still to "abound;" what is not so good and beautiful will be less easily rooted out than we could wish, and many a "fair defect" will long remain to rejoice their hearts and fancies. Such will be as the childish element in the race, and, as such, worthy of all indulgence and tenderness.

But I must also remind the "chivalrous" that their ideal is, and always has been, the monopoly of a small privileged class. For "chivalrous homage" has nothing to say to the poor, hard-working wives and mothers outside that, nor to the thousands of courageous single women who are too strenuously fighting the battle of life—often for others as well as for themselves—to have time to cultivate graceful clingingness, or to stand on pedestals. It would be hard, truly, to withhold citizenship, and whatever dignity and support it may confer from these "lonely, unadmired heroines," for the sake of keeping up a special feminine ideal as the monopoly of a special class.*

We see, indeed, where this long subjection of women, most favourably exhibited in the placing of some of them on a fancied pinnacle, has landed us at last. It finds us confronted by a glaring discrepancy between profession and performance, which must make the very word "chivalry," if they even heard it, seem a cruel mockery to the rest.

Some theorists, we know, will say, "True, all is not right as it now is; but there is a remedy. She is now *too* independent, she has got *one* hand free; bind *both* again, bind her hand and foot—put her more completely in men's power; but educate men and women better, so that man may be less likely to abuse his power, and woman may know her proper place; protect her exactly as you would a child, by stringent legislation, leaving her no discretion, no option, and then trust the rest to man's generosity, and the perfect dignity this perfect subjection and perfect powerlessness will give her." But women have a right to a voice before this theory of a dominant sex can be forced on them.

Moreover, let me remind the upholders *par excellence* of "feminine delicacy and refinement" how very different are and have been the ideas attached to these words in other ages and other countries, and maintained with obstinate persistence, and confidence that they rest on the immutable sanction of nature and religion. Ask the respectable Turkish father of a family what will happen to society when the harem doors are unlocked, and the women allowed to go forth unveiled—nay, ask the respectable Turk's ladylike wife and

* The number of women supporting themselves by manual labour, alone, is stated at three millions.

daughter—and their answer will be the same. Go back to the days, not so very long ago, when in all countries, Christian and pagan, a woman was married without her consent being asked; when worthy fathers of families would have been shocked at the indelicacy of a girl presuming to have a choice, or even a veto on her parents' choice. Nay, when the bold idea was first started of teaching women to read, "Fancy," can we not see it said in some popular journal of those mythical days? "fancy a woman forsaking the spindle and frying-pan, her own peculiar sciences, to plunge into the unfeminine mysteries of the alphabet!" Not to mention some *very* civilized European countries where, even in the present day, if a girl (of the drawing-room class, I mean) were known to have once walked out in town unattended, it would destroy her chance of marriage, and where it is with difficulty believed that such liberty in England is not abused.

Why, then, is it so certain that we here, in England and now, have reached that exact point of feminine freedom beyond which we cannot go without contradicting nature—that exact type of refinement which admits of no further modification? Let us remember that with every fresh instalment of liberty and independence granted to women by advancing civilization, every step forward from her primitive condition of slavery to her present position of legal subjection, she has received not less, but more, kindness and respect from men, and the masculine ideal has not ruinously suffered thereby. Women have attained to far more self-reliance and liberty of movement in the United States of America than in England; but no one has asserted that they are as a consequence of less importance to men, or treated with less deference. To say that their manners are not to the taste of those Englishmen who know them only by hearsay is beside the argument, nor is this distaste generally shared by Englishmen who know them by personal acquaintance.

Why, then, should we fear that one step further in the same path of independence would do all that the others have failed to do—at once revolutionize all the natural relations of the sexes, and transform, as we are so often told, women into men?

The truth is, social circumstances in all civilized communities, and notably in this, have outgrown the old theory of women's proper place in the world. The increased difficulty of living, felt in all classes, the 800,000 women in excess of men, the exclusion of women from all but one or two modes of gaining a precarious livelihood, the increased importance of education with so small an increase of the facilities offered to women, making it impossible for them to cope with men in the struggle for actual existence, and all these causes rendering marriage for women at

once more necessary and too often more impossible, such realities have reduced to a mere figment the theory of universal protection, dependence, and homage.

The men of the past did what seemed the best in those days; the men of the present are not to blame for the altered conditions which have made it the worst. But they will be to blame if they persist in upholding it and in regarding attempted reforms as attempts to "remove the landmarks of society;" if, in a word, they endeavour to force the life of successive generations of women into the old Chinese shoe of subjection and restraint, fancying that if they just make it a little easier, all will be right. The shoe must be made to fit perfectly, and women themselves must decide whether it does so.

And now comes the question of the influence actually exercised by women, in the cultivated and comfortable classes that is, for no other female influence over men is generally spoken of as of any importance. Gentlemen, when they speak of women, mean "ladies." And as "ladies" are the wives, mothers, and sisters of the class which at present governs us, their influence *should* be important, fearfully important; though this is no reason for casting aside so much as, in common parlance, we are too wont to do, the interests of women in the sphere beneath that recognised by "chivalry," and the influence which they too *ought* to be able to exercise.

But let us see what this influence of "ladies" is. We are told that it is very great, and those who say so are apt to go further, and fling all responsibility for social vices on the women of society. Let women humbly acknowledge to themselves their own shortcomings; they could not do much, but some of them, perhaps, might have done more. Capable, it may be, of better things, too many have been led ignobly astray by vanity and frivolity, too many by precept and example have done harm where they might have done good, thus, and in a thousand other ways, under a thousand disguises, rendering back to man the ill that the long domination of masculine ideas has wrought upon them. But while it is safe to be severe on themselves individually, it is not so safe to be blind to the faults of the social system under which they live. The fact remains that the influence of women for good, is very small, compared with what it is said to be, and might be, if men so willed it. No good influence, worth naming such, can be exercised but by an independent mind, and such independence is made tenfold more difficult to women at the present day, not only by men's prejudices, but by the difficulty of marriage resulting from the conditions before alluded to. This, an evil over which neither men nor women have any immediate control, is no doubt

in great part the secret of the humble attitude which women are apt to take towards men, and the triumphant scorn of the sex so frequently displayed by popular journals. But once conscious of these facts, the efforts of society to counteract their mischievous results should be unremitting.

This dependence, then, acknowledged, for men to lay the blame of their own weaknesses on their so-called "weaker" sisters, to seek to silence their remonstrances by assuring them that *they* are the guilty party, or at least equally guilty with their masters, of those social corruptions we all cannot but see around us, is an unconscious baseness which even good men sometimes fall into when judging of the other sex.

In order that woman may really exercise that wholesome and purifying influence ascribed to her as her natural attribute, she should herself be left free and unbiassed by fear or favour. If she is to inspire men with a refinement and morality a little deeper than drawing-room decorum, she must not herself have first to learn by rote from him the lesson she is to teach him again; she must not be cheated into taking all the rules of life unquestioning on man's traditional authority, and mistaking the dread of his reproach and ridicule for the voice of innate womanly conscience. She must not be coaxed, from earliest girlhood, by ball-room admirers, and even the gravest philosophers, into preferring her own (so-called) "feminine instincts," that is, prejudices, to the dictates of reason, sense, and duty, to find in later life "feminine unreasonableness" a bye-word in men's mouths, to find herself exposed to the good-humoured contempt of the placid husband and the scolding of the irritable one, and to hear—no longer as the delighted tribute to youthful charms, but as a grave disqualification—that women have "no sense of justice." She must not be taught that narrow views of religion are especially becoming to women, and the only safeguard to their virtue in the eyes of the laxer sex. She must not, as the mother of a family, have always that warning voice in her ear that "men hate learned women," or that "men don't want intellect in their wives" (which indeed is not so surprising in those who themselves have neither intellect nor learning) till her very schoolboy sons catch up the cry. She must not be brought up utterly to ignore all great social and national interests, all enlightened views of politics; she must not be taught that the one great object of woman's life is marriage, when every day the social obstacles in the way of marriage are increasing; and, above all, she must not be forced or hoodwinked into accepting from masculine dictation two distinct moral codes—one for men and the other for women.

Where these teachings have not been perfectly enforced, as of

course will often be the case, either from partial enlightenment in the teacher or instinctive revolt in the taught, they will be found to have caused in simple and noble minds more mental and moral suffering than actual moral deterioration. But what society has lost, still loses, by the waste of such good material, it has not yet attempted to reckon up. A movement has now been set on foot, and is slowly gaining strength, to repudiate these teachings, which have, as we have said, found rebels scattered here and there at all times; yet while legislation, man's legislation for woman, still represents the ideas embodied in them, still ignores the incongruity between the theory and the facts of woman's position in the world, so long will it be, not the elevating and purifying influence of woman upon man (the theory of "chivalrous" moralists), but the depressing and deteriorating influence of man upon woman, that regulates society. Let men, even philosophers, repeat as they will that "women have everything in their own power, that it is their own fault if men are not better than they are," I affirm that the more we look below the surface, the more we shall be convinced that whilst man remains the irresponsible legislator for women, these things will be as I have said.

The social phenomena developed by man's domination in women's education, ideas and character are so numerous and complex as almost to defy classification. I am far from classing the women, even of the sphere which we have taken for our text, "all in one," but this seems evident, that the general result has been a most disheartening mediocrity. We have hopes, it is true, that the efforts now being made by those social benefactresses, who are so earnestly fighting the educational battle for their sisters, powerfully aided by like-minded and generous men, will greatly mitigate this state of things for a fortunate part of the younger generation. But, for the present, though "the softening influence of domestic life," "the purity of English homes" are pretty phrases, yet, all the same, men and women are doing their best to degrade each other to a pitiful mediocrity. Not all the prettiness of blooming girlhood (and a pretty English girl is a charming object, whether one is in a moralizing mood or not), not all the brightness, activity and kind-heartedness of narrowly-educated women, however "clever" they may be, can hide this sad truth from our eyes.

Let us begin—working upwards from seeming trifles—with one time-honoured social institution, through which the wholesome and refining influence of one sex over the other is supposed to make itself felt. I tremble as I approach this sacred field, and find myself compelled in sober sadness to drop disrespectful words on the privileged flirtations of the young. I would not be

severe either on those who encourage or those who practise this favourite diversion. Yet, after all, in spite of the glamour thrown by youthful excitement and inexperience, by the regretful and sympathetic retrospect of age, and by the imagination of poets and painters over the ball, the croquet, the picnic, and all the other playgrounds of "society," it must be owned that the prospect is not encouraging to our hopes of the young. The "flirtation" which reigns here between the two sexes, encouraged by all social customs, provided for at the cost of time, money, health and mental improvement, has in it mischief which lies deeper than at first appears. It is more than "matter for a flying smile." Many will agree with me so far, but will strenuously resist the application of radical remedies to the whole position of society. Palliatives, not prevention, not cure, have ever been the favourite study of English philanthropy.

It is at this point of transitory, counterfeit courtship (in itself damaging to the freshness of youthful affections) that we first trace the effect of that low standard of excellence required from women. Man in general requires little from the woman he loves, still less from the woman he flirts with: we all know that a pretty face, a pretty dress and a few "womanly" coquetries generally suffice for him in either case, and he takes his chance of finding other qualities behind these when it is too late to make a fresh choice; while woman, dwarfed to meet these small requirements, requires little from him in return. And so the taste is formed, so marriages are made, and so society and the race are deteriorated.

The last thing I would wish to disparage is the natural, light-hearted, innocent enjoyment of each other's society, in the young of the two sexes. I wish it were far more easily come by and begun earlier too, and were freed from that uneasy self-consciousness which is so often and so needlessly substituted for the frank courage of innocence. From that morbidly-watchful egotism which, under the name of "propriety," used to be so much enjoined, and which would be ill-exchanged for the "fastness" of which, in certain circles, one hears so much, we turn with relief to that artless enjoyment of life and society which characterizes unspoiled girlhood, accompanied by a really strong interest in some pursuit. It finds its salvation in those genuine tastes which carry us out of ourselves (not necessarily "learned" or "intellectual")—it may be gardening, or music, or painting, or some kindred art—only, for Heaven's sake, let it be *real*, let it be good of its kind, let it be honestly followed; and the more of such the better.

On such common ground of genuine tastes and pursuits, young men and women may healthfully meet each other and prepare

for the closer partnership and co-operation of after-life; and much, very much, I trust, will this common ground be enlarged by wider education. But what has this happy, true-hearted sympathy, which one longs to see prevail everywhere, purged more and more from vanity and *arrière-pensée*, to do with the artificial sentimentalities, the unmeaning personalities, and empty rattle of flirtation, either between two equally trifling beings, or a so-called sensible man and a poor girl taught that to be admired she must "flirt" prettily, and dress prettily, and need not be well-informed? *These* have nothing in common but the common interest of vanity; and whether such a flirtation end in marriage or not, they who pursue it are equally injuring their own tastes and characters, and unfitting themselves for true marriage.

Sometimes indeed, as we all know, great misery follows from this playing with fire—especially in the woman, where an untrained, unoccupied mind is joined to a warm heart or vivid imagination. But how much of this suffering might be saved to either party if a frankness, now thought impossible between men and women, could be cultivated! Were this united to a more trained judgment and more engrossing occupations for women, we might less often see the sensational coquette followed by trains of admirers, her heart ever half-touched, and only half-satisfied, her frivolous vanity never satiated; we might less often see truer and more passionate hearts racked by the ignoble indecision or still more ignoble insincerity and heartlessness of a counterfeit lover. Women would then oftener see through the unworthiness of such a nature before it was too late, and the irretrievable waste of many a precious year of life be averted. The coquette, too, and even the much-abused "fast girl," would find better fields for their love of power (as natural to some women as to some men), as well as for the restless animal spirits and healthy untrained energies which are perhaps chiefly answerable for those vagaries to which the world is so severe.

And what must the marriages be to which this style of social intercourse leads up—putting aside for the moment moral questions of a more tragic significance? Will not this account partly for the falling off of youthful love and all the poetry of life which is thought almost inevitable in marriage? And may not much of the ignobleness of society, of class selfishness, national selfishness, have something to do with these commonplace impulses by which marriages are brought about and families are formed?

In this discouraging view, it must be observed, that we are speaking of what are considered the better kind of average marriages—that is, those which are more or less of choice (perhaps they might just as well be called of chance); not of the many which are in great measure dictated by motives of interest or

convenience, which latter, on the woman's side, is too often the supposed desperate necessity of being married at all. And this too is the result of our social arrangements!

It seems wonderful how that prevalent taste among men for female mediocrity is shared even by such as appear fit for better things. Negatives seem to attract, as if woman were to be admired rather for what she is without than what she has; the absence of some power or intellectual gift being constantly mentioned as a positive quality, not to say merit, rather than as a deficiency—a mode of estimation never used with men. And the qualities which do attract are too often superficial attributes, often those semi-childish prejudices and conventionalities, the result of a narrow education for generations, which are generally called "feminine instincts," and considered charming. This is partly the result of a prevalent idea that tenderness of feeling and good household management can seldom be found apart from these, and that the clinging subjection to man which is thought the natural position, the crowning grace of woman, is incompatible with a cultivated mind and original views. As often as not, however, his fancy invests with this poetic charm some nature below even the low standard he prefers; since whenever we limit our aspirations after excellence, we are liable to fall short even of that limit. Even these limited ideals vary, however; some profess to be content with the ideal of the intelligent cook and housekeeper, and hold that a woman cannot and ought not to have time for anything else.

Yet do not those men of sense and intellect who seek for attractive mediocrity, if they think about it at all, expect their sons to inherit their own masculine superiority, and their daughters to renew the maternal type? But there is no natural law forbidding—what in fact we so frequently see—the descent of intellectual gifts to the daughters, and the more commonplace attributes to the sons. These sons will probably marry their likes; the daughters, not finding their natural mates, and not able to seek for them, as probably as not remain unmarried.

Fortunately there are various types between the extremes we have mentioned, some, if rare, yet beautiful—tender, sympathetic, refined female natures, incapable of initiative, but appreciative and reverent of true superiority, by associating with which they gradually educate themselves, and in whose society a man tender and refined enough to appreciate their charm, may well feel himself blest. Yet even such beloved and tender beings feel too often a vague, painful sense of incompleteness and inferiority never quite absent—the greater because of its instinctive admiration of what is excellent. These, too, suffer

practically from that deficiency in the masculine ideal of women, which originally stunted their education.

One can understand and respect the man of uncultivated intellect who has the manly humility to acknowledge that a highly educated woman would not be a fit mate for him, and that tenderness, simplicity, and purity of heart, without even the perfecting grace of intellect, are enough for his needs. But what does fill us with regretful wonder is, that this incapacity to appreciate the best and completest should be ever made a boast by men, and expressed with the evident feeling that men's preference for the mediocre is a crushing sentence against the woman of trained intellect. Our most popular novelist, whilst sneering at the "heroic female character," bids us regard as the standard to which women should most aspire, the having "all the men in a cluster round her chair, all the young fellows battling to dance with her." According to this judgment, this special court of appeal to which the loftiest-minded woman must bow—her wisest policy, her most womanly grace, will be to disguise, at least, if she cannot extinguish, her superiority.

No woman of real refinement and right sympathies can wish to disparage *true* grace, beauty, and sweetness. They form together a power worthy of respectful homage. But they can hardly exist—at least, hardly last—without a certain strength and elevation of character. True sweetness means strength, not servility, not indiscriminating devotion (beautiful and commendable in a dog we allow, but not quite an adequate expression of womanly affection), not characterless goodness, not the mere liveliness of youth, nor silliness; true grace implies a harmonizing artistic faculty and a moral balance which can scarcely belong to a commonplace nature, guided only by conventional laws. As for true beauty, how little do we yet realize what glorious types of form and feature are in store for the world, when strength of body and mind, health, courage, and freedom have been developed by generations of enlightened culture—what radiance and fulness of life, what new intelligence and ardour of expression, what splendour of frame, such as we should now look on as fitter for another planet! These are dreams as yet, but they have a practical value if they preserve us from seeking our ideal in a direction contrary to true progress.

But to descend from these poetic heights—at least since the young, pretty, and lively have an influence over men's acts and wishes at present quite out of proportion to their power to use it well, they should be trained, if only with a view to the welfare of their own households, to a more enlightened sense of their responsibilities than men can at present appreciate. If any

modest man is alarmed at the prospect of an era of learned and splendid women, let him be assured that it will be long, very long before it comes, and that when it does, by the necessity of the case, men will have risen too. There will long be a supply of the women whom men emphatically call "feminine"—a word which has been for ages the engine of women's oppression. Its meanings have varied, but having been all imposed, directly or indirectly, by man, they are all so many badges of female subjection, both material and moral. Here we know we shall be contradicted by most men and by many women. Men will confidently appeal to the "instincts" of some female friend—perhaps some pretty young girl—and be confirmed by her positiveness, or her flippancy, or her timid acquiescence, in his belief that all true womanhood is on his side. It is much as if a slaveholder should appeal to some faithful, ignorant slave, born on his estate, as to the divinely-appointed necessity of slavery, and the virtues proper to his condition, and be quite satisfied with his "Yes, massa," in reply. It is quite possible that the slave does believe in the divine origin of slavery; it will not be the fault of his master's theological teachings if he does not. Women have been taught to do more than this—not merely to acquiesce, but to glory in their subjection.

One feature of this subjection is, as has been somewhere pointed out, that a double code of laws has been imposed on woman—one supposed to be common to all humanity, the other containing special regulations for herself—not merely supplementary of, but sometimes even contradicting, the other. These seem devised to keep up an enfeebling self-consciousness, and to turn the simple government of a healthy conscience into a sort of Lord Chamberlain's office of etiquettes. But there is, or ought to be, only one law for men and women; and such a "codification" will be, we trust, the great moral work of our age. One conscience, one education, one virtue, one liberty, one citizenship for men and women alike. It will not force them to do the same work, but it will enable them freely to choose their work. It will not make them the same, but it will help to make them perfect of their kind, and the world twice as great, and twice as happy.

Would it not, to begin with, be well first to instruct girls that weakness, cowardice, and ignorance cannot constitute at once the perfection of womankind and the imperfection of mankind—to cease, in short, to impress upon her the lesson epitomized in Mr. Charles Reed's short dialogue—

She. I feel all my sex's weakness,
He. And therein you are invincible.

May they not be led to cultivate grace, refinement, taste and beauty, because these things are good in themselves and make the world brighter and happier; not because men admire this, that, and the other in women, and are disgusted at its absence, and that therefore this, that, and the other are feminine attributes, and will get them partners at a ball, and perhaps for life. The original motive to this cultivation of grace and charm colours the whole of the after-life and character. On this depends whether she is to be a truthful free woman, the equal, sympathetic, and ennobling partner of man, or a sort of attractive slave, as man so often likes to picture her, to coax him by her personal charms into tenderness and morality without any trouble of his own.

"Female instincts," a favourite idea of unphilosophical minds, are called "feelings" as opposed to "reason;" and some mysterious moral advantage is supposed to accrue to the more "rational" sex from the presumed incapacity of their partners in life to look beyond personal and family interests, to draw rational inferences from facts, and to be just as well as generous. The "sacred nonsense" of mothers' talk to the child at their knee, recalled in Parliamentary utterances as one blessing to be destroyed by female suffrage, is a good illustration of this theme.

A good many sensible men, whilst unprepared to grant women equal rights and citizenship with themselves, will advocate a better education for them generally, will by no means confess to admiring ignorance and prejudice, and will even enjoy the conversation of a clever woman, if she be not *too* clever, and too much in earnest. But these notwithstanding, the view of woman's supposed defects, which I have stated before, defects either charming or provoking as you choose to take them, or as the subject of them is fifteen or fifty years old, is what has met and thwarted enlightened women at every turn.

Now, as regards "feeling" and "instinct," held, as they often are, as preferable respectively to "reason" and "judgment," let us compare that untrained, unenlightened maternal instinct which leads the mother to indulge her child to its own future injury, with that instinct trained and enlightened, which leads her for its future good not to shrink from its present suffering. Compare "feeling" which, in the shape of ignorance and prejudice, leads to narrow views of religion and to intolerance of some of the noblest and wisest of human thoughts and sentiments, with that "feeling," founded on knowledge and reason which leads to enthusiasm for what is noblest and wisest, whilst yet it can be kindly indulgent to that very ignorance which despises knowledge. The obstruction to social progress, caused by the fostering of these theological prejudices in women through the indulgence of even those husbands

and fathers who have them not themselves, can only be glanced at here. It is not a question of reason against feeling, but of allying the two, instead of keeping them apart by an irreligious divorce. To some minds the voice of reason is as the voice of conscience, and such, once awake to their responsibilities, can no more disobey the one voice than the other. These seem absolute truisms; yet how few there are, even of those who cannot contradict them, who will accord them practical recognition!

"Good Heavens! a young lady reason!" was once the exclamation of an educated Roman Catholic when mildly argued with by one of the angelic sex. Of course, as we were told in Parliament, "women's minds are absolutely closed to logic,"—this said in the face of an ever increasing number of women who can reason, and reason well, and whom men have not yet been able to answer. And why should it be "unfeminine" and "ungraceful," and all the rest of it, to appreciate the æsthetic beauty of a well-woven chain of reasoning? Partly, perhaps, because women have not the monopoly of reasoning ill. It is the superficially dexterous arguers, possibly, rather than deep and sincere thinkers amongst men who find a charm in female perverseness and irrationality in religion, politics, and subjects of thought generally. I can no more regard the power of right reasoning as a mental luxury, a privilege to be kept for the enjoyment of one sex, than I can regard correct drawing or correct intonation in music as perfections necessary in professionals, but merely unpleasing pedantry in amateurs.

Yes, surely the ardour of reason, so nearly akin to the passion for justice, is as proper for a woman as any other ardour looked upon as feminine *par excellence*. And there is an earnest vein in women which, as far as we have been able to observe, is opposed to the sophistications of the *merely* logical intellect, the cold-hearted amusement of arguing an important question without any real convictions. Such conscientious sincerity, even from a man's point of view, cannot be unwomanly.

"Unfeminine"—Alas, how much of good and great has that word blighted at its birth! On women's sensibilities, artificially fostered to an intense tenderness to the lightest sting, it does fall like the cut of a lash. But, after all, the government of the lash can only make slaves. As woman takes larger and loftier views of duty, she will learn to dread the stings of her conscience more than the lash of man's ridicule. She will look at the sun itself with undazzled eyes, not through the smoke dimmed glass man has handed her for her special use. As it is, this fear, inculcated through ages, haunts women from the cradle (and men cannot realize the effort it costs, even those who seem bravest, to shake it off), this fear which holds them back from expressing their real

opinions, hinders woman herself, as much as it hinders man, from knowing what she really is.

It is too true that a very large number of the women of one class, the comfortable drawing-room class, have ranged themselves with well-meaning docility in the ranks of this social police, have been the unconscious agents of a social terrorism, which man himself exercises almost unconsciously, while they innocently repeat the warning words of "feminine delicacy" and "ladylike propriety" which men have put into their mouths, and which they believe are the utterances of nature and religion, and the immutable conditions of civilized life.

Let us think how much we need a counteracting influence against those base motives of personal and class-selfishness which now honeycomb and almost threaten to destroy society, and how little women's "instincts" and "feelings" have done to supply this. I do not forget that, in all ages, at times of temporary excitement, there have been women found to sustain a man in the sacrifice of those whom he loves to duty, even when she and her children are to be the sacrificed; but one longs to see something of this spirit in everyday life and in peaceful times. The same woman who will cheerfully destroy her own health in nursing one she loves, who will uncomplainingly share with him his involuntary poverty, or even deserved disgrace, would on the other hand discourage him with all her powers of persuasion from risking his worldly fortune or bringing on himself the world's reproach, at some call of conscience with which she has not been taught to sympathize. Again, a husband should blush before his wife for a mean public action, a vote given through self-interest, or class-interest, or faction, as he would for cheating his neighbour, for official falsification as he would for perjury in a court of justice, for conniving at the bribery of an elector as he would for receiving stolen goods, for taking an unfair advantage in trade as he would for picking a pocket. But we hear nothing of the desirableness of feminine influence in such matters as these.

I turn now to the married state as affected in England by the marriage law, "the most barbarous," it has lately been said, "in Europe." "A woman," as has also lately been said, "loses when she marries, her name, her freedom, her individuality, her property, her vote" (municipal and other). A man takes from the woman he marries everything she has, yet is not bound to maintain her while she lives with him,* can use the forms of law to

* He is supposed to be bound to keep her off the rates, no more; but this practically means merely that she will be refused relief, if her husband is known to be able to support her.

force back a reluctant wife in spite of her aversion to live with him, and finally can take her children from her and give them to the care of some other woman if he pleases. This law, of which these are some of the most striking features—though, more or less, of course, a dead letter in affectionate marriages, but an easy instrument of iniquity in the hands of the unscrupulous—would almost seem indeed to be maintained for the special use of the bad. This law which, however modified in its practical workings by individual character, cannot but lower the whole conception of marriage for all but the exceptional few, even good men will tell us somehow helps to secure the happiness of married life generally! In its remote origin it was doubtless a valuable modification of worse evils, and in the days when no personal freedom was allowed to any woman, married or unmarried, when marriage was therefore merely an exchange of one servitude for another, there was at least no glaring incongruity in the theory of a wife's subjection.* But now, when she is supposed, once arrived at the years of discretion, to be a free agent, and to have a free choice in marriage, the position has become an antiquated anomaly. It would seem still to be upheld on the principle that because woman is weak, she should therefore be made helpless,—because man is strong, he shall have additional protection against the weak. In the classes where this law is most abused, because there education has done least to counteract its brutalizing effect on public opinion, there has been found a tendency in women (notably in manufacturing towns), to prefer unmarried unions to legitimate ones, for the sake of the greater protection of their self-earned contributions to the household, and the greater willingness of their partners to contribute their share, instead of spending all on themselves. Here, at least, is one natural result of a degrading and tyrannical law of marriage on those who suffer from it most helplessly. Before this new form of union tends universally to supplant the other, it might be better instead of vaguely deploring the immorality of the "lower classes," or contriving such piecemeal mitigations as have lately been enacted—to see if a radical reform of the old institution be not worth considering.

The truth is, our ideas are still perverted by the old fetish worship of husbands, so ludicrously expressed in the literature of past generations—that curious religion which made it a wife's highest virtue to pay the obedience of a slave to a master, how-

* Those who lay stress on particular texts of Scripture bearing on this subject should remember that there is sanction for domestic slavery in the New Testament, and the conclusion is that the first teachers of Christianity took social institutions as they found them.

ever cruel, capricious, or irrational he was, however noble and wise she, might be—in short, the greater his mental and moral inferiority to her, the greater the merit of her absolute submission. This doctrine, which turned him into a monstrous idol to be propitiated by an abject ceremonial—this ideal of wifehood, maintained by men with astonishing complacency, was carried to its highest perfection in the legend of "Patient Griselda," in which many men, we believe, still see a kind of pathetic beauty. It really exhibits the most repulsive perversion of moral feeling on both sides to which such a grotesque theory of marriage is capable of leading. This fetishism continues in a modified shape to be represented by the law of the land, and it colours more or less the ordinary ideal of marriage. There is, to be sure, a sort of humility in insisting on this right divine of husbands, since no more than the divine right of kings does it require any inherent superiority in the individual possessing it. But this kind of humility has in neither case proved beneficial to the governing or governed. Mr. Herbert Spencer has observed in the "Social Statics" that even as we "loathe" the custom which in savage nations forbids women to eat in company with men, so shall we come to loathe the civilized theories of the wife's subjection to her husband. The wonder is that any man can endure it.

Till absolute social and legal equality is the basis of the sacred partnership of marriage (the division of labours and duties in the family, by free agreement, implying no sort of inequality), till no superiority is recognised on either side but that of individual character and capacity, till marriage is no longer legally surrounded with penalties on the woman who enters into it as though she were a criminal,—till then the truest love, the truest sympathy, the truest happiness in it, will be the exception rather than the rule, and the real value of this relation, domestic and social, will be fatally missed. People may get on pretty well together, and be fairly fond of each other, without their married life presenting a spectacle particularly worthy of admiration, or suggesting a very excellent development of human nature. Of course, in numberless cases, a wife will find it her best wisdom as well as comfort in the conduct of life (especially as society is now constituted) to yield to the judgment of a husband who may probably be her superior in age, experience of life, and knowledge of the world; but this accidental part of marriage, if I may call it so, has nothing to do with the theory of divine right on the one side, and indelible inferiority on the other.

Connected with this faulty view of the marriage relations, is that other difficulty with which woman has been burdened by immemorial prejudice, grievously overweighted as she is already

without it—I mean the stigma of conventional humiliation attached to those women who pass their lives unmarried. It is, no doubt, like the fetish-worship of husbands, a relic of barbarism, but it is still strongly felt, and has been impressed by men on women themselves to their great detriment. It is not simply the opinion that, as a general rule, women are happier married than single; but that the unmarried woman, when she has ceased to be young, is an object not merely for pity, but more or less for contempt, though it is not always held good taste to express it, and some men are too sensible and manly to feel it. Apparently this notion rests on three assumptions, all of barbaric origin—namely, that a woman's highest glory and merit is to please men, that if she has not married she has failed to please men, and that her whole *raison d'être* is wifehood and motherhood. A man who has not become a husband and father may feel himself an honoured and important member of society; and till it is universally understood that a woman who from choice or chance is not a wife and mother, may fill an equally honoured and important position, true respect will not be paid to woman in any capacity, whether married or single. For the rest, the fact—not, I hope, without a possible good result on her general position as time goes on—of the eight hundred thousand women in excess of men in England, who must of necessity remain unmarried (and the disproportion continues, we believe, to increase) justifies us still further in protesting against this old world prejudice.

But the spectral difficulty it has raised is already diminishing. Women have done much for themselves towards that result, and if they will persevere it will be removed from their path altogether. The dignity and independence of womanhood must be maintained by an upright scrupulousness of choice in the first instance, to help which a much larger variety of occupation should be opened to women; and by faith in themselves, whether married or single. But in fighting this battle, as in so many others, she has been too often hindered rather than encouraged by the stronger sex.

"It is nonsense," Hawthorne remarks in the "Blithedale Romance," "and a miserable wrong—the result, like so many others, of masculine egotism—that the success or failure of a woman's existence should be made to depend wholly on the affections, and on one species of affection, while man has such a multitude of other chances, that this seems but an incident. For its own sake, if it will do no more, the world should throw open all its avenues to the passport of a woman's bleeding heart."

Before quitting the subject of the married relations, we must say a few words on the typical and most painful exemplification of the different moral codes imposed on men and women—one

having a most important bearing on these relations and the family and social influences which spring from them. We allude to the prevalent assumption that man is not bound by the same rule of moral purity as woman. An obvious development of the primitive barbaric notion of woman as the natural property of man, it is still held as a moral axiom, we believe, by the large majority of men. Unacknowledged in so many words by good men, abhorred, I doubt not, by many, denounced by the religion in whose dogmas the vicious still generally profess belief, it receives practical and almost universal recognition in the most civilized countries. Virtuous women, even, are perverted by conventional custom, persuaded, or tricked by their carefully-maintained ignorance, into assenting to it—and legislation is based upon it, as witness, amongst other examples, the law of divorce. Yet what does this distinction mean—unless it be wholly *un-meaning* and self-contradictory—except that *some* women are bound to lead purer lives than men, but *not all*?—That is, by man's traditional doctrine, the women of his own family, the women of the class he intends to marry into, are bound to be of unblemished purity, whilst the degradation in his behalf of less privileged classes is to be acquiesced in, nay, almost desired, as a social necessity. And is it at *this* price we purchase the boasted purity of English homes, with all its graceful accompaniments of chivalrous homage—by the maintenance, in a sort of pretended secrecy, of an unparalleled humiliation and slavery of woman, in a so-called free country, by those who profess to honour her the most?

Even good men, with consciences individually clear as to this matter, will shake their heads and say it *must* be—that this evil cannot be expelled from society;—indeed some say it ought not to be expelled, lest a greater evil take its place. And the good, by their silence, their acquiescence, play into the hands of the majority. But those women who think for themselves on this terrible subject, indignantly ask—By what right does any society exist on such a foundation? What right have certain classes of women to enjoy, safe and untempted, an aristocracy of virtue at the expense of the poor, the ignorant, the young, orphaned, helpless and thoughtless, the desolate and deserted, yearly, daily bribed, entrapped, tempted, goaded, and betrayed into a Hell upon earth—that men may go on talking about the "purity of English homes"—the beautiful result of high civilization and feminine subjection? Upon the seething surface of this infernal region men build their own happy households, content if no sound from below rises up to shock the ears of unconscious wives and daughters! The denizens of that region are not waiting at leisure till it shall please them to forsake their

evil lives, and become the happy and honoured heads of families: that crowning reward is reserved for the men who have profited by, and shared in, their degradation, whose easy repentance is gloried in as one more tribute to the moralizing influence of women, and in whose persons the sacred names of husband and father are thus daily and triumphantly profaned. For when they are weary of base dissipation, there is always some ignorant girl ready to confer these names upon them, to learn, probably, by degrees, that men are not bound to be as pure as women, to resign herself to her sons leading the same lives as their father before them, and to her daughters marrying men who lead the same lives as their brothers. But if this is what is meant by the "purity of English homes," are we so very sure that even this one-sided purity will always be maintained? Is it certain that no moral contamination from men's earlier associations ever enters there? Are we sure that the house built on such a foundation will always stand firm?

This brand upon society, this blight on every effort at true reform in any direction, will not be removed by sentimentalism, by costly subscriptions to churches, refuges, and reformatories, nor any other of the palliatives society seems to prefer to prevention, and which so often tend to maintain the original evil—no, nor by efforts to keep the women of one class ignorant of the degradation of women in another. The jealous trades-unionism of men which meets women at every turn in the struggle for existence, does not close the avenues of *this* trade to her. All the restrictions on her honest industry which well-meaning masculine philanthropy can devise, on the theory that she is a grown-up child, do not debar her from *this* calling. The romantic homage of the chivalrous does not shield her from *this* dishonour.

Many influences, no doubt, not directly traceable to masculine domination, tend to swell this evil. Against these the two forces of the human race should be brought to bear in combination, as they have never yet been brought. The single government of man has proved unequal to the task. Till woman has an equal or something more like an equal share in the councils of humanity, till she ceases to be the submissive subject of man, the two will not be brought to agree together on one standard of moral purity for both; and till then, man will not learn to reverence and desire purity, not in the women of one class only, but in all women—and not in woman only, but in himself as well.

In what I have just said I shall have, I am sure, some sort of sympathy and agreement from any who can in noways go along with me as to the proposed radical treatment of social mischiefs. Some of these have set before them a never yet

realized and unrealizable ideal, in which I must once again acknowledge, with all sincerity and respect, a certain refinement, tenderness, and artificial beauty, nay, a kind of generosity gone astray. Such I oppose with regret. These would fain crystallize for all time the whole system of sentimental and sublimated injustice embodied in the chivalry theory. For them woman is always to be a glorified, but well-educated invalid, who is to influence man for his good by her physical imperfections, as much as by her ethereal and intuitive morality and docile affections. She is to guard this physical incapacity as well as her supposed incapability of sharing in the highest national concerns, and her unfitness for any social business beyond the precincts of home, as sacred treasures, because man, it is said, requires this contrast to himself as a moralizing element in his life. In his own particular walk of life, which is apparently to be kept as separate from hers as possible, it would almost seem he may be hard and coarse with a safe conscience because the woman he leaves at home remains soft and delicate.

And so on. To me the whole theory seems a morbid one. One longs to take off these golden chains, open the hothouse doors, and turn the ethereal prisoner into free fresh air, to develop her moral and intellectual muscle and stature at her will. The proposed arrangement consistently carried out, as we know it never has been, and I believe never can be, seems to us much as if we mortals should invite an angel from heaven to cast in his lot with us, to purify our morals and affections by his example and sympathy, to educate our children, and housekeep for us, on condition of strictly acknowledging our absolute authority and his own unalterably subordinate position, renouncing as unangelic all independent action and opinion, all share in deciding those earthly laws under which he is to live amongst us, and promising to *stay at home*, we on our side engaging to pay the obedient angel semi-divine honours, and in general to treat him with every indulgence and consideration. But then, if the angel should not like the bargain, he would at least be free to stay in heaven—whilst woman is here, and has no neutral ground to retire to, pending the negotiation. It seems scarcely fair to take advantage of her necessary presence amongst us, to impose on her conditions more stringent than with absolutely free choice, and full comprehension of the state of the case, she would care to accept.

No, let her have as free play for her natural capacities as man; not necessarily, as I have said before, to do always the same things as man, but to try fairly what she can do, and possibly thus greatly widen the sphere and vary the details of what she ought to do. If *then* she is willing to forego all the new, natural, healthful and

legitimate ambitions and aspirations (as I hold them to be), growing up within her, and lightening even that burden of glorified invalidhood, thought to be her divinely appointed portion (except indeed in the working classes); if, after full and intelligent consideration, she decides she is not fit to share any of the higher responsibilities of citizenship with man; if, after trying what liberty of thought, conscience and action means; if after enjoying a free field for those gifts and faculties which are as various, and as imperatively cry out for exercise in women as in men; if, after learning to look on marriage as the happy alternative to other happy and satisfying occupations—not a social necessity; if after finding her voice in all that concerns the morals and welfare of society, deserving of, and listened to, with as much respect as man's; if after feeling herself a part of the state, not a servant submitting by compulsion to the will of the men in it, whether or no her judgment concurs in theirs; if after experiencing the blessing of having some little control over the laws by which the most sacred concerns of her life are to be governed; if, in one word, after being grown up, and after enjoying the privileges of a free woman, she is willing to become a child once more, and to fall back again into absolute subjection to an irresponsible sex—well and good. But the fair opportunity of choice—of understanding even the nature of the choice—has not yet been given her. If her instincts and characteristics are really as indelible as the "metaphysical" chivalry-theory makes them, then, with all freedom of choice possible, she will of course renounce the new life opening upon her. But we shall see.

For myself I fervently believe that generations of a nobler and freer culture will ennoble and liberate her very bodily frame (as I have before said) into a health, strength and beauty hitherto undreamt of; not transform her into man—why was such a senseless misrepresentation ever dragged in to degrade a serious discussion into burlesque?—but into glorified womanhood. This change, alone, would in time revolutionize the whole race, and man himself would grow to a greatness he denies himself whilst he ignorantly insists on stunting woman. Hitherto nature has always been brought into court as a hostile witness whenever it has been a question of elevating her condition in any one direction. We shall see whether nature, allowed to speak freely, is not *the* irresistibly conclusive witness on woman's side.

I must now add a remark the truth of which is, indeed, obtaining general recognition—viz., that men themselves are often, as might be expected, the victims of the faulty social system of which we complain, and are as unconscious as the

majority of women are of the causes and possible remedy of its evils. Certainly many a hard-worked father who wears out health and spirits in an irksome profession that his daughters may enjoy amusements and luxuries in which he has little share, and to the earning of which they contribute nothing, might well be confounded at finding himself classed amongst the oppressors of women, and the women of his family as victims. Assuredly, it is not these latter whom we pity, except for that melancholy conventionality fostered by false views of woman's position in society which has so long sanctioned such contented idleness in young ladies' lives, and for the possibly bitter regrets of after years. Women, too, have their own class-privileges over other women; they, too, have to be constantly on their guard against a consequent blindness to the claims of others. There are class-abuses, class-difficulties, which it will take the whole united strength of society to sweep away. But of all class-reforms in store for the future we can still conceive of none so vitally important to the whole human race as the emancipation of woman. It will be the beginning of a new world-era, a new revelation, a new religion to man.

Yet one word more. I have still to thank with heart and soul, and in the name of all women who have the same aspirations as myself, those men who for us represent whatever is most truly wise and most truly just in the other sex, who for us, that is, represent man as he will be in the new era. It is they who by their faith in us strengthen all our efforts to deserve it; whose noble sympathy, and patience with the mistakes which women, as well as men, must needs fall into when entering on an untried course, may most worthily be repaid by care to appreciate what is best even in those who as yet oppose our dearest wishes, and, as we think, our highest destinies. Those men whose self-respect and dignity of nature forbid them to fear loss or injury to themselves from the elevation of others so long held to be their inferiors, should, by their willingness to abdicate their old conventional supremacy, inspire a corresponding generosity and a true humility in ourselves.

I will conclude my whole subject with a quotation from the American writer, who having made a successful practical protest, during the late war, against the theory of indelible race-inferiority by the training of a negro regiment, has since generously taken up the case of sex-domination. He thus writes:—

"Thus far my whole 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 on her shoulder, has taunted her with not rising. But the ulterior question remains behind—How came she into this attitude originally? Explain this explanation, the logician fairly demands. Granted that woman is weak, because she has been systematically degraded; but why was she so 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 civilizations. 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. . . . The truth simply was, that her time had not come. Physical strength must rule for a time, and she was the weaker . . . and the degradation of woman was simply a part of a system which has indeed had its day, but has bequeathed its associations. . . . 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. . . . 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, for it was an empire of the muscles, enlisting, at best, but the lower parts 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. 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.”*

* “Ought Women to learn the Alphabet?” By T. W. Higginson.

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