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WHAT WOMEN HAVE A RIGHT TO,

A LECTURE

BY

✓ ARABELLA SHORE.

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WHAT WOMEN HAVE A RIGHT TO.

(A Lecture addressed March 2nd, 1879, to a meeting of members of Working Women's Unions at the Office of the Women's Protective and Provident League, 36, Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn.)

I have been asked to address you on the above subject, and I will at once begin by explaining what I consider to be included in that somewhat large and comprehensive title, "What Women have a Right to." They have a right to a livelihood, to a fair day's wages for a fair day's work, which means what it means with men, allowing for all the influences which necessarily affect its precise nature according to varying times and places; the means to live decently and with sufficient comfort and to bring up a family decently. It means also a right to just and equal laws, to have their interests, their persons and their property, as well protected, as completely their own, as those of men are. And finally it means,—because this last right is the guarantee of all the others,—a right to the position of citizens and the privileges belonging to such, which include a share in the regulation by law of their own affairs.

The key to this right, and consequently to all the others, is in one simple measure, that is, in the Bill for the removal of the Electoral Disabilities of Women, in one word for the admission of Women householders to the Parliamentary Suffrage. The Suffrage is the right to vote for a Member of Parliament. Every county and every borough has the right to choose one or two men to represent them in the House of Commons. It is considered that every class in the community should have something to do with the making of the laws by which we are governed. This we have by having a control over the members who make those laws. Of course the chief immediate power is in the hands of the Ministers who direct all affairs, but then those Ministers depend entirely on having a majority in the House of Commons, that is on the greatest number of members being willing to vote for their measures. And that majority must attend to the wishes of the constituencies that return them. For, if they go against those views, that constituency will not return them again, but will choose some one who suits them better. This is what is called Representative Government and it is the principle acted upon in many other matters, in Municipal Councils, in School Boards and whenever any class have rights or interests which they desire to defend; that is, they choose some out of their body to manage their cause for them, and if it is not well done they choose others in their place. The people of England are in this case, and we come back to that, that they have or ought to have a voice in the management of the country's affairs.

But when we ask, who are the people? we are answered, why, almost all the men. The women? no, they have nothing to do,

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but to be governed, to submit and to obey. You know what the qualification which gives a man a right to vote, is. If he lives in a town, it is the being the head of a household and paying rates, if he is in the country, it is the having a freehold or paying £12 rental. Well, this brings down the right to vote very low indeed, to all but the agricultural labourers, and it is very likely that they will soon have it given them by an Act of Parliament; and then, this will be the state of the case, that the governing class will consist of all the men, and the governed of all the women. And a great number of these our rulers will be much less educated than you, less orderly and less law-abiding, and at all events they will not be as good judges as you of your own interests and your own wishes, and yet they will settle for you your dearest, your most domestic affairs, such as your relations with your husbands and your care of your children, and you will have no voice in it at all, no more than you have now.

I am often asked,—and it is quite right in people to be careful that they understand what our meaning and our object is,—do we ask the Suffrage for married women as well as widows and single women? I answer, certainly not. This must be particularly understood, because objections are founded on a misunderstanding in this matter. It is not of course that married women are not just as fit as single women and have not equally interests to be defended; but we can only ask it for those women who have the qualifications that give it to men. We go by the law just as it is, and householders' suffrage is the law of the land. Well, we ask why half the householders are excluded, why no amount of property gives women any right? Can any one tell me why? Do not women manage their property just as well as men? Do they not pay the rates and taxes? Is not the work they do in the world just as useful as that of men? Could this great community go on living and prospering without women, any more than it could without men? have they not their places, their work, their functions in it, and most important ones? They keep the home and regulate the household, they rear the future generation, they help to earn the bread, not unfrequently they are the principal bread-winners. To do all this requires faculties which fits a woman for larger spheres just as a man's work does him.

What then is the reason but *because* they are women? that is beings whom men, through prejudices handed down from ancient and barbarous times, regard as their inferiors and therefore think that they ought not to have the same rights and privileges. There *was* a time when women were treated just like animals and it is not to be wondered at therefore if they were then in many respects much inferior to men. And for a long while women were contented with this debased condition. It was just as with slaves, who were not regarded as human beings, and had no idea that they had rights and duties too, as human beings, like their masters. But men have grown more civilized, and women too have discovered that they are fit for something better than subjection and drudgery. Since they have had leave to use their

faculties, they have used them well; and many a beautiful book, many a good work, many a wise thought and courageous undertaking, do we owe to women. I do not accuse men in general of undervaluing us; I think they have gladly accorded us this better social position and this liberty to use our faculties, and do us justice in their estimation of us, now that they see what we can do. But the law does not do so, for the law in these respects is the survival of old and barbarous notions. You see there is scarcely a class of men that the law does not put above women in this matter of the vote; and, from the strength of habit and dislike to change, even good men will maintain this state of things to be right. The law has pronounced no class of men to be ineligible for the vote save paupers, idiots, lunatics and criminals. But a man can hardly be enough of any of these things to disqualify himself; for if an idiot just knows the names of the candidates or the parties, he can vote, or the lunatic in a lucid interval; the pauperism of course need not be a permanent disqualification; and an ex-convict, however often he has been convicted, may vote as soon as he is free from the penalties of the law. But you, however wealthy, sensible, virtuous or respectable, may *never* vote, because you are women. It is said that women are too silly, too ignorant, too I know not what, to vote. No doubt, many women do know nothing of politics, but then there are many men who do not either. And if women are too silly and ignorant to do what the silliest and most ignorant men are fit to do, they must surely be unfit to manage any business whatever. We should ask what *are* politics? They are the affairs of the nation, the mode in which it is governed, the laws that are made for it and the whole machinery by which that law-making is carried on. And these laws regulate our actions in many serious and important matters. The laws have to do with us in our houses, our marriages and children, our work and callings, our buyings and sellings, and are not women deeply concerned with all this? And there are between 300,000 and 400,000 women, widows and single, who pay rates and taxes, that is about the seventh part of the whole number of the ratepayers; all these are in exactly the same position as men, maintaining themselves or living on their property, and helping to maintain the State. If men desire the suffrage for themselves, may not the women who are in the same position as men desire it too?

Do you know the reason why men desire to have votes? It is a right which Englishmen have set themselves steadily to acquire and to maintain as the most precious of rights. It is in the first place because it is the best defence against a tyranny. There is the tyranny of a single man, the sovereign. In some countries he has absolute power to do what he likes with his subjects, but with us he cannot do so, for he is under the control of a Ministry who owe their power to the consent of all the people. Moreover, it is a defence against the tyranny of a class or classes over the others. You know that in former days, and even now in some other countries, the nobility, that is the men of rank and the great wealthy landowners, have kept the other

classes subject to them, making laws for their own advantage and exacting labour, military service and money from the working classes. But even now the classes that have most to do with making the laws may be apt to make laws too favourable to themselves, to neglect the interests of the classes below them and not look into their grievances. Well, through their possession of a vote, classes of men can look after their own interests in the manner I have told you, by selecting men who will undertake this duty in Parliament.

This leads us to the first reason why women ought to have the Suffrage. They have various grievances to which men are not exposed. Of course in a general way the laws made for men affect women as well; in the matter of taxation women's interests are the same as men's, and in general the laws for the protection of person and property are the same. But there is an exception, that is in the laws concerning women in their special relation to men, that is as wives and mothers; and these laws are unjust and often even cruel. This is a grievance which affects all classes of women, the rich as well as the poor; because the law has decided that a woman, on marrying, forfeits all her rights and becomes entirely her husband's property, she and all that she has. It is true that in the case of rich persons there is a device called settlements which for the sake of the children, not the wife, will secure her property in some measure, but this is a very imperfect and uncertain arrangement, and it does not give her the real possession of it. Also, a few years ago a law was passed which gives a married woman a right to her own earnings. All you working women must feel what cruel wrongs were caused by that state of the law which enabled a bad husband who did not work but only wasted, to seize for himself all the hard earned money with which the wife was trying to maintain herself and her children. But all this has been badly done and though people allow that the law wants further improving and still causes many hardships, it is very difficult to get any alteration made in it.

Then with respect to children—you know that by law they belong to the father only, the mother has no right to them at all. The father is to decide how they are to be brought up, and if the mother objects they may be taken from her. Even if the father is dead, the mother is not their natural guardian; he may leave the care of them to any one he pleases, and the mother may be punished if she persists in retaining her own children. I have known mothers who rather than submit to this law which took their children from them and gave them to a stranger's charge, have run away to foreign countries and hidden themselves under false names with them.

Now, do you think that if women had any share in making or altering the laws they would allow such laws to stand?

These laws, as I have said, apply only to married women, but there are other laws that apply to all; and what we complain of is that women have not been consulted at all about them. There are the Factory and Workshop Acts for instance, meant kindly no doubt, in order to protect workwomen from being overworked

by their employers, as it is supposed that women cannot protect themselves. But there is no real reason why they should not do so; it is treating them like children, and such legislation is the way to keep them still more dependent, more helpless, more unfit to take care of themselves. And the results of this interference are in many ways such as to make the women's case worse than it was; their work becomes less valuable and their wages are reduced, or they are dismissed, and men, who are not so restricted, are taken in their place. This happened once in Wales, all the women were dismissed from a factory on the ground that their work could not keep pace with the men's; so they had to find work in farms and publichouses where they had longer hours and less pay. And besides, these regulations are very minute, disagreeable and inquisitorial, their hours and places of work and meals are fixed for them and inspectors may come into a house where workwomen are employed at any hour of the day or night with a policeman to see that the rules are observed; refusal to admit them being punished by a fine of £5. A poor woman working in her own room with a single assistant is liable to this inspection. And a House of Commons composed of men settles all this, without regard to women's views on the subject. The women's delegates to the Trades' Congress protesting against restrictive legislation for grown-up women obtained no attention, the evidence given by women before the Royal Commission was disregarded and an audience was refused to a deputation of women by the Home Secretary. This and other facts of a like nature make one feel that, so far as special legislation for them is concerned, women are living under a despotism, not a free government.

But even worse than the hardships inflicted by law are the difficulties of women's economic position, the difficulty of gaining your bread, the difficulty of keeping sufficiently ahead in the struggle for existence. There are nearly a million more women in England than men; and there are upwards of three millions of women who have to work for their bread, and these require the power of self-protection as much as men do, in some respects even more.

We know that women's wages are very low, always much lower than men's, even when employed in the same business, in many occupations not enough to raise them much above destitution. We know that there is no fixed standard for women's wages, that they vary capriciously, being pretty much what employers choose to give them, that the women are in many respects at the mercy of those employers, subject to sudden unfair reductions, that they have often to work very hard with long hours and inadequate pay. Various reasons are given for this. One is the excess of supply over demand, and this is no doubt true in certain kinds of labour, as for instance needlework, in which we know that unfortunate creatures may come down to twopence or threepence a day and be found at last dead of hunger on their garret floor. But this is not true in many kinds of work, for in some even of the worst paid there is a constant demand for women, bills and advertisements being posted up to that effect. Another reason given is the absence of skilled work in women,

and no doubt it is part of their distressed condition that they cannot afford to get the early special training which men can procure, and so are obliged to overcrowd the callings that require less training and are paid less. But also even where they do such work as, from the peculiar delicacy of touch that it requires, is best suited to women, and in which long training has made them skilled, they yet receive but from 11s. to 17s. per week while the roughest most unskilled workmen have 18s. Want of strength is also alleged against them, but it has been testified by their employers that they make up for that by working quicker and having more energy of will to compress more work into a given time; and indeed, when women will work from twelve to eighteen hours a day, such endurance testifies to a strength which is something more than that of muscle. This is said to be the case in the cigar trade, in which they receive forty per cent less than the men. We must look then for other reasons as well as those mentioned for this general low value of women's work and I think we shall find one cause to be the kind of prejudice which causes women to be regarded as naturally inferiors, which causes far less account to be made of their work than men's, which makes all the high, honourable, well-paid callings to be kept for men. No doubt in early times it was considered that every woman would marry, and that, as her only business was to keep the home and rear the children while the man worked for them, there was no need of a calling for her. But this we know is now far from being the case; for besides the nearly a million of surplus women who cannot marry, many of whom have to maintain themselves, a great number of the wives have to work also to help to maintain their homes. Here then we have a strange state of things, a rapidly growing class of the community, sober and industrious, working with the greatest energy and application and yet with all their efforts unable to support themselves by the payment of their labour, as shown by the wages they receive. And I have shown you how little value is attached to their work, how often they are at the mercy of their employers who may be exacting, capricious or unjust, and we know that the too common alternatives for women who cannot live by the work of their hands are vice, the workhouse or destitution.

Now when men in the employment of others have been under like unfavourable circumstances they have as we know an organization ready which assists them in various ways. You all know the advantages of these Unions, and it has occurred to many of you that women might do the like, that if like men they combined to stand out for their rights they might secure better treatment and fairer pay. I shall not dwell on the benefit you derive from these Protective and Provident Unions, for you all know much more of them than I do; and all the advice and guidance you require, you can obtain from your excellent friend and Secretary, Mrs. Paterson.

But what I wish to impress upon you is that these Unions for your own protection, this organization of women's work, are a kind of beginning of political life; this is what men do who have

resolved to protect their rights from any unfair law or any oppression by Government. It was by such unions that the people of England have obtained their freedom, a fair and just Government and the abolition of bad laws. It is not necessary fortunately to regard yourselves as fighting against tyrants or trying to force others to yield you advantages over them; because the evil comes in a great degree from ignorance on all sides, and you by understanding your own interests will help others to understand them too; and besides the good of all classes, of employers and workers, of governors and governed, is bound closely up together, and we are acting for the whole when we are acting wisely and honestly for a part. And by such action you are fitting yourselves for having a share in the general protection and defence of all the peoples' rights, which are yours too in a general way, just as the right to fair wages and just treatment from your employers is yours in a special way. Thinking and acting together for a common object is an inestimable political education. And if women, thus learning to organize themselves and act together for the good of each and of all, will bring those means to bear on the one great object of obtaining the suffrage, and if thus they obtain it, men will necessarily from that time regard them as equals; they will rise in social importance and they will value themselves more. And again when they have a part in the business of government—I mean as much part as all men who, like them, work and pay to maintain the government have—the share this gives them in common action, the feeling that they help to form a public opinion, to give power to the public opinion, all this again will help them still more to a habit of union and co-operation. No class needs this habit and this training more than working women; they have interests as a class which they themselves must best defend when once they are roused to it and know how.

2.—I have given you thus one reason why women should have the vote, that is to take care of their own interests, but there are other reasons of a more general nature which are of great importance to the well-being of the community. One is that they can help to advocate measures for the good of the country. There is much that sensible women can understand and can do in public matters without being at all required to interfere in what is beyond them. In all matters affecting the welfare of the people we have a right to an opinion and we ought to try to have one as far as our knowledge goes. Now there have been instances where women have shown such knowledge and acted upon it. In that great question of more than thirty years ago, the abolition of the Corn laws, those laws that were meant to keep bread dear for the benefit of the landholders, the women did not fear to come forward in the cause they believed in. Ladies went canvassing for signatures to petitions from door to door in the depths of winter; working women attended public meetings in crowds. I remember at a meeting on the Women's Suffrage at which I was present a working man giving us one of the experiences of his childhood as an instance of the usefulness of women's counsel

on important subjects: His father was a labourer on some great estate and at the time of the election when the contest about the Corn laws was at the hottest, he knew that his employer expected him to vote in the farmers' interests, for keeping up the price of corn, and meant to do so. But his mother who had nine children pondered on the matter "while looking after them and cooking the dinner" as our friend was careful to tell us, and she came to the conclusion that if corn was allowed to enter the country freely, its price would be lowered and there would be more bread to put in their children's mouths. So she worked on him till he had the courage to vote for the candidate who advocated the abolition of this unjust tax upon food.

In another very late question women have shown their interest in public matters and tried to influence them. This was when we believed our Government was desirous of going to war in favour of the Turks and a memorial to be signed by women only was drawn up addressed to the Queen praying her to use her influence in favour of Peace. It was signed eagerly by crowds of women, working women especially, who dreaded the misery and destitution that war would produce, and felt already the ill effect in their own homes of the disturbance of trade.

It was, I think, much to the credit of women that they came forward so decidedly to express a deep conviction on so important a question. But would not this action have been much stronger and more useful if it were known that these women had a vote; would not their petitions be more regarded if the Government and Members of Parliament had to pay the same respect to women that they do to men, as persons who help to return them to their seats and whose opinion therefore was of consequence to them?

3.—A third and very important reason is that by this means women may promote morality in the nation. Women ought to bring into every business they have to do with a moral element. They ought to stand up, as much as they can, against cruelty and injustice, fraud and vice. On the first point, we had an opportunity lately of expressing our feelings in the same way as in the Memorial for Peace, indeed a year or so before that Memorial a petition was presented to the Queen signed by 40,000 women praying her to use her influence to stop the horrible cruelties that were then being inflicted by the Turkish authorities on their unhappy subjects in Bulgaria. This petition was in the cause of humanity, a cause in which I am sure women will never be indifferent. They showed this in a contest happily over many years ago, for the abolition of the wicked Slave Trade. All the country was stirred in this great question and women took a passionate part in it, working with all their might, giving money, time, labour, health to what they felt to be a sacred cause.

And there is another subject in which women are more deeply concerned than perhaps in any other, that is, that habit of drinking which produces at least two-thirds of the crime and two-thirds of the misery in England, some will say a great deal more. You all know how strong a body politically the publicans, are and how much they had to do with returning the

present Parliament which they believed would be favourable to their interests, that is unfavourable to yours, for you do not I believe wish that the facilities for drinking should be increased, but the contrary, if possible. There will always be danger of the drink interest predominating in the House of Commons as long as the persons concerned in it are so very large, so very wealthy, so very important a class. But if women had the Parliamentary vote they would join with a large number of good men who are working now, to make a very strong opposing force. A journal once said that women must not have the vote, because if they had they would get all the publichouses shut up. This we know is nonsense; but it shows which way the women's vote would go. And this is not mere guess-work; for it happens that we have an instance in America of the working of the women's suffrage. There is a small territory called Wyoming where for the last ten years women and men have had equal rights in voting. Well, the first thing the women did was to put a stop to the prevalence of drinking which manifested itself not only at the elections but in the House of Legislature itself. "At our first election" says a Judge in the Supreme Court of Wyoming who was called to give evidence on the subject "before women voted, we had a perfect Pandemonium. The saloons were all open. Whiskey was dealt out freely by the candidates to all who would vote for them. The streets were filled with men partly intoxicated, all armed with knives and pistols; it was dangerous to pass through them, bullets were flying at random. At the next election women voted, and perfect order prevailed;" and so it has been ever since. More than that, they have used the vote to defeat the saloon keepers, who on one occasion we are told, fearing the return of candidates who would help to enforce the law against the Sunday sale of liquor, got up other candidates and sent out runners to meet the rough people coming up from the mines, gave free liquor and lunches and "rolled up" a very large vote. The "law and order" party alarmed, sent to every house to tell the women how the case stood, and they turned out in the afternoon, many of them being themselves wives of saloon-keepers and carried the temperance candidates by a large majority. So good has been the moral effect of the women's taking part in elections, that the men often set aside applicants for office because their characters would not stand the criticism of women. And the men of Wyoming themselves feel the advantage of this moral influence, so much that no one now would repeal the law of women's suffrage if he could.

I must tell you one more thing about America. There is a State near Wyoming called Colorado, where from their having seen the success of this experiment among their neighbours, most earnest efforts were made to include in the universal suffrage, established there, the women's ticket as it is called. In the words of one who was present at the election "Every man in Colorado had a voice in settling women's political rights. No woman in the State had any voice in the matter." But the women were there eager to know their destiny. Grey-haired women and young

girls sat at the polling tables and offered their tickets to all who came in the hope and with the prayer that the men of Colorado would be just to the women. One proud mother said "my three men will vote for the women's suffrage. My youngest son will give his first vote for his mother." The young man's face was radiant with pride and pleasure that his first political act should be in his mother's interests. But though there was a large vote in their favour, the women were defeated, and the majority that beat them was mainly made up as we are told by very young men, by those without family ties and living in a loose manner, and by the party of the drink-interest who were without exception against them. Married men with wives who cared about the suffrage voted for them. Among their opponents were I am sorry to say coloured men, once slaves who had themselves known what it was to have rights denied them; and one said "we want the women at home cooking our dinners." A shrewd coloured woman asked "whether they had provided any dinner to cook?" adding "most of the coloured women have to provide the dinner as well as to cook it." But the women of Colorado are not disheartened and they will try again, and perhaps get their vote before we do. But let us be equally determined, equally public-spirited with the American women. Let us remember the old saying that "God helps those who help themselves." You have proved this already in these Unions; you have shown that you can work together, that you can take care of yourselves, and maintain your rights without any violence or unseemly agitation or hostility against others. Now I want you to extend this mode of action to obtaining that which will be the great defence and protection of women, the Suffrage. Do not let anyone frighten you from it by saying that it is not womanly to care about politics. It is quite womanly to care for what concerns women in general quite as much as men. Do not be ashamed of wishing for this thing, for it is wishing for the means of doing good to the country to which we belong. Our homes of course come first in our care and interests, but our homes cannot be happy if our country is not well-governed. And women who are themselves happy, safe and comfortable in their homes will feel for others and wish that they should share the same blessings. This is no question of setting women against men and men against women; we wish to be friendly fellow-workers with men. For there are many good men who are wishing and striving that we women should have the same advantage as themselves; but they say that they can only succeed by women showing that they want it. Will you not show that you do? Will you not sign the petitions which request the House of Commons to give the Suffrage to Women Householders? This is a way of proving our desire that no one can object to; it is quiet and peaceable, it does not bring you a step out of your proper or your usual sphere, it does not make your names public, and it is the mode provided by our Constitution for all members of the Community to make known their wants or their grievances to those who have the management of our affairs.

PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISE FOR WOMEN RATEPAYERS.

✓ By AUGUSTA WEBSTER.

(Reprinted from the "Examiner" of June 1, 1878.)

THE National Women's Suffrage Society, by announcing the subject of its public meeting at St. George's Hall, under, not the familiar heading of Women's Suffrage, but the restrictive and more explanatory title of "Parliamentary Franchise for Women Ratepayers," has made so judicious an attempt at forestalling criticism by definition that it is a pity it will be quite thrown away. The Society's object manifestly is to place in unmistakable prominence the exact claim they are making for their clients, and to restrain their opponents from confuting their arguments for it by replies against claims which they are not making. But it is not the way of opponents in any matter to allow the other side to limit attack to where it can most easily be met. Taken by itself, on its own merits, a measure which would do no more than allow certain women whom circumstances have placed in a position of independent responsibility to have the vote by right of their possessing the same legal qualifications as their male neighbours, involves no particular principle but that of common-place justice. If there is disturbance of the relation of the sexes, of the Paradaical, or Miltonic, subordination of women, it is in allowing them to hold independent positions at all. The whole mischief is done when once a woman is permitted to take control over herself, to manage her own affairs, to be mistress of a house without a master, to pay rates and taxes with her own money in her own name. The State, and society, have accepted her, Eve without an Adam to obey, as an authorised being, and made a citizen of her; the giving or withholding a vote in the election of a Member of Parliament for her borough can scarcely affect the relation of the sexes after that, though it may very much affect the worth of her citizenship to her and its use to her country.

And in a country where, with not men enough to marry all the women and polygamy still forbidden, the women who are spinsters and widows cannot fairly be condemned for their solitary state, and where living is too expensive for men to take the cost of their female collateral relatives upon them and leave no woman unprovided with a man's house to live in under a man's guardianship, the majority of men would feel, if the case were allowed to go to them fairly, that the class of women whom Mr. Courtney's bill would enfranchise are reasonably entitled to the help towards self-protection of the electoral vote. But the Society which exists for the purpose of getting this bill passed, charm it never so wisely with judicious headings to its cards and posters, will still find the deaf adders argue on their own themes. In a little while one member of Parliament will, in opposition to the bill, defend marriage, another the Bible, another the right of Man to have his dinner cooked by Woman; one will shudder over the feuds the bill's fatal gift would raise between man and wife, another be merry over the influx of lady-bishops to come of it.

It must always be well in taking any step to see what is the next step to which it naturally leads, and what again the next. But this form of wisdom may be pushed too far. Unless the subsequent steps are inevitable if the first be taken, we need not refuse to move at all because we do not want to go further than a certain point, or because, from where we stand, it is not possible to see round the corner, and we might not like the road beyond it. In our own small daily affairs we should never get any good done if we never dared make a useful change lest some other change we think not useful should afterwards seem to somebody its logical, though by no means its compulsory or necessary, sequence. We make the change so far as it is to our purpose, and we stop short of the point where we think it would begin to work amiss. English liberties, as we all know, have been established and legislated for in the same piecemeal but practical fashion, and there seems no earthly reason why the question of extending the franchise to a special class of women whom our laws and customs recognise as qualified citizens in all other respects should be treated as if the desire for it could pledge its supporters, or why its success could pledge the country, to even the smallest advance beyond it in the same direction—let alone to a seven-leagued-boot rush towards putting the men and the women in each others' places and governing England by the laws of the Amazons.

The women for whom enfranchisement is being asked have a definite and, all fair reasoners will admit, reasonable claim. It

is a generally admitted principle that taxation and representation should go together, that those who put the money in the national purse should all alike have so much share in controlling the spending of it as comes of a voice in choosing the national representatives in Parliament. But these many women—about a seventh of the number of the present male voters, it is calculated—are, as householders and ratepayers, sharing their full burden of taxation with the male voters, and are politically helpless. Their case is manifestly a strong one. They have a right, and the country has a right, to require that it shall have due consideration. It is only proper that all objections there may genuinely seem to be against granting them the political privilege of their responsibilities should be brought forward and fully urged, and that, if on careful examination it should seem that this act of impartiality to them could be injurious to the commonwealth, it should continue to be withheld. But it is not fair to drown discussion of their claim in denunciations of revolutions in the airy future with which it has nothing to do; in arguments founded on the duty of the wife's submission to the husband—the women in question being husbandless; in combating a principle of the parity of the sexes in all points which the bill not only does not seek to establish, but which it does not even insinuate. Nor is it fulfilling the duty of honest discussion to meet such a claim by assertions of the superiority of married women over single and of the reasons for believing that the wife's mental fitness to vote would be no less, or would be greater, than that of the spinster and the widow. Married women might, or might not, make better voters than the others, but this is not a question of a fancy franchise to be created on competitive examination principles, but of a claim to the existing franchise in virtue of the possession of the qualifications now established by law. It is no just answer to say "You are women under your own control, recognised by the law as in the position of men, and you are householders and ratepayers and so have men's qualifications for the vote; but your betters, being wives, are not in this position and have not these qualifications; therefore you ought not to have the vote."

It is quite true that the granting the women in question the vote, and so removing from them all legal stamp of inferiority on the ground of sex, must have effects reaching further than to themselves individually only, and no discussion on the subject would be complete which ignored this fact. We should not find so many married women prominent as workers in the Women's Suffrage Society if it were not generally felt among them that to remove the stamp of inferiority from the women on

whom it is inflicted on the ground of sex alone, is to remove it from all women, and that the result must be favourable to the general position of women altogether. The disqualification of only married women would be of course felt in its true light, that is as one not of sex but circumstances only—no worse a stigma than is put upon a son living in his father's house on his father's income—and it would bring with it none of that sense of humiliation with which so many women now look upon the position given to women in a nation in which every man and no woman (Queens excepted, but then they are rare) is held to be capable of feeling an interest in the commonwealth. The disqualification of sex alone which presses on independent women is unquestionably a marked disparagement of womanhood, and it is not unnatural to suppose that its removal would gradually and indirectly have its effect on the general conception of the moral and mental position of women, and therefore on the position itself. If evil consequences can be apprehended from such a result, our legislators and those who seek to influence them ought to look into that part of the matter narrowly. No objection based on any result genuinely deducible from the proposed measure can be irrelevant or unfair. But to discuss, apropos of a Bill for not withholding votes from husbandless females who have achieved the masculine distinction of paying rates and taxes, the theory of marriage, Adam and Eve, ministering angels, Tennyson's Princess, physiology, psychology, and things in general, is—may be honest.

Clever Alice went down to Hans in the beer cellar, and, while the beer ran, noticed a hatchet in what seemed to her a threatening place. Clever Alice at once perceived that, when she was married to Hans and had had a son and the son was grown up and just going to be married, the son might go into the cellar to draw beer for his betrothed, and the hatchet would tumble down on him and chop off his head. Clever Alice explained the danger, Hans listened and lamented, and the beer ran away unnoticed and left the barrel empty. Clever Alice was honest.

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78. SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN HOUSEHOLDERS.

AGAIN, last session, the House of Commons has discussed the question of Woman's Suffrage, and again, as was expected by all who know how great is the strength of prejudice and Conservatism, it was rejected. It is only by very slow degrees that opinion in Parliament responds to the growth of public opinion; and on a question which does not immediately affect the interests of any class already possessing that great lever of movement, the vote, we may expect the response to be doubly slow in coming. The Women's Suffrage Societies have to act with small command of funds, and with workers who, like the Romans against Pyrrhus, can only learn how to win through repeated defeats.

The Bill to remove the Electoral Disabilities of Women, which was brought forward by Mr. Leonard Courtney, M.P. for Liskeard, was rejected on June 19th by 220 votes against 140. At the last division, that of 1876, 239 voted against the Bill and 152 for it; therefore, the number of those who voted this year was smaller on each side, the opponents of the measure losing nineteen votes, and the friends twelve. Since the commencement of the movement, eleven years ago, the support given to it by members of Parliament has been very remarkable, 396 having voted in favour of the Bill, some of them seven or eight times. It was asserted with premature triumph by Mr. Hanbury, who opposed the Bill, that many former supporters were prepared to follow his example in deserting the cause; but on examination of the division list, this assertion has not been borne out, the Bill having received some new adherents, and the conversions having been the other way. The balance of support for the Bill lies, as might be naturally conjectured on a question of rational reform, on the Liberal side of the House. Of the 142 who, including tellers, voted for the Bill, 88 were Liberals, 16 Home Rulers, and 38 Conservatives. Of the 220 who opposed it, 67 were Liberals, 7 Home Rulers, and 146 Conservatives.

The debate followed much the same course as in preceding years, with this difference, that the new speakers were mostly on the side of the Bill, and the opposition was entrusted chiefly to veteran antagonists. Their arguments were not remarkable for novelty. One member thought that to give votes to women was making votes too cheap, and that if Parliament could retrace its steps in the matter of the School Board and municipal franchises, long ago conceded to them, it would do well. By other M.P.'s it was characterised as an "arrant sham," "a mere phantasm to create a vexatious state of agitation," "a piece of socialistic democracy," and a measure which should be "opposed to the Day of Judgment." Nevertheless, there was a marked improvement in the tone of the debate, and instead of the derisive howls and hootings with which the discussion was overpowered in 1877, every speaker was listened to with punctilious courtesy.

The method of attack reminds us now and then forcibly of the quarrel which Æsop's wolf picks with the lamb, accusing him of having muddied the brook at which he drinks. The lamb humbly represents that he is drinking lower down, so he reviles him for having once used bad language of him, to which the lamb says he had not been born then. Then, said the wolf, it was thy father who did so. Some of the gentlemen in the House of Commons lament that all women would vote as a logical consequence of the Bill, and hence heartburnings in families, and fierce domestic discord, the wife voting one way and the husband another. But, say its supporters quickly, this Bill

would not alter the Common Law of England, by which a married woman would be incapable of voting. Then, they declare, it would cast a stigma upon the best of their sex—the mothers and matrons of England—by giving an advantage to the social failures, the despised and rejected of men. Similarly, they first assert that women are indifferent to the vote, and then when proof is brought forward that qualified women avail themselves of their School Board and municipal vote quite as much, proportionately to their numbers, as men avail themselves of it, they change their front of battle, and we are informed that women would rush so eagerly to the polling booth that all natural responsibilities and domestic duties would be forgotten.

The position which this question holds in public opinion is, however, more important to us than the particular objections of members of Parliament, or the still more numerous votes of those who, not having heard the reasons on either side, crowd into the lobby to vote against it when the division bell rings. Public opinion must be tested by the tone of the newspapers, the number and quality of petitions, and public meetings. The tone of the country press admits as a rule the justice of the claim which women are now making, cautiously limiting their approval to extending votes to women householders and ratepayers, a caution which is entirely uncalled for, as the most ardent worker in the movement has never asked that women should not be subjected to the same qualification test as men. The London Press, probably more under the influence of Parliament, is more oracular in its tone, but a fair and increasing proportion expresses hearty approval of the cause.

The petitions presented last session for the Bill were 723, containing 173,521 signatures. Some hesitation may frequently be felt in taking the number of signatures only as a test of public feeling, but the case is different when we consider the number of petitions under seal from town councils, those from women householders, and those from men of considerable social standing, such as 105 advocates, solicitors, and writers to the signet in Edinburgh; 185 rectors of colleges, head masters, and teachers; 43 physicians and surgeons, and 212 bankers, merchants, and civil engineers in the same city. Twenty-four town councils in England and Scotland petitioned for the Bill. The class who would be themselves enfranchised—women householders—sent petitions from more than twenty different towns; 1607 women householders of Edinburgh alone signed; 243 women householders of Boston sent a petition complaining of the increase in their rates consequent upon the inquiry into a corrupt Parliamentary election, in which, of course, they had no share; 532 women householders of Norwich did the same. Other petitions were representative in character. All the ladies who have been registered as medical practitioners in Great Britain signed. Several petitions went in from schoolmistresses, principals of women's colleges, and teachers. An association of women, called the "Co-operative Shirtmakers," in Soho, sent a petition by themselves, as well as other working women's associations. Lady artists, and women well known for their good standing in literature, also signed. The total number of petitioners is, of course, insignificant as compared with the number of women who have not signed, but they represent a large majority of women thinkers, of those who lead independent, self-supporting lives, or who are engaged in philanthropic or charitable labours. Several members declared in the recent debate that they knew no lady who cared for it. If this statement was no more than a flourish of rhetoric, we must suppose that the ladies of their families are too wealthy and isolated from the working, starving, and suffering women of the poor, to know anything of their wishes, or too well drilled in fashionable nonentity to express any opinions differing from those of their husbands and fathers.

We learn from the reports in the *Women's Suffrage Journal*, that during the year between the debate in 1877 and that of 1878, twenty-seven public meetings and lectures took place upon the subject. As an additional means

of extending knowledge on the question, many ladies invited their friends to private discussion meetings in their drawing-rooms. It has become, too, rather a fashionable topic for debating societies, where the result is generally, though not invariably, in favour of the measure.

The proportion of women who will be enfranchised when this Bill passes varies considerably according to localities. In Bath, for instance, there is one woman householder in every three households, in Manchester one in six, in Newcastle one in eight, while in Tewkesbury there is but one to twenty-three. Taking the whole of England and Wales, the number of women electors on the municipal register is 108,806, or one woman to every seven men electors. In Ireland it would also be about one to seven. There are, moreover, in England and Wales, 37,806 women landowners of one acre and upwards, or one woman to every six men landowners, and in Ireland 4127, or one woman to every seven men. There is no reason to suppose that the proportion between women and men differs greatly in the owners of land of less than an acre. At a rough estimate, between 300,000 and 400,000 would receive the vote, and a large majority of those already exercise one, if not more, votes—parochial, municipal, or educational.

The case, which was before alluded to, of Boston showed very forcibly the inconsistency of a system which extends to women the burdens, while refusing to them one of the most valued privileges, of ratepayers. After the last general election, a petition was lodged against the return of Mr. Parry, on the ground of bribery, and as it was reported to the Home Secretary that bribery extensively prevailed in that borough, a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the subject. The Commissioners reported that no bribery existed, but the expenses of the inquiry had to be paid by the ratepayers of the borough, of whom one-fifth were women. To defray it, a rate of about eightpence in the pound was levied, and thus the Boston women are compelled to pay for alleged offences in connection with an election from which they are expressly excluded from taking part. The case in Norwich was similar, the expenses of the Commission there being still larger.

Another proof of the increasing interest that women take in public matters, and of their growing sense of the responsibilities which they share with men for the common good, is the number of women who, during the last few years, have allowed themselves to be nominated as candidates for the School Board, or as poor law guardians, or overseers of the poor. It is worthy of note that no town which has once had a woman on the School Board or on the board of guardians, has gone back from its choice. The success of the few women medical practitioners who have been registered, the increasing demand for high-class women's schools, and above all, the recent admission of women on equal terms to men to the London University, are all signs that a wider and more liberal view of the claims and position of women is prevailing, and that in proportion as education and liberty increase among men, they must be extended to women, if they are to be more than nominal. No one can shut his eyes to the fact that the "old order" of life is changing; that the number of unmarried women is on the increase, and that the cares and pleasures of domestic life, instead of being the one sphere possible to a woman, are now the lot of only about two-thirds of the whole. The women who, with or without their will, have their time unoccupied with domestic duties, and their hearts unfilled by home affections, must, as the only escape from frivolity or crime, engage themselves in a wider sphere of interests; and it is in the general acceptance by women of the fact that they, as well as men, have duties to fulfil to the world corresponding to the rights which civilisation has given to them, that we shall solve the many social questions which now perplex the mind and sadden the heart of the philanthropist.

So great a change in national education and modes of thought is not to be achieved in a few years. It need not, then, be a source of surprise to any one that despite the great advance which the women's suffrage question has

made, and is making, that it was not won last year, and will probably not be won even in the next Parliament. There are some people who believe it is making no progress because year after year the House of Commons throws it out with but slightly altered majorities, and they quote, with approval, the women's higher education, and their entrance into the medical profession, as questions which "get on." It is often with political questions, as with the dawn of a tropical morning, that full daylight breaks in upon the darkness without long gradations of brightness. It is frequently not till a reform is actually made law that the world perceives that opinion, for a long course of years, was slowly ripening in its favour. Even the opponents of Women's Suffrage admit its justice, while doubting its expediency; we believe in its expediency likewise: in the effect which it will slowly, but surely, have of removing the influences of prejudice and injustice, and doubling the effective forces of the world by the participation of women in its higher interests. Of one thing we may be sure, that the struggle which those ladies who are the principal exponents of the movement are conducting, is among those which, "though baffled oft, are ever won." They are not impatient—they do not look for victory either next year, or the year after; but as each session passes, they chronicle their slowly accumulating gains, and, while steadily keeping in front the standard of complete educational, electoral, professional, and legal equality of men and women, they despise no improvement in the condition of women, no fresh sphere of activity, no new concession of justice; but look on each step as leading to the more perfect end. It is this steadiness of purpose and continuity of effort which Englishwomen, like Englishmen, inherit as a national characteristic, that is the surest harbinger of success.

THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

A PAPER BY MISS BECKER,

Read at the Conference on behalf of extending the Parliamentary Franchise to Women, held in the Victoria Rooms, Clifton, Bristol, on January 24th, 1879.

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THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Representative government is the fundamental principle which regulates the conduct of public affairs in this country. The principle had its origin in local government. The application of this principle in the supreme government of the country appears to be of comparatively recent origin. Before the reign of Egbert consolidated the Saxon kingdoms into a nation, all government might be said to be local government. During the reign of the Saxon kings, the representative assemblies had a real share in the government. Women took part in these assemblies. Gurdon, in his antiquities of Parliament, says the ladies of birth and quality sat in council with the Saxon Witas. The Abbess Wilde, says Bede, presided in an Ecclesiastical Synod.

The Norman conquest introduced the feudal system of government, in which the kings were little more than military chiefs. The various struggles for the crown from the death of Henry I. to the accession of Henry VII. were determined by military successes, and not in any sense by the choice of the people. A few hundred knights and men-at-arms, fighting hand to hand, gave the crown first to one prince, then to another, the people as a party standing aloof from a struggle which, in truth, concerned them very little. But local or

municipal government was not dead. It survived in the government of parishes, cities, and counties, and it formed the basis of the more general representative government which first took definite form under the guidance of Simon de Montfort, the man who caused to be summoned the first House of Commons.

Women were not left out of consideration in the earlier forms of parliamentary government. We learn from Gurdon that in the times of Henry III. and Edward VI., four abbesses were summoned to Parliament, namely of Shaftesbury, Berking, St. Mary of Winchester, and of Wilton. In the 35th of Edward III. were summoned to Parliament, to appear by their proxies, Mary, Countess of Norfolk; Alienor, Countess of Ormond; Anne Despenser Philippa, Countess of March; Johanna Fitzwater Augusta, Countess of Pembroke; Mary de St. Paul, Mary de Roos, Matilda, Countess of Oxford; Catherine, Countess of Athol.

This indication of a sketch of the rise of parliamentary government, and of the connection between this and the earlier form of local government, is intended to prove that the annual local franchise, instead of being a secondary and subordinate vote of little or no importance politically, is in truth the foundation on which the whole of our system of government is built. Women have, and always have had, coeval rights with men in regard to local franchise; they have a share in the foundation, and they have a right to a corresponding share in the superstructure that has been reared upon it.

For an illustration of the proposition that local self-government, by means of representative assemblies, is antecedent to national self-government, we may turn to the condition of the village communities in Russia. Here representative government in imperial affairs is non-existent. The Czar is abso-

lute autocrat. But local affairs are regulated by village communities named "Mir;" these are described by Mr. Mackenzie Wallace as "a good specimen of constitutional government of the extreme democratic type." The constitutional members are the "Heads of Households." The "Mir" apportioned the land of the community, regulates agricultural operations, and exercises authority over the taxes, and also over the movements of the villagers. Women are represented in these gatherings. Mr. Wallace says:—

"In the crowd may generally be seen, especially in the northern provinces, where a considerable portion of the male population is always absent from the village, a certain number of female peasants. These are women who, on account of the absence or death of their husbands, happen to be for the moment Heads of Households. As such they are entitled to be present, and their right to take part in the deliberations is never called in question."

Should parliamentary government come to be established in Russia, these village communities will in all probability form the basis of the electoral districts, and we may see representative government in imperial affairs accorded concurrently to women and men.

Men in this country obtained parliamentary representation in and through local government. They used the power they had, and they obtained more extended power. We urge women to follow their example—to take an interest in the local affairs in which they have a legal right to be represented, to make their votes felt as a power which must be recognised by all who would govern such affairs, and to be ready to fill personally such offices as they are liable to be nominated for, and to seek those positions to which they are eligible for election.

The parochial offices to which women may be nominated are

churchwarden, overseer, waywarden or surveyor of roads, guardian, parish clerk, and sexton. Women now occupy, or have very recently occupied, all these offices. Recently, a parliamentary petition was placed in my hand signed by a lady as churchwarden of a parish in Wales. There are many parishes now in England where women are overseers. There is a parish in Cheshire where there are but six or seven farmers eligible for the office of overseer. One of these is a lady, and she takes her turn with the rest. Moreover, while many of the men employ a deputy, she performs the work herself.

The office of overseer is a very responsible one. When the guardians or other lawfully-constituted authorities require money for the relief of the poor or for other purposes, they issue a "precept" to the overseers to furnish the required amount. The overseers are then personally liable for the sum. On the other hand, they are armed with stringent powers over the property of the ratepayers. They have to adjust the burden of the impost equitably among those who are to bear it, and they must collect the money from the people, either personally or by deputy. They have power to seize the goods of any person who does not pay the rate, and their own goods are liable to seizure if they do not collect the money from the parish. The office of overseer is unpaid, and the persons on whom the duties are imposed must discharge them under the penalty of a considerable fine. Women are not excused from these duties on account of their sex, and many women are now discharging these duties in various parts of the country.

A few years ago, Mrs. Gold, a widow lady of sixty years of age, was appointed overseer of her parish in Montgomeryshire. She objected to serve, and applied to the Court of Queen's Bench to release her from the obligation to do so. Her application was refused; she would therefore be compelled either to

fulfil an office entailing much trouble and no honour, or to pay a heavy fine.

A widow lady was recently appointed waywarden of a parish in Westmoreland. This lady had complained to the surveyor of the state of the roads, and at the next election he prevailed on the ratepayers to elect her to the office. Perhaps he imagined that she would decline to serve, and render herself liable to the penalty of twenty pounds for refusal. But the lady was equal to the occasion. She accepted the duties imposed upon her, and as she keeps a clerk and has ample means, she has no difficulty in obtaining a thorough supervision of the work. It is said that she has made some important discoveries as to the state of the accounts.

The conditions of local government vary greatly in different districts of England. They may be classified under three heads :—

1. Government of parishes by vestry meetings, in which every ratepayer had a right to vote, and which were convened for the imposition of rates and the election of parochial officers.
2. Government by vestries or other local commissioners under the provision of some local act applying only to the particular district therein specified. This is the condition of the metropolitan parishes outside the city of London, and of large districts in the country.
3. Government by local authorities elected under a general Act of Parliament specifically applied—a kind of permissive act, which may be extended on application by the ratepayers of any district in which it is not in force. Of this nature are the Public Health Act of 1848, the Municipal Corporations Act of

1833, with its amendments of 1869; and the Elementary Education Acts of 1870—1876.

In all of these provisions for local government, the rights of women are recognised.

I have before me, as I write, a copy of an Act passed in the year 1774, when George the Third was king, for the local government of the parish of Clerkenwell. It is a quaint document, printed in black letter. The preamble sets forth that whereas the poor of the said parish are very numerous, and the present workhouse is not large enough to contain them, and a considerable debt for their relief has been unavoidably contracted; and whereas the present method of raising and applying money for the relief of the poor is attended with many inconveniences, &c., &c., &c., the Act proceeds to set forth the names of a number of gentlemen to act together with the ministers, churchwardens, and overseers of the parish as guardians or governors of the poor for carrying the Act into execution. The Act further provides that in the event of a death, or removal, or refusal to act of any of the before-named persons, it shall be lawful for the inhabitants of the parish paying to the rates for the church and the poor to assemble and meet together in the vestry-room of the said parish, on Tuesday in Easter week every year, or within one month after, to elect one or more persons to be guardians.

It is further provided that the inhabitants as aforesaid are authorised and required to assemble on the Tuesday in Easter week, or within ten days after, to nominate a list of eight persons to be overseers, and the persons so nominated shall be bound to serve under a penalty of ten pounds. It is further enacted that the churchwardens, overseers, and inhabitants are authorised and required to assemble on Tuesday in Easter week,

or oftener, as occasion serves, to make a general equal pound rate or assessment for the relief of the poor, or for the other purposes of this Act.

The requirement to assemble in the vestry on the Tuesday in Easter week, for the election of overseers and the imposition of rates, is laid on all inhabitant ratepayers, without mention of sex. There is no doubt that women ratepayers are summoned equally with men, and that they may attend and vote.

In the clauses relating to the qualification of guardians masculine pronouns only are used; it is said no person shall be capable of acting as guardian unless *he* shall be assessed at the annual sum of twenty pounds, &c. Also, in the provision relating to the penalty for refusing to serve as overseers, the words "if *he* or they shall refuse," &c., are used. Notwithstanding this, it is probable that women might be guardians or overseers under this local Act, and it is certain that they may fill these offices in other districts.

But when it comes to the clauses providing for the payment of rates there is no possibility of mistake as to whether women are intended to be included. The pronouns *he*, *she*, or *they*, *his* or *her* house or houses, etc., occur. These feminine pronouns are not, however, introduced everywhere, and it would not be possible to construe the Act so as to exclude women in every case where masculine pronouns only are employed.

This old Act is the only one which I have had the opportunity of examining, but, as it is probably a type of many similar ones for other parishes, I have thought it worth while to describe its provisions.

I desire particularly to impress on women the fact that Tuesday in Easter week is the day for vestry meetings and parochial elections of churchwardens and other officials, that

women ratepayers have equal rights with men in such elections, and I would urge them to assert these rights by taking part in the elections whenever practicable. Thus Tuesday in Easter week would in parishes become what the first of November is in boroughs, a day when thousands of women in different parts of England may be seen taking part in public affairs, forming a demonstration of women electors, and giving a practical proof that women desire and care for the suffrage.

The Public Health Act of 1848 contains an interpretation clause in virtue of which, to use the clumsy and ungrammatical phraseology of our legislators, "words importing the masculine gender are deemed and taken to include females." There seems to be nothing to prevent women from becoming members of Local Boards of Health; and I cannot help thinking that some of the energy which is successful in keeping the insides of our houses clean and well ordered might be usefully extended to the care of the outside arrangements for the same end.

The Municipal Corporations Act was originally intended to apply to men only. When its operation was extended to women in 1869 the extension was specifically declared to be to the right of voting for councillors, auditors, and assessors. It seems therefore probable, though not absolutely certain—because the question has never been raised in such a form as to call for a legal decision—that women are not eligible for election to Town Councils.

The Elementary Education Act, on the other hand, was from the beginning intended by its framers to include women in all its provisions. Women have not only the right to vote, but to sit on School Boards, and to be elected to any official position in connection with the work for which men are eligible. A woman may be chairman, vice-chairman, or clerk of a School Board, and ladies actually fill such offices.

The principle on which this part of the Act was based is that, as half the children to be educated are girls, women have an equal right with men to regulate the conditions of the education. But if this is allowed in the case of education, its application cannot be logically arrested here. Half the people to be taxed are women, half the people to be governed are women, half of the people whose interests are affected by the national policy are women; women therefore have as much right to a share in regulating these matters as they have to a share in the regulation of education.

Political freedom begins for women as it began for men, with freedom in local government. It rests with women to pursue the advantage that has been won, and to advance from the position that has been conceded to them in local representation to that which is the goal of our efforts—the concession of the right to a share in the representation of our common country.



OPINIONS OF WOMEN
ON
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

OPINIONS OF WOMEN

ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

ISSUED BY THE
CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,
64, BERNERS STREET, LONDON, W.

1879.

P R E F A C E.

THE Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, in making the following collection of Opinions on Women's Suffrage, have been desirous of meeting the objection sometimes put forward by those to whom this question was new, that political representation for women is only desired by women who have failed to find another field for their energies. To refute this objection satisfactorily the Committee have obtained the Opinions of about a hundred women engaged in such non-political work as makes them more or less known to the public.

The Opinions of living persons have been written expressly for this purpose within the last few months: a few quotations from the speeches or writings of eminent women no longer living have been added. It need scarcely be pointed out that the Committee have avoided publishing in this collection the views of those women who are most prominently active in the Women's Suffrage movement, the sole object being to show the current of feeling among women whose pursuits are other than political. Special attention has been paid to obtaining the Opinions of women engaged in forwarding the higher education of their sex; also of women occupying official positions on School Boards or Boards of Guardians, or as secretaries of various social and industrial organisations; of women engaged in philanthropic work, and of women pursuing literary and artistic careers.

With more time the collection might have been made much larger. It is, however, already sufficiently representative, and it will serve to show that the wish that the benefits of political enfranchisement should be extended to women is not confined to only one class, or grounded on only one set of reasons.

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I.

WOMEN IN OFFICIAL POSITIONS.

MEMBERS OF SCHOOL BOARDS.

MRS. C. M. BUCKTON

(Member of the Leeds School Board. Author of "Health in the House," "Food and Home Cookery," "Town and Window Gardening").

It will always be a subject of great regret to me that I remained so many years indifferent to the Women's Suffrage question. Directly my sanitary work among the working people brought me face to face with the difficulties which assail women obliged to fight the battle of life, I felt that their only hope of gaining a fair field and justice would be by obtaining, as men had done, a direct voice in the legislature and in demanding that representation and taxation should go together.

CATHERINE M. BUCKTON.

MRS. DICKINSON

(Member of the Painswick School Board).

I feel strongly that no words of mine could add anything to the amount of valuable opinion you have in favour of your cause; but you have my sympathy in your efforts, and hearty good wishes for your success.

F. S. DICKINSON.

MRS. FENWICK MILLER

(Member of the London School Board. Author of "The House of Life").

The demand for Women's Suffrage is not made in any spirit of antagonism between men and women, nor is there under-

lying the movement any assumption that such an antagonism exists.

Many women happily married, together with many thoughtful men, join in seeking this extension of the franchise, believing that it would be productive of good both to women and to the community. Because—

First: Laws regulating the existence of women where their daily life differs from that of man (as in the maternal relation for instance) cannot be properly made, and questions specially affecting the female half of mankind cannot be wisely decided, without the opinion of the class to be affected being given, and without their knowledge of their own needs being admitted to counsel the legislators.

Second: There is among women collectively much intellect, much conscientiousness, and much energy, which might be employed in public affairs to the benefit of the whole community. And further, men and women in our complex social state, of necessity act and react upon each other to so great an extent that men cannot progress far alone; civilisation and good government must needs be hampered and delayed so long as women are excluded from sympathy and participation in the thought, the devotion to public causes, and the active patriotism by which improvements in legislation and society are effected.

FLORENCE FENWICK MILLER.

MISS HELLENA RICHARDSON
(Member of the Bristol School Board).

Women are more free from party politics and party bias than men are, and, consequently, more likely to take measures on their own merits. And, therefore, although woman's judgment may often be inferior to that of men, yet it is probable that she would vote more fairly for what is likely to benefit the nation in its domestic relations. And as woman is not considered so inferior to man as to require that she be excluded from paying taxes, it seems but just that she should have some voice in deciding how the taxes should be spent.

HELLENA RICHARDSON.

MRS. SURR
(Member of the London School Board).

So long as there is no slackening of strenuous effort among the noble and patient band who labour for the extension of the franchise to women—their ultimate success is certain.

Surely the hour is not far distant, when thoughtful and honourable men will blush that their sisters should have been debarred so long from exercising a right to which, as ratepayers, they have an equal claim with themselves. ELIZ. SURR.

MISS HELEN TAYLOR
(Member of the London School Board).

Domestic life can never have all the elements of the happiness it is capable of giving, while women are careless of one large branch of men's interests in the world: and men's interests can never receive all the development of which they are susceptible, until women share with men in all the tasks of life.

HELEN TAYLOR.

MRS. WESTLAKE
(Member of the London School Board).

I desire women's suffrage because, where representative government exists, not to share in it is almost to be excluded from the nation. It is said that all government rests ultimately on force. This is true, if not only physical force be meant, but the mental and moral qualities which combine and direct physical force be included. The voting power can never be made proportional to all the elements of force, and I believe that such proportion as now exists between them would not be diminished by women's suffrage. ALICE WESTLAKE.

GUARDIANS OF THE POOR.

MRS. S. A. BARNETT
(Member of the Whitechapel Board of Guardians).

Although pity is usually reserved for the oppressed, it is the oppressor who is the most to be pitied, for the moral nature is

*of the Four Gate
District School*

more harmed by the act of oppression than by the endurance of it.

It was the slave-owner, and not the slave, who suffered most from the institution of slavery.

The women who agitate for the suffrage are now claiming the pity of the world because they are deprived of their rights.

Might it not be that the men who refuse to others the right which they themselves possess are the more to be pitied?

Without asserting that the woman's keener sense for morality, combined with her interest in details, would be more beneficial, when directly brought to bear on the legislators—without reasserting the old argument that property has a right to be represented—without asserting the desirable influence that responsibility would have on the character of the ~~men or~~ women themselves—without asserting that even if a few women should lose their womanliness by taking part in public life, it would be well sacrificed for the good which would accrue to the whole nation—without asserting that women would gain by receiving this right, it is at least injurious to the nation that a portion of the community should be, legally, in the position to refuse to a body of its intelligent members a share in the privilege of government.

Women are at present, politically, an outcast class, and it is to the prejudice of the men that they can treat them as inferiors and refuse to recognise them as equally concerned in the well-being of the commonwealth.

HENRIETTA O. BARNETT.

MISS COLLETT

(Member of the St. Pancras Board of Guardians).

I heartily desire the political enfranchisement of women, though for many reasons, too lengthy to name here, I have never taken any part in the efforts to procure it.

MARGARET COLLETT.

MISS MERINGTON

(Member of the Kensington Board of Poor Law Guardians).

I consider it would be most desirable that women having the same qualifications as men, and holding equal responsibilities in other respects, should have power to exercise this privilege and duty in like manner as men. Those who have hitherto exercised the right of voting at municipal elections are capable probably of voting with judgment and fairness at any other election. I think the time has come when the electoral vote should be extended to them; and that in thus raising the social status of women, Parliament would do an act of justice, and would make a great social reform.

MARTHA CRAWFORD MERINGTON.

II.
WOMEN ENGAGED IN LITERATURE
AND ART.

MRS. ALLINGHAM.

It certainly seems to me that women paying taxes ought to be able to vote as men do. HELEN ALLINGHAM.

MRS. ARTHUR ARNOLD

(Translator of Sênor Castelar's Works, &c.).

The suffrage is admittedly a protection to men, and women, being weaker than men, are still more in need of its protection. Anyone who takes the trouble to read the police reports in the daily papers will see that women, being unrepresented, are unsafe in purse and person.

If "taxation without representation is tyranny" it is also robbery. Under the form of taxes women are defrauded of vast sums of money, frequently for objects of which they wholly disapprove. This Afghan war for instance, how many women are opposed to it! yet they must help to pay for it and try to fancy they are living in a free country.

All those who fulfil the conditions on which the franchise has been granted to some persons, are equally entitled to its protection. Women receive less value for their money than men do at present, since they are taxed like men, but they are not represented like men. When both sexes are represented, then England may be called a *free* country, but not before. Every educated woman with whom I am acquainted desires the Parliamentary Suffrage, and though many of them do not ask for it, it must be remembered that numbers of women are supported by men, and often afraid to express their opinions.

AMELIA ARNOLD.

MRS. G. LINNÆUS BANKS

(Author of "Ripples and Breakers," &c., &c.).

With respect to the Female Franchise, I can only say, that I should be most reluctant to give my adhesion to any movement calculated to make women less womanly or to remove them from the sphere undeniably assigned to them by the Creator. But so long as there are women on whom all the duties and responsibilities of men devolve, or are thrust, so long as such women have to pay for the maintenance of governments, local or national, I consider that they have as clear a right to vote for proper representation as have their masculine brothers. I know it is urged that there are women who do not want the franchise, who could not fitly exercise it if they had the right. Just so, to puppets or blocks, whether male or female, the franchise is a nullity. But to responsible thinkers, whether feminine or masculine, the franchise is a privilege and a *right*.

I owe a shipwrecked brother's life to the exercise of the female right of vote amongst a tribe of cannibals in the Oriental Archipelago, and I have therefore reason to uphold the principle.

ISABELLA BANKS.

MISS ALICE BEWICKE

(Author of "The Last of the Jerminghams," "Lonely Carlotta," &c., &c.).

Unless women contrary to common belief care less about their opinions than men do, the State exposes itself to danger by depriving them of that direct mode of expression, through the election of a representative, which it is found expedient to throw open to men. In the blackened ruins of Paris may be read the handwriting on the wall, telling how women, degraded even as those of Paris are degraded, yet cannot sink past feeling their degradation and resentment against the society that inflicts it. And though we may trust that English women could never be driven to a like desperation, yet it seems inevitable but that their thoughts should become slightly more passionate or morbid, for want of a safe legitimate outlet. How

insidiously the thoughts of women may sap a nation's strength may be read in the history of Sparta, which suppressed women till, eaten up by corruption and effeminacy, it itself perished as a nation.

A. E. N. BEWICKE.

MRS. BODICHON.

The longer I live the more I see the necessity of women taking an intelligent part in all that concerns the welfare of their country, and I am sure that if they had the power of voting they would feel more decidedly than they do, that they are an important part of the Commonwealth.

BARBARA L. S. BODICHON.

MISS ELLEN L. BROWN

(Author of "The Favell Children," &c.).

When women are told to keep to their sphere, they can well answer that existing legislation discourages their doing so. When they have conscientiously performed all the important duties of life which fall to their share, it would seem that, according to the ruling of the State, they must also take upon themselves the entire work of the other sex before they can be deemed worthy to enjoy equal civic status with the man who is scarcely short of being a criminal or a lunatic. This enforced and unnecessarily debased position is not only the direct cause of many more cruel hardships than would naturally fall to the lot of women, but it is a distinct, though often unrecognised, drawback to every woman in all that she undertakes, both in her home and beyond it. Her voice, her influence, her work, count for so much less, and in philanthropic labours her time and talents, and even money, must be more profusely sacrificed to outweigh the disadvantages of her political disabilities, and the consequently lowered estimate of her mental and moral powers. This opinion is the result of very careful observation of the lives of women.

ELLEN L. BROWN.

MRS. CHARLES

(Author of "The Schönberg Cotta Family," &c., &c.).

I believe that "public spirit," a genuine interest in all questions of national or social importance, is as essential a part of true womanhood as of true manhood.

The question of Women's Suffrage is not one which has hitherto interested me much, because I think the possession of the franchise would add a mere fraction to the true influence of women. But it seems to me just, both to themselves and to the State, that women, on whom the responsibilities of property have devolved, should not be exempt from the responsibility of the vote attached to property in all other cases.

And I think there is a hope that the possession of the suffrage might help to educate women, as only practical responsibility can educate; and might also, through the thoughts and hearts of good women, tend to raise political questions out of the region of party strife into that true, ideal Divine and human world where men and women work together for the redemption and the perfection of each other, according to the will of God.

ELIZABETH CHARLES.

MISS COBBE

(Author of "Broken Lights," "Re-echoes," "Hopes of the Human Race," &c.).

So far from the truth is the reiterated statement of certain honourable M.P.s that "Women do not desire the franchise," that in my large experience I have scarcely ever known a woman possessed of ordinary common sense, and who had lived some years alone in the world, who did not earnestly wish for it. The women who gratify these gentlemen by smilingly deprecating any such responsibilities, are those who have dwelt since they were born in well-feathered nests, and have never needed to do anything but open their soft beaks for the choicest little grubs to be dropped into them. It is utterly absurd (and I am afraid the M.P.s in question are quite aware they are talking nonsense) to argue from the contented squawks of a brood of

these callow creatures, that full-grown swallows and larks have no need of wings, and are always happiest when their pinions are broken.

FRANCES POWER COBBE.

MRS. COWDEN CLARKE

(Author of the "Concordance to Shakespeare").

It gives me cordial pleasure to find that the great question is in such excellent, competent, and energetic hands as those of the ladies whose distinguished names are appended to the Opinions of which you enclose me a copy. . . . a cause which to me appears clearly obvious in its appeals to reason, justice, and common sense.

MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

(Extract from a letter).

MISS SHARMAN CRAWFORD.

"If a husband provides his wife with a due supply of food and clothing, she should never go outside the door," said an Egyptian dragoman. "Would you like a perpetual indoor life?" I asked. "Certainly not, but I am a man," was the conclusive answer. In England, where women have an admitted right to the enjoyment of personal liberty, the absurdity of the reply is evident; but as regards their political liberty, the majority of Englishmen at this present day reason in dragoman fashion. They have yet to learn that, if the physical health of woman is admittedly impaired by confinement within a limited space, her mental health also suffers through legislative disabilities; and that it is as unfair to deprive her, on the ground of sex, of political liberty, as, in the Oriental mode, to shut her up within four walls. At this present day the Turkish empire is crumbling into ruins through the consistently enforced rule of the exclusively domestic sphere of woman, whilst society in England is vivified by a general infringement of this principle. The feminine philanthropist—designer and director of some beneficent public work—is essentially a politician; and, happily for the poor and friendless, this feminine poacher on masculine preserves is an ordinary feature of English life, in town and country. To say that a woman is unfit to vote in a land where a woman rules, is like saying that to pull an oar requires more intelligence than to steer.

MABEL SHARMAN CRAWFORD.

MRS. EILOART

(Author of "Some of our Girls," &c., &c.).

I do not believe that the wrongs the sufferings and the claims of women will ever meet with due consideration until they have that share in legislation which the franchise alone can give them.

ELIZABETH EILOART.

MRS. EWING

(Editor of "Aunt Judy's Magazine").

I am unable to see any rational objection to the "Extension of the Franchise to Women Ratepayers and Householders." This, as I understand, is all that Mr. Courtney asks, and it is all on which I express the opinion you have requested.

My name can carry no weight whatever on your leaflet, but I would gladly help you to disprove the notion that women whose interests and circumstances lie apart from public affairs, and whose gate happens to be shielded from legal or social hardships, are therefore indifferent on these subjects.

JULIANA HORATIA EWING.

MRS. FAWCETT

(Author of "Political Economy for Beginners," &c.).

I am every year more convinced of the value that the granting of the Parliamentary suffrage would be both to men and women. Everything that is now being done to enlarge the sphere of women's lives needs the help that the possession of the suffrage by women would be. In itself, too, the removal of electoral disabilities would be a great good; it would foster public spirit and a sense of public duty in women. When women are shut out from all direct political influence they are apt to forget the claims of patriotism and to grudge all that they or their relatives have to give up for the public good. Anything which brings home to Englishwomen that they are "citizens of no mean city" will help to make our future as a nation worthy of our past.

MILLCENT GARRETT FAWCETT.

MISS MARGARET GILLIES.

As holders of property and payers of rates and taxes, women who do so ought, it seems to me, to have a vote in the choice of those who are their representatives in Parliament.

MARGARET GILLIES.

MISS DORA GREENWELL

(Author of "The Patience of Hope," &c.).

It appears to me that the possession of property is like speech, or like prayer, one of the grand distinctions between rational and merely animal life. Animals, it is true, hoard, but can scarcely be said to *own*, property. To refuse such a right to a woman in a country whose chief magistrate and ruler is a woman seems (to me at least) a manifest absurdity.

DORA GREENWELL.

MRS. H. R. HAWEIS

(Author of "Chancer for Children," "The Art of Beauty," &c.).

I am interested in the franchise, not only as a means of bringing the direct influence of women to bear on questions which directly concern them, but also as one of the steps towards their general elevation. I think that in proportion as women realise that they hold a responsible place in the State, they will become fit for it. No woman is a worse wife or mother for understanding her duties; and she would be the better citizen for appreciating her legal and political, as well as her social position.

M. E. HAWEIS.

MRS. HOWITT.

I entirely sympathize with the movement to obtain Female Suffrage.

MARY HOWITT.

MRS. ALFRED W. HUNT

(Author of "The Hazard of the Die," &c.).

If women are too weak and too foolish to be trusted with votes, they ought in common fairness to be spared the burden

of taxpaying. The latest arguments I have heard of (all the others having really been worn to death) against the manifest injustice of departing in the case of unmarried women from the constitutional maxim about Taxation and Representation being joined together, is that which is based on the ground that all government rests ultimately on physical force, and therefore it would not be well for the State to have a large class of voters who could vote, but could not (or, it is to be hoped, would not) be able to take part in the rough work of politics. I thought it had been settled long ago that one of the chief advantages of civilised government was, that under it opinion and intellectual judgment as such had full and due means of expression afforded them. The opponents of the Women's (unmarried ratepayers) Suffrage Bill must fall back on the old simple argument of women's intellectual inferiority if they are to put forward any show of argument at all.

MARGARET HUNT.

MISS ANNIE KEARY

(Author of "Castle Daly," "A Doubting Heart," &c.).

MISS ELIZA KEARY

(Author of "Heroes of Asgard," "The Little Sealskin," &c.).

It is because we think that not only women but the men themselves would be benefited by the association of the sexes in the acts of legislation that we wish to see the suffrage extended to women. Though it has been said that nothing is so like a man as a woman, it is not to be denied that the difference between them is a root difference and that neither is complete without the other—wherever they work together, they work better than apart. The household is ruled jointly by man and woman in practice if not in theory, and it seems to us that the very fact of their essential difference makes it, not desirable merely, but needful that the influence of both should be everywhere felt. Whom God hath joined together, let not conventionality and prejudice keep asunder.

ANNIE AND ELIZA KEARY.

MISS KEDDIE (SARAH TYTLER)

(Author of "Citoyenne Jacqueline," &c., &c., &c.).

It seems to me it is no more than justice that those women who, as householders, share the burden of paying taxes, should also share the privilege of the franchise.

HENRIETTA KEDDIE.

THE HON. MRS. OCTAVIUS KNOX

(Author of "Sonnets and other Poems").

Certainly I think woman should differ from man; but not by being ignorant where he is instructed, prejudiced where he is large-minded, foolish where he is wise. If then you have women instructed, large-minded, and wise, it is impossible that men should long withhold from them so elementary a right as that of choosing who shall make the laws they have to obey. One is a little impatient of writing down "reasons" for so obvious an act of justice, yet I believe that this delay, this timidity about granting her the franchise, is good for woman; it gives her an aim, a hope, and it winnows from amongst the number of those who declare for this aim all cowards, all who have never thought for themselves, all, in fact, who could not use the franchise if they had it. The delay, however, is not very creditable to men, neither are some of the arguments employed in its favour, such as "that physical force being behind men and not behind women no modicum of ruling power can safely be given to the latter." In the end which rules, which do we desire should rule, in civilized communities, brute force or intellect? We had always thought that (make what political arrangements you will) intellect did, because it is by its nature king over brute force, in the long run; can gather that together, can organize, can command it. Cromwell gathers his Ironsides, and through intellectual and moral force he wields them; his mind withdrawn what avails the force of his powerful army? Napoleon gathers, leads, and trains his big battalions, and through his intellectual might he triumphs; through his want of morality he falls. Surely this argument from "force" cannot long prove

a bugbear to the wise; but will they not feel the force of this one? "You cannot expect wisdom where you deny all power and responsibility; you must desire wisdom in one half the community if your highest aspiration is that wisdom should rule the other." It has been truly said that "Man and Woman form one perfect whole,"

Two glorious wings humanity was given;
How piteous should the silver feathers sweep,
Broken and marred, on either hand the dust.
Ah, not alone we suffer! man faints too;
His mate unequal, all the flight is stayed.

LUCY KNOX.

PRINCESS MELE BARESE

(née Lilian Mackworth Praed).

It is difficult to give any special reason for desiring the political enfranchisement of women, simply because there are so many reasons for desiring it. But the one which, perhaps, to my mind, has the greatest weight, is, after all, not grounded on any wish to benefit women only, or even specially, but rather on the conviction that in raising *them* we should raise men also; that in the higher development of their capacities—such as I believe would undoubtedly result from their political enfranchisement—we should promote the higher development and culture of the whole nation.

E. L. M. MELE BARESE.

MISS METEYARD

(Author of "Life of Wedgwood;" "Wedgwood and his Works;" "Wedgwood Handbook," &c., &c.).

I believe that the extension of the franchise to women householders would play an important part in leading them to a knowledge of political subjects, and to the taking a vivid interest therein. At present, generally speaking, the dormant condition of female intelligence in respect of all the great moral, social, and political questions of the time is something lamentable, and is a main cause of that narrow conservatism of ideas which stops the way to the intellectual advance of the middle classes.

ELIZA METEYARD.

MRS. MOLESWORTH

(Author of "Carrots," "Grandmother Dear," &c.).

I have often felt astonished that there could be any diversity of opinion as to the manifest injustice of women who are in the independent and responsible position of ratepayers and householders being deprived of the political rights which they should enjoy. And were I in a position to do more than express my hearty concurrence in your opinions, and my admiration for your efforts, I should gladly do so. LOUISA MOLESWORTH.

MRS. F. E. M. NOTLEY

(Author of "Olive Varcoe," &c., &c.).

I am of opinion that to withhold the franchise from those women who are undertaking and suffering all the burdens and responsibilities of men is an injustice as senseless as it is illogical. I hold this opinion upon much wider grounds than the mere payment of rates and taxes. I know that women cannot hope for much change in the cumbrous and unfair laws which weigh on them now so heavily, until they have a voice in the choosing of law-makers. Therefore, I consider it is their bounden duty honourably and bravely to continue their struggle to obtain the franchise, until victory crowns the cause. Men have fought to the very death for freedom and for just laws, always with women's support and sympathy; it is our turn now to ask them for help and to entreat them to remember that "The woman's question is the man's." F. E. M. NOTLEY.

MISS CHARLOTTE G. O'BRIEN

(Author of "Light and Shade," &c.).

Granted the desirability of women's education, the desirability of the suffrage becomes a mere consequence. Will any man or woman learn a trade they never expect to make use of? No. How then can it be expected they should learn to interest themselves in politics (without which interest a really educated mind

is impossible) if their so doing can have no fruits? But this interest does bear fruit in other forms. Undoubtedly it does, but only as the side growths of a pollarded tree, imperfect though often vigorous. CHARLOTTE G. O'BRIEN.

MISS OTTÉ

(Author of "Scandinavian History," &c.).

It is often argued that women generally do not wish to acquire the right of electoral suffrage, and that if it were extended to them the majority of those who might claim it would regard its obligations as burdensome and distasteful, and would either evade them altogether, or fulfil them with reluctance and indifference, or with inconsistency and caprice. Such an argument can, however, have no weight in a question like this, which is one of right and not of sentiment. Similar charges of disinclination and inefficiency for the discharge of electoral duties might possibly apply with equal force to numerous men; but no one would for a moment pretend that any such individual contingencies could be advanced as reasons why Englishmen should not retain their constitutional right of having a voice in the election of those who legislate upon the questions which most closely affect the interests of each individual member of the community.

If women generally labour under the ignorance and indifference imputed to them with regard to all that concerns the conduct of public affairs, it would seem the more imperative that they should be made participants with men in the exercise of those electoral duties and privileges to which Englishmen are wont to point as the basis of their own claim to be regarded as patterns for other nations of the enlightenment which springs from the free individual exercise of political rights. If it be true that political enlightenment comes with the power to exercise political rights, women will have an important grievance to complain of till they are in this respect put on an equality with men. ELISE C. OTTÉ.

MRS. MARK PATTISON

(Author of "The Renaissance of Art in France").

I earnestly desire to see the franchise extended to women. I believe that its educational value would be great, and that by its possession women would be led to exercise judgment in forming their opinions upon questions which at present they regard with ignorant indifference, or with equally ignorant prejudice. I think also that it cannot be contested, that at the present day the right to vote is the one right, without which no other right is secure.

E. F. S. PATTISON.

MRS. PFEIFFER

(Author of "Glán Alarch," "Gerard's Monument," "Quarterman's Grace," &c.).

Although not a worker in the cause of women's suffrage, the efforts of those engaged in it have my deepest sympathy, convinced as I am that its success would let in a stream of now ineffective light upon questions of highest importance to the race. Thought is liable to become unsound when divorced from action, and the orderly evolution of the mental power of women,—now first emerging from the trammels of custom,—requires the wider field which they claim, not for themselves alone, but in the interests of human society.

Further, the open recognition of gifts on the part of women, which whether equal or not to those of men, are needed to the fuller efficiency of the complicated social machine, would, in increasing responsibility and womanly self-respect, give a new impulse to moral and intellectual culture, and form a needed counterpoise to the lamentable tendencies of the social (more truly anti-social) ambitions, in which the energies of the more stirring of the sex have been wasted.

EMILY PFEIFFER.

MRS. RICHMOND RITCHIE (Miss Thackeray)

(Author of "The Village on the Cliff," "Old Kensington," "Miss Angel," &c.).

I entirely sympathise with your wish that the franchise should be extended to women.

Extract from Letter.

MISS ARABELLA SHORE

(Author of "War Lyrics" and "Fra Dolcino").

The position of women is, I think, at present anomalous and most unsatisfactory. Efforts are being made in various directions to improve and elevate their condition; but these are more or less frustrated by the assumption of their natural inferiority and incompetency stamped on the whole of our legislation concerning women, especially in the refusal of the suffrage to them. Social progress, to be real and consistent, must be accompanied by political emancipation. It seems almost ridiculous to grant them new rights, open new fields, claim offices of responsibility for them, while the simplest of rights which almost any man is thought good enough for is denied them. The law which makes the highest of women the inferior of the wife-beater, the drunkard, and the illiterate, must act injuriously on the moral sense of the whole community; and general professions of respect and homage are rendered nearly worthless by the habit of classing women as political incapables along with criminals, lunatics, and idiots. The depth of this prejudice is shown by the facts that the very words, justice and right, seem to lose their force, in most men's minds, when applied to women, and that all the arguments for representation deemed unanswerable in the case of classes of men, are quietly ignored when urged by women themselves for the same classes of women, or are met by the simple assertion that they don't apply to women. Yet by women the weight of these reasons for emancipation are strongly felt, and ever more strongly the more they interest themselves in social work and public questions. Ought not this fact to induce men to attempt, if they can, to look on the subject from the women's point of view also, instead of merely, as hitherto, from their own?

ARABELLA SHORE.

MISS SIMCOX

(Author of the "Ethics of Law," &c.).

I can only give the same reasons for desiring the political enfranchisement of women that I should give for desiring the

political enfranchisement of anyone else; *e.g.*, of the agricultural labourers now, of the manufacturing towns before the first Reform Bill, and of male householders and lodgers before the last. The chief of these reasons is that I think every member of a society has duties towards that society and owes it a debt of service in return for the innumerable benefits of social and civilised life. And this debt of gratitude and service cannot but be ignored or repudiated by any persons who find themselves permanently and deliberately excluded from civic fellowship. A disfranchised class is either politically ignorant and indifferent, or disaffected. Ignorance and indifference in reference to the welfare of the community, on the part of half its members, though these be only women, seems to me a graver social evil than even positive disaffection in a smaller class. Yet *this* is so serious a danger that hardly anyone nowadays would deny that if a body of discontented men thought the franchise would content them, that safe and inexpensive remedy should be administered at once. *A fortiori*, then, should the remedy be tried in our case, since we are, to a woman, either unwholesomely discontented with our political status, or else unwholesomely indifferent to the highest interests, social and political, of the community which has a right to our loyalty. EDITH SIMCOX.

MRS. J. K. SPENDER

(Author of "Parted Lives," "Mark Fylmer's Revenge," &c., &c.).

My opinion has been formed slowly and after much hesitation. Although for years past I have taken an active part in the educational movements of the day, and have contributed anonymously to periodical literature on the subject of women's work and influence, I have held back till lately from giving my adherence to the cause of Women's Suffrage from a dread lest political controversy should destroy the "womanliness" of women. But after long consideration of various social questions I have felt bound to support the movement, on conscientious grounds, as good and just in itself. LILY SPENDER,

Secretary of the Oxford Examinations, Bath.

MISS ANNA SWANWICK

(Translator of *Æschylus*).

Recognising the vast importance of legislation, as an agency either for good or for evil, women desire, with such influence as they can wield, to aid in bringing our human laws into harmony with the everlasting law of God. They recognise that the eternal law of righteousness vindicates itself not only through the acts of individuals, but also through the acts of the Legislature, and that failure, involving wide-spread misery, waits upon every measure not in harmony with the requirements of that higher law. In the light of this solemn truth law making becomes a very serious matter, and women are naturally desirous to have a voice in selecting the men to whom this sacred duty is entrusted.

ANNA SWANWICK.

MISS TABOR.

Our legislation is becoming so increasingly domestic in its character, and deals so largely now with the *home life* of the people, their health, their occupations, the disposal of their earnings, the training and education of their children, the treatment of the sick and poor, the paid nursing of infants, etc., etc., as to make it desirable that, in the interests of the community at large, some scheme of representation be devised, by which the opinions of women may be ascertained, and their influence and judgment brought to bear upon matters so clearly within their province and so closely affecting themselves.

MARY C. TABOR.

MRS. E. M. WARD.

You are already aware of my strong opinion on the subject of women's suffrage, and I am quite sure to artists it would be of the greatest use. There are several reasons, which I withhold from want of space, which would make it *most desirable* for women in my own profession.

HENRIETTA WARD.

MRS. HOWITT-WATTS

(Author of "An Art Student in Munich," &c.).

I see more and more—indeed there is not a day in which the newspapers do not display them—the evils of the Disabilities of women. The most important of these, representing—and, in a sense, comprehending—all the others, is the denial to her of the exercise of the Elective Franchise, and it is on that account that I desire to see her relieved from this most unreasonable disability.

I find it difficult to comprehend how, in an age in which exceptional legislation directed against particular classes of society is so universally deprecated, it can still be deemed right by any order of thinkers that these disabilities should continue to be maintained, or why women should be debarred from that highest of all culture which is provided by the exercise of individual responsibility in relation to important questions, some, especially and materially affecting themselves.

I cannot avoid adding the expression of my earnest belief that the existing state of things, and the habit of thought which it perpetuates, is as injurious to man as it is to woman, and that the happiness and welfare of both in this matter are one and indivisible.

ANNA MARY HOWITT-WATTS.

MRS. WEBSTER

(Author of "Portraits," "Dramatic Studies," "A Housewife's Opinions," &c.).

Women will have ceased to be an unrepresented class when some women have a vote. And for so great a good to us all I would gladly be at some sacrifice individually, if, which I do not believe, it can be a sacrifice to a married woman that unmarried and widowed women should be allowed to exercise a right from which her position precludes her.

AUGUSTA WEBSTER.

MISS JULIA WEDGWOOD

(Author of "John Wesley, and the Evangelical Reaction").

I consider the opening of the suffrage to women as a very important indirect influence on all measures taken or proposed for female welfare, as well as one of considerable importance in its direct bearing on this subject,

JULIA WEDGWOOD.

MRS. VILLARI

(Author of "In Change Unchanged," "Courtship and a Campaign," &c., &c., &c. Translator of "Life of Machiavelli").

It is my firm belief that both reason and expediency are in favour of Women's Suffrage. With the mass of our sex, enlargement of thought is only to be achieved by enlarged responsibility. None can deny that, even in the present state of the law, considerable political influence is exercised by women. That influence is sometimes mischievous, for, being secret, it is often employed for petty aims, whereas, were it open and recognised, the sense of responsibility would induce a higher platform of thought, and public good be more considered than personal caprice. It seems to me that political suffrage is not only desirable for the development of female intellect, but is a natural right which coming generations will pronounce indisputable. The fact that some women may not care to exercise this right in nowise invalidates the claim.

LINDA VILLARI.

III.
WOMEN FOLLOWING SCIENTIFIC AND
PROFESSIONAL CAREERS.

MRS. ANDERSON, M.D.

It is because it seems to me that giving women the franchise would be a very great step towards the uplifting of the whole sex, that I take special interest in it.

ELIZABETH GARRETT-ANDERSON.
(Reprinted by permission.)

MISS ANNIE BARKER, M.D.
(Women's Hospital, Birmingham).

It gives me much pleasure to have the opportunity of expressing my opinion with regard to the movement in favour of women's suffrage. The reform it advocates, I believe, will have a tendency to raise the social position of women, and on many points of vital interest prove a real gain to them and to the community at large.

ANNIE REAY BARKER.

MISS ELIZABETH BLACKWELL, M.D.

Character, not sex, is the best qualification for the electoral franchise. Any regulations which secure the increased influence of character and intelligence in public affairs must inevitably be productive of individual and national good.

ELIZABETH BLACKWELL.

MISS JEX-BLAKE, M.D., L.K.Q.C.P.I.

If I correctly understand the British Constitution one of its fundamental principles is that Taxation and Representation should go together, and that every person taxed should have a voice in the election of those by whom taxes are imposed. If this is a wrong principle it should be exchanged as soon as possible for some other, so that we may know what is the real basis of representation in this country; if it is a right principle it must admit of general application, and I am unable to see that the sex of the taxpaying householder should enter into the question at all.

The argument respecting the "virtual representation" of women under the present system seems to me especially worthless, as it can be answered alternatively, thus:—If women as a sex have exactly the same interests as men, their votes can do no harm, and indeed will not affect the ultimate result; if they have interests more or less divergent from those of men, it is obviously essential that such interests should be directly represented in the councils of the nation. My own belief is that in the highest sense the interests of the two sexes are identical, and that the noblest and most enlightened men and women will always feel them to be so; and, in that case, a country must surely be most politically healthy where all phases of thought and experience find legitimate expression in the selection of its Parliamentary representatives.

SOPHIA JEX-BLAKE.

MISS A. W. BUCKLAND

(Member of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, and Honorary Member of the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institute).

Although I have always kept myself aloof from that movement commonly known as "Woman's Rights," I hold firmly the opinion that women, otherwise duly qualified, may claim the Parliamentary franchise, not as a favour, but as a *right*. The excuses made for withholding this simple act of justice from our sex show plainly that it is *might*, rather than *right*, which prevails; but I do not believe that legislators would have been able

so long to resist a movement, so entirely in consonance with the boasted progress of this 19th century, in education and liberality of thought, had it not been for the unwise advocacy of some, who have made it apparent that they regarded the franchise claimed for unmarried women and widows, as only the thin end of the wedge intended eventually to include married women also, and to enable a few of the more masculine of our sex to appear on the platform as political agitators or candidates for Parliamentary honours. This idea would, however, I feel sure, be repudiated by the vast majority of those who now desire to be allowed to record their vote according to their opinions, in return for the full amount of taxation imposed upon them; and if our rulers would reflect upon the fact that the franchise claimed would, as a rule, only include women who may be fairly supposed to have arrived at years of discretion (as younger women would almost invariably be represented by father, mother, or husband); and would further in fairness allow, that the municipal franchise granted as a tentative measure and exercised by precisely the same class as would be further enfranchised; has certainly never been productive of political or social embarrassment in any way,—they would, I think, hasten to remove those disabilities, which some among us look upon as a mark of degradation unworthy of a nation standing in the front rank of civilisation.

A. W. BUCKLAND.

MISS ISABELLA CLARKE

(Pharmaceutical Chemist).

I am glad of the opportunity to express my opinion on the extension of the suffrage to women. I think it most unjust and illogical to deny the political franchise to women while it is granted to men who are in every respect inferiors of the women who would be entitled to it, and especially as women already possess the municipal franchise. Women must be represented *directly* as men are to obtain *direct* justice. Men would not be satisfied to have women as their representatives. It is impossible for either sex to represent the other, although the higher interests of both are identical.

ISABELLA S. CLARKE.

MISS DUNBAR, M.D., L.K.Q.C.P.I.

As the social position of women in the civilized world is very different from what it was in primitive times, it is only reasonable to believe that what has altered and improved so much in the past, must be capable of alteration and improvement in the present and future. There are changes which the generations of to-day are witnessing in the education of women and their employment in professions and trades hitherto closed to them. It appears to me, that the extension of the franchise to women is only a natural concession to a just demand made in conformity to the advancement of civilization and the changes effected by the acquirement of new privileges and responsibilities.

ELIZA WALKER-DUNBAR.

MRS. HOGGAN, M.D., L.K.Q.C.P.I.

It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of women's suffrage from an educational point of view. The possession of political rights and the responsibility of political duties will fortify in women the virtues of citizenship, the lack of which has become a reproach to them, and will tend to form that habit of mind, so conducive to the general well-being, which enables its possessor to look at everything from the two-fold standpoint of private and of public interest. The suffrage will also prove a precious safeguard in women's hands of the natural right of children, during the period of their minority, to the enjoyment of maternal care, as well as of those personal rights of their own which have been heretofore ignored by our legislators, owing to their inability to discover and recognise them.

FRANCES ELIZABETH HOGGAN.

MISS ORME.

I regard Mr. Courtney's proposed extension of the Parliamentary suffrage as a necessary reform in our representative system, and I look forward to its success as the safest, the most

effectual, and, on the whole, the most direct means of obtaining for women those educational advantages and remunerative employments still withheld from them.

ELIZA ORME.

MISS PECHEY, M.D. (Berne), L.K.Q.C.P.I.

I maintain that the present subjection of women to a position of political inferiority to men is calculated seriously to retard the advancement of the nation, both intellectually and morally. Only by giving full scope for individual development can a state become truly great; and the full extent of individual development can alone be secured by granting equality of rights to all alike without distinction of sex.

EDITH PECHEY.

IV.

WOMEN ENGAGED IN PROMOTING THE HIGHER EDUCATION OR THE TECH- NICAL EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN.

MADAME BELLOC

(Author of *Essays on Woman's Work*).

I think that in a time and country wherein the power of the vote is supreme, that power should be increasingly diffused.

The will of the majority has a tendency to become all-powerful; and, therefore, that majority should be composed of every diverse element, or injustice in a thousand subtle forms will result.

It is on this ground that I think women should ask for and obtain the suffrage.

BESSIE PARKES BELLOC.

LADY BOWRING.

My opinion with respect to the extension of the franchise remains unchanged. I cannot but think that those women ratepayers who like myself take an interest in social questions, must, as I do, feel strongly the injustice that is done them in being called upon to share in the taxation, without participating in the advantages conferred by property on the other sex, of a voice in Parliamentary representation.

DEBORAH BOWRING.

MISS CORLETT

(Founder of Queen's Institute and Queen's College, Dublin).

I have not heard of any dispute in Ireland as to the right of women holding property qualification to exercise the franchise, but there is a majority decidedly adverse to the expediency of its exercise. In Parliament the Irish members support the measure of the female franchise. The sole franchise privilege open to Irish women is that of voting for Poor-Law Guardians. The most remarkable test in respect of confidence in women's capacity arose in connection with framing the government of the Irish Church and regulating the status of its members. For three days the subject of equality in voting powers was warmly debated; about 300 voted for women, but by a narrow majority women were totally excluded from the privileges of Christian membership. I shall not refer to the debates, but they were unequalled for prejudice and unfairness in the expressions of the "opposition," and full of apprehension against the evil of priestly influence. I cannot but think the determination to exclude women from the advantages of Christian union had a serious effect on the popularity of the Church; it certainly weakened the attachments of those holding broad views; that it had a disastrous financial effect there can be no doubt, as very few women contribute to the Irish Church funds. All churchmen connected with the Queen's Institute faithfully upheld women's rights in the Church, and did their utmost to strengthen their just claims.

Among Irish Presbyterians women's votes are equal to men's votes, and the privilege of voting is held in high esteem. In respect of the real value of voting powers to women, my experience in the working of this society leads me to consider it would prove of the highest importance to working women to hold the Parliamentary franchise. In many cases the law could be made to inflict great hardships on working women, and but for compassion I believe the law would often bring home its power grievously to them. No doubt compassionate sentiments often avert the hardships of legislation from women. If enforced, the Factory Acts could not fail to open women's

eyes to their own disabilities. The Public Health Act (Ireland) is one which will cause great trouble and cost to women holding house property, and will compel their attention to the inconvenience of recent legislation. I have no doubt the liabilities under this Act will ultimately prove so exceptionally severe on ladies, that it will result in causing a very strong desire to obtain the possession of the franchise as an indispensable protection under British Law. Hitherto the consideration scarcely touched the upper classes, but they will immediately find it concerns them closely, in its application to property, and this Act can hardly fail to take a share in the political education of women.

A. BARBARA CORLETT.

MRS. CRAWSHAY.

The degradation of women will never cease, until means of earning an honest livelihood are afforded to that large majority which cannot achieve marriage; to this end women must have a voice in modifying laws which impede their doing a fair day's work, for a fair day's wage; and this will never be until the franchise is granted to women on the same conditions as those on which it is granted to men.

ROSE MARY CRAWSHAY.

MISS EMILY DAVIES.

I have long wished to see the suffrage granted to women. Now that it has been so very widely extended, the possession of an individual vote may indeed appear to be of little value, and I should not myself expect any very marked immediate effect on legislation from the concession. But the moral effect would, I believe, be deep and far-reaching. As matters stand, the law asserts in a solemn and emphatic form that women are not called upon to take an active interest in affairs of State; and it appears to make the assertion on the ground that they are by nature unfit for such action. This I hold to be a mischievous untruth, and believing, as I do, that political interests are among the noblest that can occupy our thoughts and energies,

I should welcome the removal of a restriction which so strongly discourages women from taking their fair share in public affairs.

EMILY DAVIES.

MRS. R. L. FORD (Leeds).

It is an obvious injustice to deny to women the privilege of citizenship, seeing that no women are exempted, on the ground of sex, from their share in the burdens of the State, and from obligation to obey laws framed by men only, without any reference to the opinions and wishes of women.

HANNAH FORD.

LADY GOLDSMID.

I consider it most unjust and invidious that women, who are ratepayers, should be denied the franchise, and I cannot, further, better express my feeling in favour of the measure than by quoting Miss Buss's words: "I think that women should possess the franchise, as the best means for their protection and representation of their interests."

LOUISA GOLDSMID.

MRS. WILLIAM GREY.

I give my entire and earnest support to the Bill to enable Women Ratepayers and Householders to vote for Members of Parliament, for two reasons: First, because I believe that artificial disabilities imposed on any section of society, which no energy or merit can overcome, and which partake, therefore, of the nature of caste, have a demoralising effect equally upon those who impose and those who are subject to them and, consequently, on society at large. Secondly, because having come originally to the consideration of the subject with the prejudice against it which belonged to my generation, I have become more and more convinced, the more I look into it, that the fears of social disaster, of revolution in the relations of the sexes, of danger to home and family, always put forward by its opponents, are wholly groundless, and that we may rely in

peace upon the action of natural laws, unaided by artificial regulations, to maintain the natural and healthy relations between men and women on which society rests.

MARIA G. GREY.

MISS MARY GURNEY.

If women householders were not, as at present, excluded from the Parliamentary franchise, their influence would be of much value in securing attention in the House of Commons to measures affecting the educational interest of girls.

MARY GURNEY.

MISS EMILY HALL.

Apart from the injustice of excluding women ratepayers from the privileges accorded to men in a like position; and regarding the subject solely with reference to its effect upon *character*, it would seem desirable that the franchise should be extended to women upon the same terms as it is granted to men.

If, in the interests of society at large, it is wished that women should be earnest, liberal-minded, cultivated, and reasoning beings, rather than frivolous and mean, acting more from impulse than principle, then let them be recognised as social and political entities. When, as at present, placed upon an equality with irresponsible children and idiots, is it wonderful if women should sometimes gravitate to this lower level, and by so much act as a dead weight to pull down those who would climb higher? No true progress can be made in either educational or social matters while the two halves of humanity thus "limp on unequal legs." The agile and unfettered member must of necessity restrain his steps and, on pain of complete dismemberment, suit them to the pace of his companion. Thus the whole race suffers, and, with much unnecessary friction, makes but feeble strides towards the goal—that higher development of every faculty which united effort can alone attain.

EMILY HALL.

MRS. ELIZABETH PEASE NICHOL.

It is my belief that the extension of the suffrage to women would not only be a measure of simple justice to them, but that a beneficial influence would thereby be brought to bear in the selection of representatives to Parliament, and on the minds of our legislators.

ELIZABETH PEASE NICHOL.

MRS. PATERSON

(Hon. Secretary of Women's Protective and Provident League).

For working women especially, I should hope for important advantages from the removal of the political disabilities of women, not so much on account of immediate and direct gains, as from the strengthening of the power of self help. Long tradition and habit have left them only the hope, often but a very faint one, that men know, and will do, all that is for their best interests; they cling to this hope in their industrial life, and allow their wages to be ground down, halfpenny by halfpenny, until at last they can think of nothing but how not to starve. Though only a small proportion of working women might have qualifications entitling them to the franchise, their present hopelessness and helplessness would be lightened by the removal of the injustice which places every one of their sisters, however intelligent, however good and useful a member of society, in the position, as some writer has said, of a "political outcast."

EMMA A. PATERSON.

MISS PRIDEAUX

(Hon. Secretary Cambridge Higher Local Examinations (London Centre) for Women).

I give my entire and hearty support to the Bill to enable women ratepayers and householders to vote for members of Parliament. I fail to see why members of society having equal liabilities should not also have equal privileges.

ADA H. PRIDEAUX.

MISS SHIRREFF.

My interest in the movement for giving the suffrage to women householders is founded, *first*, on a keen sense of the injustice of excluding one class of ratepayers from the privilege granted to others, merely because they are women; while their duties and liabilities remain the same. *Secondly*, on the fact that the history of this country shows us, that only as certain sections of the community obtained the suffrage, were their special wrongs redressed; and that it is evident, how much the mere agitation of this question has done, to bring about reforms which would probably have been neglected for generations to come, as through generations past, had not the unwelcome prospect of a wider door to be opened for influence hitherto little felt, made it desirable to cut away some of the grounds of complaints. *Lastly*, my conviction of the cogency of the arguments urged by the friends of the movement is strengthened by the circumstance, that its adversaries are driven year after year to depend on the same contradiction of known facts, on the same flying from argument to prophecy, on the same appeals to custom, to associations, and predilections, to the same pathetic iteration of the "*sentiment* of our forefathers;" whereas had they been able to find one simple intelligible reason to serve their purpose, we must, in fairness to them, suppose that they would in the course of debate, here and there at least, have brought it forward.

EMILY A. E. SHIRREFF.

MISS LOUISA STEVENSON, Edinburgh

(Hon. Sec. to the National Association for Promoting the Medical Education of Women).

Seeing that many members of Parliament feel bound to be representatives *only*, it is not to be wondered at that important interests concerning unrepresented women are often neglected in the pressure and among the chances of Parliamentary life.

LOUISA STEVENSON.

MRS. THORNE

(Hon. Sec. to the School of Medicine for Women).

As our representative system is based on taxation, and not on physical force, there seems to me no sound reason for the

exclusion of women householders from the elective franchise, while the fact that women take an active and useful part in many public matters indicates that their responsible co-operation in our system of representative government is likely to be beneficial to the community.

ISABEL THORNE.

PRINCIPALS OF COLLEGES AND HEADS OF HIGH SCHOOLS.

MISS BUSS

(Fellow of the College of Preceptors, and Principal of the North London Collegiate School for Girls).

I think that women should possess the franchise, as the best existing means for their protection and the representation of their interests. The interests of all classes of men are represented *directly*, those of women only *indirectly*.

FRANCES M. BUSS.

MRS. BRYANT

(Fellow of the College of Preceptors).

Supposing that men do in a measure represent women, it seems to me that the *indirect* influence involved in the supposition is just one of the worst things in the world by itself. Surely there should be no power that is not acknowledged and direct. Good human beings may easily cause others to do things which they would never do themselves if placed face to face with these things and their consequences. For he who has a power *direct* and can act, questions conscience and investigates facts by the light of reason before he acts. But she who is conscious only of her power of speech may easily use it without reference to conscience and reason at all. Action is always more prudent, and naturally more conscientious, than speech. I think, therefore, that if women have *irresponsible* influence at present, and are thereby indirectly represented, the sooner they are made to feel the weight of *responsible* influence by direct representation the better.

SOPHIA BRYANT.

MRS. BYERS

(Principal of the Ladies' Collegiate School, Belfast).

It is perfectly obvious that from sheer necessity many women are obliged unaided and alone, to make a struggle for existence not only for themselves but for helpless relatives. In this struggle women have many *natural* hindrances of which men similarly placed practically know nothing. I often wonder why good men do not unitedly step forward and free women householders from any legal or artificial disabilities that they can remove, and thus take away any reason for their agitating about a question of personal rights, a thing that must always be disagreeable to women of good taste and refinement.

MARGARET BYERS.

MISS GROVE

(Lady Resident of Queen's College).

With regard to the extension of the franchise to women, I have the sure conviction that sooner or later it must be ours because it is so thoroughly just a demand on our side. In giving it to us, men only give, what in a free country every class has a right to expect: the power of getting its own case represented from its own point of view; and this is a power which any body of educated men, if it were persistently denied to them, would take to themselves at last by physical force.

ELEANOR GROVE.

BATH HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

MISS WOOD, Head Mistress.

It seems to me that a disinclination to allow to woman a possibility of individual life lies at the root of many social prejudices and mistakes. "He for God only, &c., &c.," is the text of the speeches in Parliament and elsewhere against the proposed measure. But those who take up the profession of teaching, especially those who are at the head of large schools, are perhaps specially conscious of their individuality, and are constantly reminded that they are social units. Why, then, not political units also?

S. WOOD.

BRADFORD GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

MISS PORTER, Head Mistress.

I take a warm interest in the efforts that are being made to obtain the suffrage for women. In connection with the work of educating girls, I constantly feel how important it is that they should learn to take an intelligent interest in the great social and political questions of the day. The action of the Government and legislature in settling these questions, and the resulting consequences which flow from that action, have as vital an interest for women as for men, and as direct a bearing on their welfare. Nothing would so tend to create a vivid interest on the part of women in such matters, as the feeling that it was a duty to one's country to embrace all possible means of forming a right judgment on such questions. It has been well said that we all, men and women, hold a place in the great parliament of public opinion, and some of us, feeling the truth of this, hold it to be our duty to form such opinions under *present* circumstances; but the duty will never be generally recognised by women till they have a voice in the election of representatives to Parliament. Surely the large-hearted patriotism which, rising above mere party spirit, cares greatly for the honour and welfare of the country, will one day be found to be as ennobling an influence in the lives of women as it has been in the lives of men.

MARY E. PORTER.

BRIGHTON HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

MISS CREAK, Head Mistress.

I am in favour of women's suffrage because it is a doctrine of the British Constitution that Taxation and Representation go together.

EDITH CREAK.

CROYDON HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

MISS D. NELIGAN, Head Mistress.

For years I was an indifferent, if not antagonistic, spectator of the efforts made to procure the extension of the franchise to women. When I became a householder, I felt for the first time

that the existing disqualification is an unjust one; and I now support the movement not merely from the desire to see justice done to a class, but in the firm belief that it will do much to raise the aims and widen the thoughts of women, a result which must benefit the whole human race.

D. NELIGAN.

DULWICH HIGH SCHOOL.

MISS MARY ALGER, Head Mistress.

I cannot understand the principle upon which women are admitted to municipal offices, and yet are not considered qualified to give their vote as citizens. On that day when by unanimous consent women were allowed to become sovereigns, the principle of political equality irrespective of sex took its place; and whilst the right of Women's Suffrage is still withheld from us, it is an anomaly to see a woman occupying the highest position in our country.

MARY ALGER.

GATESHEAD HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

MISS ROWDON, Head Mistress.

Surely all those whose welfare depends upon the laws of a country should have a voice in electing those who make the laws. If so, women would be equally qualified to vote with men.

The chief objection to extending the franchise to women has hitherto been based upon the deficiency in their education. This argument is daily becoming more feeble and without true foundation, since women have eagerly and successfully availed themselves of the greater educational advantages offered them during the last few years.

JANE PASKE ROWDON.

HACKNEY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

MISS PEARSE, Head Mistress.

I cannot see why, if women desire the Franchise, they should not have it, particularly as they are now eligible to vote for School Board candidates, and I understand also in parochial

matters. Eventually, I suppose, we may be looking forward to universal suffrage, and when that takes place it seems to me it would be only logical if women should vote as well as men.

M. PEARSE.

HALIFAX HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

MISS ROBINSON, Head Mistress.

Women are as justified in their demands for Female Suffrage, as were the Americans in their War of Independence, and it seems to me that by *quietly* keeping the justice of the matter before the public; they must eventually gain their end.

Laura A. ROBINSON.

IPSWICH HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

MISS YOUNGMAN, Head Mistress.

I have much pleasure in entering my protest against the injustice practised upon unmarried female ratepayers in the withholding of the suffrage from them. Until the taxes are removed from a class popularly considered incapable of forming rational opinions, I hold it to be the duty of every member to exercise the sum of her feeble intellectual powers towards the overthrow of such systematic oppression.

SOPHIE YOUNGMAN.

NORWICH HIGH SCHOOL.

MISS WILLS.

My opinion on the Women's Suffrage question is that Taxation and Representation should go together.

L. B. WILLS.

NOTTINGHAM HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

MISS HASTINGS, Head Mistress.

I am glad to add my testimony to the fact that women earnestly desire the franchise; and to assert my belief that the possession of it would tend to give them wider interests and sympathies.

EDITH HASTINGS.

NOTTING HILL HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

MISS H. M. JONES, Head Mistress.

The extension of the Parliamentary franchise to women who are householders and ratepayers appears to me most desirable from every point of view.

In the first place, it would be simply an act of justice that women who bear the burden of taxation should have some share in that representation which gives to England its political freedom. As it is, instead of being endowed with the rights and privileges of citizenship, women are set aside as a separate class of inferior beings, whose opinions are valueless, and whose wishes and wants are of no importance whatever.

Again, the extension of the franchise to women would act powerfully as an educational stimulus. The national recognition of women as intelligent beings, capable of forming an opinion on the great questions which affect the interests of a nation, would tend not a little to develop that intelligence, and also to rescue them from that state of helplessness, ignorance, and indifference to which so many are condemned by the present political and social state of things.

Again, I earnestly desire the suffrage, because so long as women are unrepresented, their interests are often overlooked, and even set aside by those who ought to legislate for the nation at large. Such has been the case in the distribution of educational endowments, in the laws relating to married women, and also in the regulations limiting the powers of women in the guardianship of their own children.

These all are, in my opinion, reasons why those who desire the well-being of every class of society should do what they can to help forward the cause of women's suffrage, which, when obtained, will free them from the reproach of intellectual inferiority, under which they at present lie.

H. M. JONES.

SHEFFIELD HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

MISS WOODHOUSE, Head Mistress.

I hope for the extension of the franchise to qualified women, not only as an act of justice to one-half the community now

practically unrepresented, but mainly as a great motive power in increasing the moral elevation of women, by fostering the feeling of responsibility and strengthening the judgment by exercise on questions, which would then become matters of personal interest. By enfranchisement would be removed, I am convinced, one of the chief causes of that levity in the formation of opinions, and evident irresponsibility of character so common among women and so painful to the trained intellect whether of men or women.

The world, in its career of advancement and eager utilisation of all material forces, can ill afford to leave unrecognised and undirected those moral forces, less apparent, but more important to the well-being of the race of which the greatest is, perhaps, the moral influence for good or ill of women. And we may rest assured that in this case, as ever before, the raising of any class to a higher moral elevation will be a great and lasting gain to all, and cannot fail to subserve the highest interests of society at large.

ELIZA WOODHOUSE.

WESTMINSTER GREY COAT SCHOOL.

MISS ELSIE DAY, Head Mistress.

That, constitutionally, all women who pay taxes, have the right to direct representation, appears to me incontrovertible. It is the genius of the English people, when once convinced of a duty, to act upon it; but the growth of that conviction is slow. We would do well to be thankful that it is so. That the conviction will come eventually, as in the case of the Roman Catholic disabilities, I have no doubt. In the meantime, let us quietly wait and educate the nation to look impassionately at the question, not as a matter of opposing interests, but of simple duty—remembering Auguste Cochin's wise caution that "noise does no good, and good makes no noise."

ELSIE DAY.

MISS LUMSDEN

(Head Mistress of St. Andrew's School for Girls).

I earnestly desire that the suffrage should be opened to women. Since women, when taxpayers, bear equally with men the burdens of citizenship, I cannot see any just ground for excluding such women from the privileges of citizenship. Besides, why should any part of the intellectual power of the community be useless to the State on questions of public and national interest? Utilising it would surely prove to be for the advantage, not of women only, but of the whole community. On women themselves I believe the possession of responsible political power would have an enormous influence for good.

LOUISA INNES LUMSDEN.

V.
WOMEN ENGAGED IN PHILANTHROPIC
WORK.

MISS DAVENPORT HILL

(Author of "What we Saw in Australia," &c.).

One objection often raised against the demand by women for the suffrage is that they can at present exercise quite as much political power as is good for them. This may be quite true, but at the same time it must not be forgotten that the power they now exercise is unaccompanied by responsibility; and power without responsibility is a dangerous possession.

ROSAMOND DAVENPORT HILL.

MISS FLORENCE DAVENPORT HILL

(Author of "Children of the State," &c.).

It is as reasonable to suppose that a family is as wisely governed and adequately cared for which has only a master and no mistress, as to believe that the country has all its wants understood and provided for in the absence of the feminine element from its legislation. The fact that women are different from men affords the strongest argument in favour of their joint exercise of the franchise. Were they identical, either sex could adequately represent the other; but being complementary, each is needed, whether in the management of the family or the nation.

FLORENCE DAVENPORT HILL.

MRS. HILTON

(Founder of the Crèche at Stepney).

Women have special functions to fulfil in the social work of the world, in the management of children, assisting the poor, nursing the sick, or educating the ignorant. It appears to me that as the attention of Parliament is necessarily so frequently directed to the concerns of the poor, ignorant, infirm, or helpless, its legislation can only be imperfect as long as women have no share in the election of its members.

MARIE HILTON.

MISS ELLICE HOPKINS

(Author of "Life of James Hinton," "Work in Brighton," &c.).

It is difficult for anyone impartially to study this question of legislation without being led to feel that the absence of the direct moral influence of women is an irremediable loss. Surely the family is the Divine archetype of all social organisation, the constitutive element of which the larger family of the municipality, the yet larger family of the State should be assimilated, and inevitably will be assimilated hereafter, in spirit if not in form. Are not our public organisations survivals of older and extinct forms of the family when the woman was allowed only an indirect influence, was placed under the perpetual guardianship of man, and had her own separate quarters in the house, the *παρὰ* of home, and was not permitted to take her place with man at the common table? And if in the slow evolution of the family idea it has been found that the work of the family can be best done by the woman taking an equal place by the side of the man, and realising the ideal of Christianity, which consecrates her as the Divine mother, the fountain of life and love and purity, so in the future may we not find in the larger family of the State, that the work of the world is best done by the man and the woman together, each supplying what is lacking to the other, the man the head of the woman, the woman the heart of the man?

ELLICE HOPKINS.

MISS IRBY.

In reply to your inquiry, I say that I am in favour of the admission of women to a share in the representation. Justice is ever the best policy. We have nothing to fear from freedom. With regard to the application of those principles to the particular question before us, I believe that the extension of the franchise to women is calculated to enable men and women alike to grow more worthy of its possession, and better able to fulfil their joint duties of citizenship. A. PAULINA IRBY.

MISS E. A. MANNING

(Hon. Secretary to the National Indian Association).

The claim of women to the suffrage, when considered impartially, seems so natural and just, that probably fifty years hence the present opposition to it will be looked back upon with curious surprise, and will be quoted as an instance of the force of imaginary fears. ELIZABETH ADELAIDE MANNING.

MISS MERRYWEATHER

(Lady Superintendent of the Nurses' Home, Broad Sanctuary, Westminster).

I feel that justice and morality can never rule the country where half the population, even when qualified otherwise, is, by the accident of sex, excluded from the representation.

MARY MERRYWEATHER.

MISS FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

You ask me to give my reasons for wishing for the suffrage for women householders and women ratepayers. I have no reasons.

The Indian ryot should be represented so that the people may virtually rate themselves according to the surveys of what is wanted and spend the money locally under certain orders of an elected board.

If this is the case: That we wish to give to the Indian native, peasant and Zemindar alike, such local representation *as we*

can in spending the taxes he pays,—is the educated English taxpayer, of *whichever* sex, to be excluded from a share in electing the Imperial representatives?

It seems a first principle, an axiom: that *every* householder or taxpayer should have a voice in electing those who spend the money we pay, including, as this does, interests the most vital to a human being—for instance, education. At the same time, I do not expect much from it, for I do not see that, for instance, in America, where suffrage is, I suppose, the most extended, there is more, but rather less, of what may truly be called freedom or progress than anywhere else.

But there can be no freedom or progress without representation. And we must give women the true education to deserve being represented. *Men* as well as women are not so well endowed with that preparation at present. And if the persons represented are not worth much, of course the representatives will not be worth much. FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

MRS. SOUTHEY

(Hon. Sec. of the Women's Peace and Arbitration Association).

I am in favour of women's suffrage because the basis is justice, and what is morally right must eventually prove to be politically right. ELIZABETH MARY SOUTHEY.

WOMEN ENGAGED IN PROMOTING TEMPERANCE.

MRS. DAWSON BURNS.

It has been argued that had women the power of voting they would in some instances show how unsuitably that power would be used, or even utterly abused. Even were it so, let it be remembered that non-suitability, or the abuse of the privilege, does not disfranchise a man. Here are two glaring anomalies: A man may drink as much as he pleases, far beyond the bounds of moderation and respectability; may be as ignorant and brutal as he pleases; may be quietly breaking every law that should honestly bind him to his home, his wife, and his children; may

be utterly incompetent to estimate either the character or intelligence of the man for whom he is asked to vote; yet, let him only live in a borough as householder or lodger; paying a yearly rental, and he possesses the right of voting at Parliamentary elections.

Contrast this case with that of a woman who has all her life maintained an honourable position; guided her house with consummate judgment; has been first and foremost in various benevolences and schemes for her country's purity and elevation; can always give an excellent reason for the judicious opinion she has formed; yet, whether widow or spinster, as a householder paying taxes, or a lodger renting apartments of the required value, is denied the opportunity of exercising that tact, that judgment, that influence in the election of candidates whom she deems best qualified to legislate for the urgent wants and necessities of the times.

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MRS. M. A. CLARKE (Headington).

There are so many *reasonable* reasons for giving the franchise to tax-paying women that it is difficult to make a selection. Perhaps the injustice of withholding the suffrage wherever taxes are demanded may to some minds be brought home by a startling contrast. We see a well-educated woman with wealth and property at her command classed by the law with minors, idiots, and felons, while the man who opens her carriage door or drives her horses may have a voice in the legislation of the country, be he ignorant, drunken, or depraved!

The hackneyed argument that women are imperfectly informed about politics will not hold good while so many men voters are profoundly ignorant concerning the highest politics of the day. In both cases the possession of the vote will necessarily create an interest in the subject, and no woman can be far wrong who votes for the men that do their best to promote peace, sobriety, and equal justice in the land.

MARY ANNE CLARKE.

MRS. LUCAS

(President of the British Women's Temperance Association).

It would appear that women are being drawn into the political arena, whether or no they desire it, owing to the growing tendency to bring all questions before Parliament which affect them equally with men. This being the case, it is only a question of justice to grant the moral right of representation to women who have the same qualifications as men. There is no doubt their votes would be widely utilised in stemming the tide of intemperance, and this power united with the moral influence they already possess would add immense weight to the cause of social purity.

MARGARET LUCAS.

MRS. PARKER (Dundee)

(President of the International Christian Women's Temperance Union).

Looking at it as a matter of simple justice, I never could understand why men should shut women *out* of privileges, who pay rates, and shut themselves *into* privileges on the same ground, and do both in the name of justice. It seems little else than plunder of the most ungenerous kind. Woman certainly has a right to have her property represented in the representation of property, and her person in the representation of persons. To say that woman is not educated for the ballot is idle. The best education for the ballot is the ballot itself.

MARGARET E. PARKER.

VI.

PASSAGES FROM WRITINGS OR SPEECHES
OF EMINENT WOMEN NO LONGER
LIVING.

MISS MARY CARPENTER

(Died June, 1877. Author of "Juvenile Delinquents," "Our Convicts," &c.
Founder of the Red Lodge Reformatory for Girls, Bristol).

At the Annual Public Meeting of the Bristol and West of England Society for the Promotion of Women's Suffrage, on March 8th, 1877, Miss Carpenter said:—"She very warmly sympathised in the principles of that Society and wished it success, though she was unable from her other engagements to take any part in the movement."

MRS. GROTE.

(Died January, 1879.)

By the Reform Act you have invested with a large measure of representative power the classes who do not represent property, or at least in very small proportions, but who live by their labour; that is to say, you have augmented the weight of the representation of numbers; then, is it not fair that at least the property side should be in possession of all its legitimate power? Why, when you have augmented one side of the representation, are you not to give the full measure of its power to the other? I think that is an additional reason for giving the franchise to women, that is to women who occupy the position of citizens, bearing the burdens to which their position is subject, contributing to the support of the State, and having the liabilities which attach to property.—*From a speech at Hanover Square Rooms, March 26th, 1870.*

LADY ANNA GORE-LANGTON.

(Died February, 1879.)

A great many social questions are annually brought before Parliament, such as all matters relating to health, education and guardianship of children, marriage laws, employment, and remuneration of labour. These questions affect both sexes, and women ought to be allowed to express their opinions through their representatives in Parliament. In these days, prejudices are slowly disappearing before the brighter light of knowledge and liberality; but principles must always remain the same. It will always be a principle that Christian women should be meek, humble, modest, and charitable; but it is a prejudice to suppose that giving them the franchise will make them less so. Intellect has been given to them which enables them to form opinions—whether equal or not to men we need not consider; such as it is, they are answerable for making the best use of it for themselves and others. I agree that women's duties begin at home—they begin there, but there they do not end. Wherever there is poverty or sorrow, need or suffering, there it is the duty of women to follow, and try to alleviate or remedy the evil. It is because I believe that if women had the political vote they would be raised morally and socially, and have more power to help and benefit their fellow-creatures, that I am here to-night to try and advocate the cause of women's suffrage.—*Speech at Bristol meeting, March 4th, 1875.*

MISS MARTINEAU.

(Died June, 1876.) "Society in America," Vol. I, p. 150.

"The interests of women who have fathers and husbands can never be identical with theirs while there is a necessity for laws to protect women against their husbands and fathers. This statement is not worth another word.

"Some who desire that there should be an equality of property between men and women oppose representation on the ground

that political duties would be incompatible with the other duties which women have to discharge. The reply to this is that women are the best judges here. God has given time and power for the discharge of all duties ; and if He had not, it would be for women to decide which they would take, and which they would leave."

MRS. JAMESON.

(Died March, 1860.) "Winter Studies," &c., Vol. I, 104, 1838.

"I am not one of those who opine sagely, that women have nothing to do with politics."

"Communion of Labour." 1856. Page 24.

"I have the deepest conviction, founded not merely on my own experience and observation, but on the testimony of some of the wisest and best men among us, that to enlarge the working sphere of woman to the measure of her faculties, to give her a more practical and authorised share in all social arrangements which have for their object the amelioration of evil and suffering, is to elevate her in the social scale ; and that whatever renders womanhood respected and respectable in the estimation of the people tends to humanise and refine the people."

MRS. NASSAU SENIOR.

(Died 1877.) Inspector of the Female Departments of Workhouses and Workhouse Schools ; appointed 1873.

(Letter from the late Mrs. Nassau Senior to the Secretary of the Central Committee.)

Lavender Hill, Wandsworth Road, S.W.,
April 10th, 1875.

Dear Madam,—The Reports of the Debate on the Women's Disabilities Bill, and the leading articles in the *Times*, show so plainly that the question is not dealt with fairly either by the legislature or the press, that I feel it a duty (holding as I do that women have a just claim to the franchise) to do my utmost to promote the success of the measure, regardless of any effect

which this may possibly have on my chances of future employment under the Local Government Board, or of election to any Board of Guardians.

I can do little to help on the cause, as I am confined to my bed, with small prospect of any immediate improvement in my health, but I should like to have any petitions sent me to sign, and I enclose £1 for the fund.

I am, dear madam, yours truly,

J. E. SENIOR.

MRS. SOMERVILLE.

(Died November, 1872.) "Personal Recollections," p. 344, and p. 346.

"The British laws are adverse to women ; and we are deeply indebted to Mr. Stuart Mill for daring to show their iniquity and injustice. The law in the United States is in some respects even worse, insulting the sex, by granting suffrage to the newly-emancipated slaves, and refusing it to the most highly-educated republic.

"I joined in a petition to the Senate of London University, praying that degrees might be granted to women, but it was rejected. I have also frequently signed petitions to Parliament for the female suffrage, and have the honour now to be a member of the general committee for Woman Suffrage in London."

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