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17. **THE VOTERS' PETITION F0R WOMEN'S FRANCHISE II.** from: *The Englishwoman* Vol. V. no. 15 April 1910. pp.243-6.
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Leaflet 3.

OPINIONS OF WOMEN ON

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

MISS C0BBE*

(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 years alone in the world, who did not earnestly wish for it. The women who gratify these gentlemen 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. - July, 1878.[1]

*(Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904). Feminist, philanthropist, theological and social writer. Wrote a number of books and articles for various magazines and newspapers, and was very influential in the British Unitarian movement. Among her best known books are *The Theory of Intuitive Morals* (1855), *Broken Lights* (1864), *The Duties of Women* (1881), and *Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors* (1869).)

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 judgement 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. - July, 1878.

MRS. MARK PATTISON*

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 at the present day the right to vote is the one right without which no other right is secure.

E.F.S. PATTISON. - JULY, 1878.[2]

(Emily Francis Strong Pattison (1840-1904) Intellectual, feminist, art critic, author, Published widely on art history but also a writer of social commentary, first under the neutral name E. F. S. Pattison, but later as Emilia Frances Dilke, or simply Lady Dilke. President of the Women's Trade Union League for nearly twenty years.)

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.-July, 1878.

Miss CREAK

(Head Mistress of Brighton High School for Girls).

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– Sept., 1878.

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 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.

MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT. - July, I878.[3]

*(Millicent Garrett Fawcett (1847-1929). At an early age she became an ardent supporter of John Stuart Mill. Fawcett became involved in politics through her assistance of her husband in his work as MP. Her strength lay not so much in public speaking as in organizing, and she soon emerged as one of the leaders of the suffrage movement. In 1890 she became the leader of NUWSS. Originally a supporter of the Liberal party, their unwillingness to support women’s suffrage (especially under Herbert Asquith - prime minister in 1908), she and the movement went over to the Labour party. After the war Fawcett dedicated herself to writing, and among her books are *The Women's Victory* (1920), *What I Remember* (1924) and *Josephine Butler* (1927)

MISS WO0DHOUSE

(Head Mistress of the Sheffield High School for Girls).

I hope for the extension of the franchise to qualified women, not only as an act of justice to one-half of 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 utilization 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.– Oct., 1878,

MISS YOUNGMAN

(Head Mistress of Ipswich High School for Girls).

I have much pleasure in entering my protest against the injustice practiced 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 lie the duty of every member to exercise the sum of her feeble intellectual powers towards the overthrow of such systematic oppression.

SOPHIE YOUNGMAN.– Oct.,1878.

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.- Oct., 1878.

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Leaflet 4

OPINONS OF WOMEN ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

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 absurd. 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.

(*Reprinted by permission*.)

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

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 JE X-BLAKE.-Sept. I878

*(Sophia Jex-Blake (1840-1912). Started out as mathematician at Queens College, also taught in Germany and U.S. After the return to England, she began training as a doctor. The only place at the time which would admit her was Edinburgh

University, although they refused to grant her the exam papers, i.e. to register her as a doctor once she passed the exams. This resulted in public debates, and in 1876 a bill was passed that enabled women to complete their medical education on the same grounds as men. Jex-Blake practiced in Edinburgh until she died, and was an active member of the Suffrage Society there.)

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

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.–July, 1878.

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.

ELIZABET EILOART.–July, 1878.

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. –Sept., 1878[6]

*Annie Keary (1825-1879), wrote a number of books, both children's and adults', of which *Castle Daly* (1875) is the best known. The novel was considered to be the best Irish novel of its time. Elizabeth Keary was Annie's sister, and they co-wrote several books, among them *Heroes of Asgard*.

**(Play on the biblical "What God hath brought together, let no man tear apart.")

MISS SIMCOX*

(Hon. Secretary of the Shirtmakers' Association).

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 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.–Sept., 1878[8]

* Edith Jemima Simcox (1844-1901). Trade union's activist who together with Emma Paterson established a number of unions for e.g. shirtmakers, tailoresses/tailors, bookmakers, nailmakers etc. In 1875 Simcox and Paterson were the first women delegates ever to attend the Trade Unions Congress (Glasgow). Among Simcox's many pieces of writing are *Natural Law: An Essay on Ethics* (1858) and *Autobiography of a Shirtmaker* (1900).

**"During the nineteenth century three reform bills were passed in Britain which significantly extended the male citizen's right to vote. In 1832, the First Reform Bill was passed which extended suffrage to £10 householders, effectively enfranchising the more affluent of the middle classes. One of every six male citizens had the right to vote. The Second Reform Bill was passed in 1867 and extended the vote to the entire middle class. Somewhat fewer than half the male citizens were able to exercise their right to vote. Finally, in 1884, the Third Reform Bill gave universal suffrage to male citizens in Britain." Source: http://english.cla.umn.edu/courseweb/3113/Terms.html)

MRS. PATERSON*

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

For workingwomen 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.- Sept., 1878.u[9]

Emma (née Smith) Paterson (1848-1886). Founded the Women's Protective and Provident League (the first women's trade union) in 1875. The union was modelled on Paterson’s experiences With unions during travels to the US, and represented such trades groups as dressmakers, bookbinders, artificial-flower makers, tobacco, jam and pickle workers, shop assistants and typists. After her death Lady Dilke (see note above on Mrs Pattison (Dilke) took over, and in 1901 the Union changed its name to Women's Trade Union League.

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OPINIONS OF WOMEN

ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

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 - 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.–Sept., 1878.

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 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 improvements in the present and future. There are changes which the generations 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.– July, 1878

*Eliza Walker-Dunbar was a pioneer in health care, and received her medical training in Zurich. In 1873 she was elected House Surgeon to the Hospital for Sick Children in Bristol, which immediately caused great stirrings and several other surgeons' resignation.

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. – Sept., 1878.

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. - Sept., 1878.

* Bodichon, Barbara Leigh Smith (1827-1891). Activist and writer of, among others, *A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women* (1854), *Objections to the Enfranchisement of Women Considered* (1866, and *Reasons For and Against the Enfranchisement of Women* (1872).

LADY ANNA GORE LANGTON.

To have a share, however small, in, the, government of his

country is one of the noblest ambitions of man; it improves by elevating him; forces him to consider the welfare of others ; enlarges his intellect ; and if men find themselves benefited and improved by having the franchise, would not women find themselves equally benefited if they also had the power of voting?

(Reprinted by permission)

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.– Oct., 1878.

*Helen Taylor (1831-1907). Author of *The Claim of Englishwomen to the Suffrage Constitutionally Considered* (1867).

LADY BOWRING*

My respect 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.– OCT.,1878.

*Deborah Castle Bowring was an active Unitarian from Bristol. She was a strong speaker and one of the earliest women members of the Council of the British & Foreign Unitarian Association.

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 interests of girls.

MARY GURNEY. – Sept.,1878

MISS D. NELIGAN

(Head Mistress of the Croydon High School for Girls)

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. –Oct.,1878

MISS ANNE 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. - 2nd. Oct., 1878

MISS WOOD

(Head Mistress of the Bath High School for Girls)

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. – Sept., 1878.

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. – Sept., 1878

* Emily Davies (1830-1921). Co-founder of London Suffrage Committee in 1866 (with among others Bodichon). Davies' conservatism led to a break with LSC, and she dedicated herself to working for women's education instead, particularly higher education, and founded a women's college in Cambridge. When the NUWSS decided to support the Labour party in 1912, Davies, who did not think there should be universal suffrage, withdrew from the organization.

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. – Sept.,1878.

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***No. 14*.**

THE FRANCHISE FOR WOMEN

OF PROPERTY.

I.

Not a few of those who support woman suffrage appear to think that such suffrage can be based on a property qualification, and can be used for the defence of property and Conservative principles.

For the moment, all shades of opinion in the Suffrage camp are united in demanding the suffrage for women "on the same terms as men." It is known that this, if granted, would work out, as things are at present, as largely a property franchise.

All married women would be excluded, except those able to show a separate property or occupying qualification from that possessed by their husbands.

And of unmarried women, considering the great difficulty which the working girl of the labouring class would have in satisfying the conditions of the lodger franchise, probably the majority of those exercising the vote would belong to the middle and upper classes.

All the women of means, possessing or occupying, a house of their own, would have a vote.

All the single women, occupying a separate room in their own name, at not less than 4s. a week rent, would have a vote.

And some married women possessing property of their own, or to whom their husbands had conveyed property for the purpose, would have a vote.

In other words, "the short Bill in this present Session," for which the Suffragists ask, would be a Franchise Bill on a property basis. Woman suffrage "on the same terms as men" works out as a property franchise.

But let us consider this for a moment. Is it probable that any Government at the present day is going to commit itself to an extension of the property basis of franchise? The tendency is all in the opposite direction; and any extension of the property franchise would be, in fact, a perpetual challenge to the democratic spirit of the large constituencies. **The ownership vote, as it now exists, is a clumsy and inconsistent franchise**. These are some of the facts:

(1)The ownership of freehold property of the clear annual value of 40s. entitles to a parliamentary vote. Accordingly, if a man has such property to the total value of £24, in only one constituency, he is entitled to **one vote**. But if he has property to the clear annual value of £2 **in each of twelve constituencies** (a total value of £24) he can exercise twelve votes. Further, although a man be the sole proprietor of £10,000 worth of shares in a big English railway, and have not the £2 worth of freehold property, he is not necessarily entitled by his railway interest to **any vote**.

The property qualification is, in fact, an anomaly, on its way to abolition. The Parliamentary vote is really based on the principle of manhood suffrage. The primal principle is, that **the man represents his household**. In the same way the men of a class present that class. The interests of the women of property are safeguarded by the votes of the men of the propertied class; just as the women of the working class are represented by the men of that class.

(2) **No Liberal Government could reconcile its professed principles with any extension of the system of property suffrage**. It would be a political endowment of one class of won-ten only, and would instantly be denounced as class legislation.

(3) **No Conservative Government would ultimately profit by an extension of the property suffrage** (though some Conservatives seem to think that their party would so profit). The next turn of the political tide would sweep the anomaly away. But woman suffrage, the principle of it, would remain, and could not be withdrawn. The result would, and must be, the enfranchisement of all **women** and **all men** over twenty-one, in other words, adult Suffrage. And Adult Suffrage would mean **the government of this country by women**. Nor ought it to be forgotten that Adult Suffrage would involve also the enfranchisement of that large class of "undesirables" which has hitherto been excluded altogether from municipal as well as from Parliamentary politics.

(4) That the attempt to introduce a property suffrage for women is but the thin edge of the wedge, or, at any rate, would so work out, is clearly not overlooked by its advocates. For the agitators "demand the vote on the same terms as it is, or **may be**, granted to men." Anyone reading the Socialist newspapers may see clearly enough for themselves that the present demand, in the minds of the majority of its advocates, is a mere stepping-stone to something far more extensive and revolutionary.

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WOMEN AND THE REPRESENTATION OF PROPERTY.

II.

Can Women Suffrage Rest on the Property Basis?

Let us look at the facts.

If the Woman Suffrage Bill advocated by Lady Frances Balfour, Mrs. Fawcett, and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence were to pass, a property franchise would be the rule for women. Almost all married women, except those possessed of a property qualification, would be excluded, and only those unmarried women would vote who were householders or occupiers or who paid a rent of at least 4s. a week for a separate room. But in the case of men for the most part, the franchise does not, as a fact, rest upon a property basis. Accordingly the proposed franchise for women would be a constant offence to the Liberal Party. If, for a time, it seemed to serve the ends of the Conservatives - as many believe it would - the next turn of the political tide would inevitably see it swept away; and as the principle of woman suffrage has been once admitted, it would be past recall. The only way out would be an immense enlargement of the electorate, ending in adult suffrage.

The Woman Suffrage Bills hitherto put forward could only be - and are only - accepted by Liberals, who are true to their own principles, as a

mere temporary stage, to be replaced, as soon as possible, by something more democratic. The majority of Liberals do not accept them at all - for Liberal and democratic reasons, as is proved by Mr. Asquith's* recent pronouncement.

On the other hand, the Conservatives, if they gave women the vote on what is practically a property basis, would only find, when the next Liberal Government came in, that they had paved the way to - had even provoked - adult suffrage, involving in this country a permanent majority of women voters.

The Suffragists are thus in this dilemma: a property franchise would be a perpetual provocation to the democratic feeling of the country, while the suffrage for all men and women over twenty-one would mean the Government of this Empire by women.

Is it not better to accept the natural fact of the difference between men and women; to enlarge the legitimate influence of women in every possible way; to strengthen their hold on the field of local government, but to leave to men the political rule and maintenance of this vast and complex Empire, which men have created?

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*****Herbert Asquith, 1852 - 1928. Prime Minister from 1908 - 1916. While he was a Prime Minister Asquith introduced a number of significant reforms. He was, however, ardently opposed to women suffrage. This made him unpopular in several corners of society, and in the campaigns in connection with the 1910 General Elections he promised to grant suffrage to all women with property. Once in power, though, the promise was abandoned and instead all men over 21 were given universal suffrage. Asquith was not a good wartime leader, and in 1916 his government lost to the Conservative Party. During all his years in power he fought against women getting the vote, and we come across his name a number of times in the texts collected on this site.

Leaflet 15

WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE AND

WOMEN'S WAGES.

I

IT is often said that women need votes in order to enable them to obtain better treatment in the labour market. It is even argued that by means of the franchise women would be in a position to increase their average wage, till it was equal to the average wage of men.

Thus, in a pamphlet published by the Forward Printing and Publishing Company ("The Case for Woman's Suffrage "by Thomas Johnston), it is stated that " economic power follows political power. That is to say, any class which is underpaid and oppressed requires to have political power - in this case the vote - before it has the remotest hope of becoming well paid and free."

This pamphlet is circulated broadcast as an inducement to women to support the " vote for women " agitation, and the same argument is employed by the suffragist agitators in their meetings or at street-corners. "Higher wages" is the promise held out to factory girls to induce them to listen to the oratory of the suffragist missionaries.

Yet, as a fact, wages are dependent on quite other considerations than those of political status, and the vote has nothing to do) with the fluctuations of the labour market or the proportion which the working claps is able to secure for themselves out of the profits of the employers,

1. Look in the first place at the labour market for men. Has the

vote enabled men to get all they want in the way of wages? We have only to study what is now taking place in the North of England, in Lancashire, and on the Tyne to realise that men, possessing the vote, have nevertheless been obliged to accept a reduction in wages, because the economic conditions - in other words, the relation of demand to supply - in the trades affected, no longer allowed the employers to pay wages at the same rate as heretofore

Or take the case of the sweated industries. In the pamphlet referred to above, it is suggested that if women had the vote they would be able to mend the evils of the sweating system. In the attic of a house off the Commercial Road is living at this moment a couple, a man and his wife, who work from early morning till late night attaching the soles of ladies' dress shoes to the uppers. Twenty years ago they could earn 60s. a week at the work; to-day they earn 14s. a week when there is work for them to do, but during the off season the man can do nothing and the woman goes out charing. The man has a vote. Why, if the vote could improve his wage, does he not use it for that purpose? This is not in isolated case. There are plenty like him, or even worse off. Does the possession of the vote help them? Agricultural labourers had the vote for nearly a quarter of a century, yet their average wage is still from 16s. to 19s. a week. In many parts of the country it is much lower. Yet these men have the vote. Why does it not improve their wages?

These are simple illustrations of the common mistake which connects the possession of the vote with the rate of wages; and it would be possible, of course, to give a great many more.

On the other hand, look at the striking rise in the average wage of domestic servants! The vote has clearly had nothing to do with it, for domestic servants have no votes.

2. **No! - The improvement in wages since the passing of the Reform Bill has been due to quite other causes than the possession of the suffrage.**

First and foremost among the causes which have on the whole tended to improve wages has been the education of the worker in methods of combination. **Trade-unionism, co-operative and other associations** have given the workers a strength, collectively, which they could never have had individually. It is true that the right to co-operation of this kind, the protection of co-operative funds, and so forth, have been won from Parliament, but these rights are equally available for women workers, who therefore cannot require the franchise to secure them.

Secondly, we must largely attribute the improved condition of the workers to the immense increase in the means of communication and transport. This has involved an increase in the **competitive demand for labour,** because the worker is no longer tied, by lack of means of getting about, to the place where he was born, or started work.

3. **As to the difference between the wages of men and women,** that, again, has nothing to do with the vote.

Some of the reasons which keep women's wages lower than men's wages are as follows:

(a) **Woman workers are not as a rule organised.** They do not belong to trade unions, and they lack the strength which only comes of combination.

(b) **Women are physically weaker** and, speaking generally, less effective as workers than men.

(c) Men as a rule depend entirely upon the wages received for the work which they perform, and they devote their whole energies to it. Therefore it tends to he necessary for employers to pay them a fair living wage. **Women,** on the other hand - or, at least, very

large numbers of them - **are partially supported by husbands, parents, or other individuals,** whilst a large proportion of them cannot devote their whole time to their work. The competition of these women tends to keep down the wages even of those who wish to support themselves entirely by their work and to give their whole time to it.

4. In those educated professions where the salaries of men and women are unequal, as in teaching and journalism, it must be remembered that the numerical excess of women on the one hand, and the greater number of skilled occupations of all sorts open to men as men, and always competing for their services, on the other, tend to raise the salaries of men and depress those of women. The steady progress of education, and growth of competence among women, will tend, one may hope, to diminish the inequality, but it can never wholly disappear, because it depends ultimately on the physical differences between the two sexes.

Lastly, the following may be suggested as some of the possible means of remedying what is wrong in the existing situation.

(1) **Combination,** in trades unions, or by whatever term combination may be known. By such organisation, women workers in the textile trades in the North of England have already secured fairer wages and conditions of labour. In the great Weavers' Union there are 65,000 women and 35,000 men. The women are paid at precisely the same standard rates as the, men; but as they are not physically able to do the heavier kinds of work, their earnings are somewhat less.

(2) **The fixing of minimum rates of wages** in particular trades by properly established boards.

(3) **The increase of voluntary co-operative undertakings** on the part of the workers.

(4) **Emigration,** or the more even distribution of the female throughout the Empire. Women who are underpaid and overcrowded at home are often urgently wanted in the colonies and could at once secure, if willing workers, a happier and easier life there.

Summing up what has been said:

(1) **It is a fact** that while the men of the working class have no doubt been able to improve the Conditions of Labour (as to hours, safety sanitation, &c.), both for men and women, by the exercise of the vote, **wages have been determined,** not by the vote, but by **economic causes in the first place, and in the second, by combination among the workers.**

(2) **It is a fact** that women's wages rose between 1866 and 1891 by a greater percentage than the average wage of all employed.

(3) **It is a fact** that women have shared in the progress of the last sixty years, and that when they are still miserably paid the non-possession of the vote has nothing to do with it.

(4) **It is a fact that** whole classes of poorly-paid men workers have not succeeded in improving their wages, although they have long possessed the vote.

(5) **It is a fact** - of Nature - that women as producers of wealth are not equal to men; and the greater industrial efficiency of men, as compared with women, is a difficulty in the way of equal remuneration that no franchise could get rid of.

It is, therefore, NOT A FACT THAT THE POSSESSION OF THE VOTE WOULD ENABLE WOMEN TO OBTAIN THE - SAME WAGES AS MEN.

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No.15

WOMAN'S SUFFRAGE AND WOMEN'S WAGES.

II.

IT is often said that women need votes in order to enable them to obtain proper treatment in the labour market. Some women indeed, seem to think that, by means of the franchise, they could raise the wages of their sex to an equality with those of men.

But if we understand the real causes of the inferiority of Women's position as wage-earners, and consider the only possible ways of improving their position in this respect, we shall see how little reason there is for connecting the subject of votes for women with women's wages.

The following are surely among the **principal causes why the wages earned by women compare unfavourably with those of men:**

(1) Women are physically weaker and, speaking generally, less effective as workers than men.

(2) Men, as a rule, depend entirely upon the wages received for, and devote their entire energies to, the work which they perform; and these facts tend to render it necessary for employers to pay them a fair living wage. On the other hand, vast numbers of women workers are partially supported by husbands, parents, or other individuals, or by charity or other relief, while a large proportion of them can devote only a portion of their time to their work. The competition of these women tends to keep down the wages even of those who wish to support themselves entirely by, and can give their whole time to, their work.

(3) Women workers are, as a rule, entirely unorganized; they

belong to no trade unions, and entirely lack the strength of combination.

The following may be indicated as among the possible **remedies** for what is wrong in the existing situation: —

(1) Combination in trade unions. By such organisation women workers in the textile trades of the North of England have already secured comparatively fair wages and conditions of labour

(2) The fixing of minimum rates of wages in particular trades by properly established Boards.

(3) The increase of voluntary co-operative undertakings on the part of workers.

(4) The more even distribution of the female population throughout the territory of the Empire, by means of emigration.

(5) A general modification of a social and industrial policy, so as to procure a more equable distribution of wealth.

How could woman suffrage promote any of these remedies?

The franchise may possibly have helped men to obtain the due recognition by law of the right of combination. But this right is now equally open to women.

The following facts seem to show how entirely ineffective the political franchise is to secure good wages, or even work. Agricultural labourers have had the suffrage for nearly a quarter of a century; yet their average wage is still only 15s. or 16s. a week. Vast numbers of the voters of London are still miserably paid. The problem of unemployment is even more urgent in the case of men than in that of women. During the last sixty years the wages of women have risen at a faster rate, and more consistently, than those of men. In particular, domestic servants, whose industry is one of the largest in the kingdom, have obtained an increase in wages of a particularly striking character.

Laws cannot alter the facts of Nature. Women, as producers of wealth, are not equal to men. lf the legislature attempted to compel employers to pay women the same wages as they paid to men, the business of the country would be deranged, financial disaster would ensue, and women, as well as men, would be worse off than they are now.

All possible improvements in the position of women workers can be secured without giving them the franchise. On the other hand,

they could not get better wages by means of votes.

Woman Suffrage therefore has nothing to do with wages, and the interests of woman workers can be promoted, and are constantly being promoted in quite other ways.

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No. 13.

WOMAN'S POSITION UNDER

LAWS MADE BY MAN.

Many of the advocates of Woman Suffrage say that, women will never get justice until they obtain the right to vote. Let us test this assertion by referring to their present situation. We shall then see that there is no foundation for the suggestion that women are not fairly treated either by those who make, or those who administer, the laws of England.

LAW OF HUSBAND AND WIFE.

Maintenance—The law provides for the support of the wife by the husband; and it is 'by no means easy for him to escape from the obligation of maintaining her in a manner suitable to his means. While she is living with him he can bring no action or prosecution against her for availing herself of any of his property. If he does not provide her with the necessary supplies, she is at liberty to obtain them for herself at his expense. If he drives her away without justifiable cause, or if she separates from him by mutual consent, and he makes no provision for her, she has authority to pledge his credit in order to supply with all things reasonably necessary, having regard to her position in life and his apparent means. With the object of giving to women of the humbler classes special facilities for the enforcement of their rights, it has been enacted that, where wilful neglect on the part of a husband to provide reasonable maintenance for his wife or her infant children under the age of sixteen has caused her to leave him, a court of summary jurisdiction may order the husband to pay to her a weekly sum not exceeding two pounds. A wife's rights are practically unconditional, as her husband has no legal means of compelling her to do anything for him or his household, or of controlling her conduct in any way. If, immediately after marriage, she renders his existence with her unbearable, he cannot escape from the obligation of maintaining her for the rest of his life, or the liability to go to prison in default of so doing.

On the other hand, however rich his wife may be, a husband has no corresponding means of compelling her to maintain him. It is only in the event of his becoming chargeable as a pauper that she incurs liability to the local authority in respect of his maintenance as such. Moreover, she may at any time sue him if necessary for the protection and security of her property.

Liability to Third Parties—If a wife commits a civil wrong, such as trespass, libel, or assault, her husband is liable in damages to the person she has injured. If a husband commits such a wrong, his wife is under no similar liability.

Criminal Liability–lf a wife commits a theft or misdemeanour the presence of her husband, there is a legal presumption in her favour, which holds good unless the contrary is proved, that she acted under his coercion, and she is accordingly excused from responsibility.

Custody Of Children—If disputes arise between a husband and wife as to any of their infant children, the Court, upon the application of the mother, may make, such order as it thinks fit regarding the custody of the children, and the right of either parent of having access to them, having regard to the welfare of the children and to the conduct of the parents and to the wishes of the mother as well as of the father. In this respect the Court treats the parents equally, and takes the whole conduct and wishes of both into consideration.

Divorce.— If divorce proceedings are instituted by or against a wife is usually liable to make provision for her costs and ultimately to pay them, whether she wins or loses. He may, however, escape payment if her suit is vexatious or she has herself the means to pay the costs incurred by her.

When a divorce has been granted the Court has discretion to order the husband, even where the successful party, to continue to support a guilty wife.

As to the grounds for divorce, it is true that, while a husband need only prove infidelity on the part of his wife, a wife must prove either cruelty or desertion, in addition to infidelity, on his part. But it must be remembered that the infidelity of the wife naturally leads, unless divorce takes place, to the husband becoming burdened with all the responsibilities of a father in relation to a child which is not really his but an intolerable reminder of the wrong which he has suffered; whereas the infidelity of a husband cannot be attended by similar consequences to his wife. It is also to he borne in mind that "cruelty" on the part of the husband has proved a very elastic conception. Any conduct may be treated as cruelty if it gives rise to danger to the wife's health, either bodily or mental, or to a reasonable apprehension of such danger.

WOMEN AND PROPERTY.

As regards property, women and men have the same capacity of acquisition, enjoyment, and disposition. A married woman, however, enjoys a special advantage. As a safeguard against the coercion or persuasion of her husband, the law permits any of her property to be made inalienable during the continuance of the marriage, so that she may not incur the risk of depriving herself in a moment of weakness of the benefit of its enjoyment by way of anticipation.

WOMEN AND CONTRACTS.

A woman has the same capacity of making contracts and of holding others liable to her upon them as a man possesses. But a married woman enjoys peculiar advantages. She does not become personally liable upon her contracts. The rights of her creditors are restricted to such free separate estate as she may have when execution is levied upon judgements in their favour. She cannot be imprisoned for not paying a judgment debt. She cannot be made a. bankrupt, except where she is carrying on a trade separately from her husband.

RIGHT TO REPUTATION.

A woman can recover damages for slander of a kind for which a man would have no right of action.

HUSBANDLESS MOTHERS.

Where an unmarried woman is left to bear the burden of maternity alone, it is often suggested that the law is at fault. It must, however, be remembered that nature has ordained that, while the maternity of an infant is usually a matter beyond doubt, the paternity is by no means necessarily self□evident. A man must be shown to be the father before he can be made responsible as such. The law gives the mother every facility for proving the paternity of her child; and, when she has done this, a Court will order the father to pay a weekly sum, enforceable by imprisonment, for the maintenance of his offspring.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAW.

The administration of the law is even more favourable to woman than is the letter of the law.

In criminal cases juries are less willing to convict women than they are to convict men. Judges and magistrates commonly pronounce more lenient sentences on women than on men convicted of similar offences. In prison their treatment is less rigorous, and the conditions as to remission of portions of their terms of punishment are more favourable than is the case with male convicts.

Infanticide.—Most people think that infanticide ought to be checked. But, where the crime is committed by a mother very shortly after the birth of the child, those who administer the law are not usually lacking in pity. Judges very often go out of their way to prevent a conviction for murder by telling the jury that there is not sufficient evidence that the child was born alive, or by suggesting doubts as to whether it may not have died before any violence

was used. In the comparatively rare cases where the jury convict of the capital offence (as distinguished from concealment of birth, which they frequently find), the Home Secretary reduces the sentence as a matter of course to a comparatively short term of imprisonment. Moreover, the law will probably be altered very shortly so as to render a conviction for murder impossible in such a case. Some people say the father ought to be punished. As we have already pointed out, if the child had not been killed he could have been compelled to pay for its maintenance. If he has been no party to its death, he cannot, of course, be punished for the mother's crime.

In civil cases the treatment of woman is certainly very favourable, There are few judges, magistrates, or jurymen who, as between a woman and a man, can wholly free themselves of a natural bias in her favour.

Actions for breach of promise of marriage constitute a signal instance of this. A woman who proves that a man has been faithless to her has no difficulty in recovering a verdict for substantial damages. If a man be the plaintiff, although the law places no difficulty in his way, his action is practically hopeless.

RECENT LEGISLATION.

For the last forty years Parliament has been more active than ever before in legislating to promote the welfare and protect the interest of women Few years have passed during this period in which some enactment has not been passed whereby the position of women has been improved. Conspicuous among such statutes are the following: The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870, 1874, and 1882; The Guardianship of Infants Act, 1886; The Summary Jurisdiction (Married Women) Act, 1895; The Factory and Workshop Acts, 1901 and 1907; the Act of 1876 which removed restrictions on the granting of qualifications for registration under the Medical Act on the ground of sex; and the various Acts by which the franchises for local governing authorities have been conferred upon women. No one who studies these statutes is likely to think that the members of the Parliaments which passed them have been unmindful of their duties

We all realise that much still remains to be done to improve our laws as they affect both women and men. A great portion of every Parliamentary Session is occupied in efforts in this direction. The important point to remember is that our legislators show that they are quite as anxious to discharge their duties towards women as they are to fulfil their obligations to the men by whom they are elected.

Woman Suffrage is not necessary in order to procure Justice for Women.

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THE

ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN:

AN ANCIENT RIGHT, A MODERN NEED.

A PAPER READ

by

Mrs. Mc ILQUHAM

(POOR LAW GUARDIAN)

TO THE

BEDMINSTER (BRISTOL) CHAMPION LEAGUE,

OF THE

PRIMROSE LEAGUE

ON THE 11TH DECEMBER, 1891.

(REVISED AND ENLARGED)

WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION UNION.

———

HON.SEC: - MRS. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY,

BUXTON HOUSE, CONGLETON

THE ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN :

AN ANCIENT RIGHT, A MODERN NEED

IT is with very great pleasure that I find myself enabled to address the Bedminster Champion Habitation of the Primrose League on the Constitutional aspect of Women's Suffrage. The Primrose League, as you are all perfectly well aware, was established as a perpetual remembrance of the great services which Lord Beaconsfield rendered to the Conservative Party. [1] It is, therefore, peculiarly appropriate now to speak of Lord Beaconsfield, who was one of the earliest friends of the enfranchisement of women. His clear and astute mind plainly discerned the injustice and anomaly of denying to women in Parliamentary representation those rights which, from time immemorial, have been theirs in local representation. Speaking in the House of Commons, on the 27th of April, 1866, Lord Beaconsfield, then Mr. Disraeli, said:—

> I have always been of opinion that, if there is to be universal suffrage, women have as much right to vote as men. And, more than that, a woman ought to have a vote in a country in which she may hold manorial courts and sometimes act as church-wardess.

So also, in reply to a memorial from upwards of eleven thousand women of Great Britain and Ireland, which was presented through Mr.Gore Langton, M.P., on April 29th, 1873, Mr. Disraeli wrote—

> DEAR GORE LANGTON,- I was much honoured by receiving from your hands the memorial signed by eleven thousand women of England, among them some illustrious names, thanking me for my services in attempting to abolish the anomaly, that the Parliamentary Franchise attached to a household or property qualification, when possessed by a woman, should not be exercised, though in all matters of local government, when similarly qualified, she exercises this right. As I believe this anomaly to be injurious to the best interests of the country, I trust to see it removed by the wisdom of Parliament. - Yours sincerely, E. DISRAELI.

Mr. Disraeli, moreover, voted for the second reading of the Women's Disabilities Removal Bill in 1871; paired for it in 1872; and voted for it in 1873, 1875, and 1876, up to the time when he was created a Peer. When, in 1884, the Representation of the People Bill was before the House of Commons, and an amendment enfranchising women was under consideration, another eminent Conservative leader, the late Lord Iddesleigh, then Sir Stafford Northcote, spoke, on June 12th, as follows:—

> The point upon which we lay stress is that upon which the late Lord Beaconsfield laid stress, and upon which so much stress has been laid to-night, viz., that by

excluding women, you are excluding a large portion of the property owners of this country from representation, and from their share in the legislation. (Hear, hear.) You are now asked to introduce a certain number of women. We believe there will be 400,000 or 500,000 women who will be so admitted. The number is not difficult to recollect, because that is nearly the exact number of persons you are going to add in Ireland from the lowest population in that country. It is a moderate demand we make when we ask you, as a counterbalance to the effect of admitting so large a body of men, as to whose qualification and efficiency for the franchise you have no reason to believe that they have half as much knowledge of the real question at issue as most of the women of England have, when you are going to admit these people as capable citizens, is it unreasonable to demand that the same privilege shall be given to 400,000 or 500,000 women who are at the heads of households and are managers of property in this country.

On the same occasion, another well-known Conservative statesman, His Grace the Duke of Rutland, then Lord John Manners, said:—

Can anyone allege that the female ratepayers of this country have shown themselves unworthy of the trust which it is proposed to repose in them, from the manner in which they have discharged the functions which have already been entrusted to them? I ventured, in some observations which I made upon the second reading of the Bill, to allude to one class of these female ratepayers—the female farmers of this country. By way of illustration I will again refer to that class, because, as a county member, I naturally have more knowledge of that class, and possibly more interest in them. But, I ask, can anyone allege that from the manner in which during the period of time, now ranging over a great number of years, the female farmers have discharged the duties which have devolved on them, many and important as those duties are, there is the slightest ground for asserting that they are likely to prove themselves unworthy, unfit, or incapable of exercising the Parliamentary franchise? I should like to quote the opinion delivered only the other day in a town with which I am acquainted - the borough of Grantham by a gentleman well known in the agricultural world of Lincolnshire and Leicestershire on this very subject. I refer to Mr. Wilders, who said : "To my mind the greatest injustice is that the female ratepayer and owner should not be allowed to vote. Fancy a woman farming 500 acres of land, and paying the usual contributions to the taxes of the country, having no voice in the representation of the country, while her own labourers have. If any man disputes the business capabilities of women, let him begin an important business transaction with her, and I will answer for it that he will come off second best." Well then, sir, I contend that there has been no reason assigned by anyone why the Parliamentary Franchise should not be conferred upon those fit and capable female ratepayers.

Coming to a still more recent date, at a meeting convened by the Primrose League in their Lyceum Theatre, at Edinburgh, on November 29th. 1888, Lord Salisbury said:—

I earnestly hope that the day is not far distant when women also will bear their share in voting for members of Parliament—(cheers)—and in determining the policy of the country. I can conceive no argument by which they are excluded. It is obvious that they are abundantly as well fitted as many who now possess the suffrage, by

knowledge, by training, and by character, and that their influence is likely to weigh in a direction which, in an age so material as ours, is exceedingly valuable - namely, in the direction of morality and religion.

Still more recently, the present leader of the House of Commons, Mr. A. J. Balfour, speaking at Bury, on Friday, the 23rd October last, said:

> I do not now express, my opinions—my opinions are well-known—on the question of female suffrage, but if you are going to say that every intelligent person who is of age has a right to a vote, on what possible principle are you going to exclude the women?

These sympathetic utterances of eminent Conservative leaders will, I trust, have prepared you for the favourable consideration of the enfranchisement of women, as an ancient right and a modern need.

A feeling is rapidly gaining ground that, before the dissolution of the present Parliament, the enfranchisement of women ought to be assured. The straightforward utterances of Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour, and the resolutions passed by some Conservative Societies, and still more recently by the National Union of Conservative Associations at the Birmingham Conference, have led women to hope that at last they are to have political justice. At this important juncture it may not be unprofitable to review the past and present position of women in regard to Parliamentary, Municipal, and Parochial Government.

To speak briefly, the present position of women in regard to the various franchises is anomalous and contradictory, unworthy of that great growth of freedom which the nineteenth century has given to men, and degenerate as regards the position which women held in the days of the Plantagenets and the Tudors. [2] Freedom for women has not broadened down "from precedent to precedent." Rather has it suffered by unnecessary legislative interference. Every woman, except the Queen, is politically non-existent. It was not always so. Restrictions unknown to our ancient constitution have crept in, as the following brief sketch of the public functions of women from the earliest times in Britain to the present day may serve to show.

Amongst the ancient Britons the position of women seems to have been broadly equal to that of men. Selden, in his "Epinomis" (Redman Westcot's translation), cites Tacitus as saying of the Britons, "They were wont to war under the conduct of women, and to make no difference of sex in places of command or government."* [3] The pages of that historian reveal to us the treacherous queen, Cartismandua**, the betrayer of the gallant fugitive Caractacus, as ruling over the Brigantes (the people of Lancashire and Yorkshire) about 50 AD.

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* Perhaps Selden's reference is to the words of Tacitus, "Ann." xiv. 35. Solitum quidem Britannis feminarum ductu bellare testabatur.

"**Tacitus, " Ann." xii. 36.

So, too, in pithy words, they tell us of the wrongs inflicted some years later by Roman hands upon Boadicea, the widowed queen of the Iceni, of her terrible vengeance, and her tragic fate. Almost she succeeded in driving the Romans from Britain; and in the final conflict, with passionate eloquence, stimulated by her intolerable wrongs, she harangued her army, led her troops to battle with the Romans, and when defeated in that bloody fight, in which Tacitus tells us 80,000 Britons were left dead upon the field, ended by poison her mournful life, and her valiant struggle for the freedom of her country.***

Yet it was not simply in fierce fight and as valiant viragos that the women of Britain distinguished themselves. Selden, in his "Epinomis," quoting Plutarch, tells us, "That, owing to the frequent intercessions of women in favour of peace, a custom grew up among the Britons that women also had prerogative in deliberative sessions touching either peace-government, or martial affairs." It would thus appear that among the ancient Britons women were as capable of appreciating peace as of conducting warfare. Coming down to Saxon times, we find that Cenwealh, ruler of the West Saxons, after a vigorous reign of thirty years, distinguished by the aggrandisement of Wessex, dying without children, about the year 672 A.D., provided for the administration of his kingdom by committing it to his queen, Sexburh or Sexburga. This princess, in her brief reign of a year, appears to have made a deep impression on the minds of her countrymen, since William of Malmesbury tells us that § "she had a great spirit to discharge the duties of the kingdom. She levied new armies, kept the old ones to duty, governed her subjects with clemency, kept her enemies quiet by threats, and, in a word, did everything at that rate that there was no difference between her and any king in management but her sex." So, too, Ethelfleda, the daughter of the great Alfred, known in history as "The Lady of Mercia," ruled that kingdom after the death of her husband, from 912 to 920 AD, with vigour and success, recovering Derby and Leicester from the Danes, and defeating her foes till the submission of the Danish Host confirmed her authority. Nor did ladies of less than royal birth fail to take their part in public affairs, since Gurdon in his "Antiquities of Parliament," tells us that women sat in the Saxon Witas, and the Venerable Bede assures us that the abbess Wilda presided at an ecclesiastical synod.

After the Norman Conquest, we are assured by Mr. Chisholm Anstey "That 'ladies' sat and voted among the '*Magnates Regni*' in right of their fees or communities long before the name of Parliament was given to those great Councils, and long before the now justly exploded doctrine began to be broached by the Feudalists, which erected masculinity into an essential of every fief, is too well attested by our more ancient records, to justify us in disregarding the statement to that effect of eminent archæologists and sound lawyers."

***Tacitus, "Ann." xiv. 37.

§ W. Malm. lib. I. Speaking of her death, he writes, "Plus quam f¾mineosanimos anhelantem vita destituit, annua vix potesate perfunctum."

We have, in the Saxon times, a glimpse of the early exercise of those rights which women, both lay and clerical, continued to enjoy for centuries after the Norman Conquest. We can trace, also, that blending of Church and local government which still exists in English rural parishes, where any ratepayer, irrespective of sex, may help to levy rates, and be elected, or take part in electing, the parochial officers. Despite the tendency of feudalism, women did not—in fact, the necessities of the times could not let them—sink into mere objects of chivalrous adoration. Tradition on the one hand, and Feudalism on the other (strange as it may seem to say it), were alike protective of the ancient rights of English women. The wars for the conquest of France, and those between the Houses of York and Lancaster, drew men from their homes and their civil duties, and threw power into the hands of women. King after king placed the administration of the realm and the control of the army in the bands of his Queen Consort. The Queen Consort of an Anglo-Norman or Plantagenet king was a person of scarcely less importance than her lord. William of Normandy frequently left the realm in the charge of his Queen. Queen Philippa, wife of Edward III, showed herself a sagacious ruler and victorious leader of the Feudal Militia. Queen Elinor, in the absence of Henry III, acted as judge in the Highest Court of Judicature, the "*curia regis*," and took her seat on the King's Bench.

So, too, women retained in the Parliaments of the Plantagenets the place and power that had belonged to them in the Saxon Witenagemot. When Parliaments were summoned, women were included in the summons.

Chisholm Anstey, citing Selden, tell us that in the 5th of Edward I, four lady abbesses were summoned by writ in right of their abbeys, as shown by the Patent Rolls still extant in his (Selden's time) ; and Gurdon, in his "History of the High Court of Parliament," tells us that in the times of Henry III. and Edward IV. the abbesses of Shaftesbury, Barking, St. Mary of Winchester, and Wilton were summoned to Parliament. The Rolls of the Parliament of the year 1404 show us that the Commons, having granted certain writs and subsidies for themselves and their constituencies, the "Lords Temporal "(*seignors temporelx)* concurred in so far as the duties for raising those supplies were payable by themselves, and in so far as the "Ladies Temporal" (*dames temporelx)* were to become liable, they also concurred in the grant. These, their several consents were entered on the Roll, and made part of the Statute. At a later period the form of writ was so far changed as to direct the dame to whom it was addressed to choose and name her lawful proxy, to appear for her in the House of Lords, ad colloquium et *tractatum coram rege*; and in one year alone, the 35 Edward III., nine peeresses appear to have been so summoned. But the language used does not imply any disability to render the duty of personal attendance, but rather an exemption from its burden ; whilst it unmistakably affirms, not only the capacity, but the duty to elect.

Nor was it in the High Court of Parliament alone that the women of those days served their country. The office of High Sheriff of Westmoreland was held jointly by Isabella de Clifford, and Idonea de Leybum. In the reigns of John and Henry III, Nicholaa de la Haye succeeded to her husband as

Custodian of Lincoln Castle and Sheriff of the county.

Ela of Salisbury, the most distinguished of four ladies of that name, held office in the reign of Henry III. as High Sheriff of Wilts, and had charge of the Castle of Sarum. In the same reign of Henry III., Maude, Duchess of Norfolk, held custody of the Castles of Strigail and Carisberg,and took by inheritance the office of Marshall; whilst Isabella de Fortibus held the Borough and Camp of Plympton. Under Edward I., Joan, Dowager Countess of Pembroke, ruled the Palatinate for nine years; whilst Matilda, wife of Thos. de Mullet de Gilsland, who survived her husband, her son, and her grandson, ruled as Domina de Gilsland to the day of her death in 1295. In that capacity she sat on the Bench at Assizes at Penrith, and in the 19th of Edward I. was summoned to Parliament. In the reigns of Edwards I. and II., Isabella, widow of John de Vesci, had custody of the Castles of Bamborough and Scarborough; whilst during the latter reign Isabel de Burgo (Lady of Clare) governed the Earldom of Pembroke during the minority of the Earl; and the same Earldom was similarly governed under Edward III. by Agnes de Hastings. Margaret, Countess of Richmond, mother of Henry VII., was a justice of the Peace, and in the reign of Mary Tudor the Lady of Berkeley was appointed a Justice of the Peace in Gloucester.

In Appleby Church may be seen the monument of Baroness Clifford of Westmorland (Anne de Clifford, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke, and Montgomery) who became, in 1643, Hereditary High Sheriff of Westmorland, and sat in that character with the Judges of Assize at Appleby. This is the lady who, when a candidate for one of her boroughs was, after the restoration of Charles II., somewhat too peremptorily urged upon her by the Secretary of State, wrote the memorable letter: "I have been bullied by an usurper, I have been neglected by a Court, but I will not be dictated to by a subject; your man shan"t stand.

ANNE, DORSET, PEMBROKE, AND MONTGOMERY."

Even in our day, the office of Hereditary Great Chamberlain of England has been held by the Baroness Willoughby de Eresby, though unlike the ladies whose names I have cited, she discharged its duties by proxy.

Since these earlier days various causes have been at work tending to restrict the civil and political rights and duties of women. The blending of the claims of the Houses of York and Lancaster, by the marriage of Henry VII. and Elizabeth of York, had given peace to the nation. Masculine rule pushed itself to the front. The jealous persistency with which Henry VII. ignored the fact that his chief claim to the throne was through his wife, Elizabeth of York, was, doubtless, copied by less royal spouses. The law of compensation, however, was asserting itself for women. Though the Salic Law had never prevailed in England, no queen had reigned in her own right since the Norman Conquest. The claims of Matilda Atheling, the Empress Maud, and Elizabeth of York, had been made subservient to masculine supremacy. Mary Tudor, the first Queen-Regnant, was soon succeeded by her sister, Elizabeth,

whose great regal talents made her reign alike prosperous at home and brilliant abroad. Both these queens at their inaugurations were girded with the sword of State, and invested with the spurs of knighthood in token that they, equally with their male predecessors in the regal office, were not merely civil, but military rulers.

To come, however, to the more specific question of the exercise by women of the Parliamentary Franchise. It is manifest that from the earliest period our principle of representation has been supposed to be that all who were liable to taxation should have a voice in choosing the representatives by whom the taxes were granted. The first *statute* prescribing qualifications for the County Franchise is the 7 Hen. IV., c. 15, which enacts that all they that be present at the County Court as well suitors summoned for the same cause as others, shall attend to the election of the knights for the Parliament; and neither in this statute, nor in any later one, down to the Reform Act of 1832, is any word used which implies any disability of sex for electoral purposes. The County Court, at which the elections were held, would appear to have been attended no less by women than men. An earlier enactment, the Statute of Marlbridge, 52 Hen. III, c. 10, exempts, amongst others, from attendance at the *tourn*, which was one of the divisions of the County Court, *viri religiosi et mulieres*, unless specially summoned. It is obvious that the intent was not to impose a disability, but to exempt from a burdensome duty, except when the necessities of the case demanded the performance of that duty.

The Borough Franchise, on the other hand, is more obscure in its origin; Hallam, in his "Constitutional History,"* referring to no fewer than four different theories on the subject. But from the earliest period, women, as well as men, were burgesses in our ancient boroughs, and as such, enjoyed and exercised whatever franchises accrued to their position as burgesses. The female burgesses of Tamworth are recorded in "Domesday Book" as having been free before the Conquest, and still free when the book was compiled.

Early in our Parliamentary History, the practice grew up of evidencing the return of a member, whether the knight of the shire, or the representative of a borough, by indentures entered into between the Crown and certain of the electors in the name of the rest. Prynne, in his "Brevia Parliamentaria Rediviva," refers to sundry Earls, Lords, Nobles, and *some ladies*, who were annual suitors (freeholders) to the County Court of Yorkshire, being the sole electors of the Knights, and sealing their indentures. He gives, pp. 152 and 153, two instances of such indentures. The earliest is dated 13 Hen. IV., and is signed by an attorney of Lucy, Countess of Kent. Another in 2 Henry V, is signed by the attorney of Margaret, widow of Sir H. Vavasour. In the 7 Edward VI., the return for the borough of Gatton was made by the Lady Elizabeth Copley, widow of Roger Copley, and all the inhabitants of the borough.

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* "C. H.," Vol. IL, ch. 13. p. 384.

In a later return for the same borough, 1 and 2 Ph. and M., the same lady made the return in her own name alone, and there is a similar return in 2 and 3 Ph. and M., in which the writ is said to have been directed to her. When, long afterwards, in 1628, the question of whether Gatton was a close or open borough was investigated before a "Committee of Privileges and Elections," the point of the disability of sex was not raised, the only question being, was the lady the sole elector, or did she sign for herself and other inhabitants. Heywood, in his "County Elections," p. 256 quotes the following remarkable return for the borough of Aylesbury, in the 14th Elizabeth:—

"To all Christian people to whom this present writing shall come, I, Dame Dorothy Packington, widow, late wife of Sir John Packington knight, lord, and owner of the town of Aylesbury, sendeth greeting : know ye me, the said Dame Dorothy Packington, to have *shown, named, and appointed* my trusty and well-beloved Thomas Lichfield and John Burden, Esquires, to be *my burgesses of my said town of* Aylesbury. And whatsoever the said Thomas and George, burgesses, shall do in the service of the Queen's highness in that present Parliament, to be holden at Westminster, the 8th day of May next ensuing the date hereof, I, the same Dame Dorothy Packington, do ratify and approve to be my own act, *as fully and wholly as if I were or might be Present there.*"

In this case, the "sole elector being a minor," his widowed mother, *jure repræsentationis*, had actually voted in his stead, elected the two burgesses, signed their indenture, and as returning officer made the preceding return, which was upheld as good. In the inquiry as to the controverted election for Lyme Regis,* a list was produced of burgesses of the town of Lyme Regis in the 19th Elizabeth, in which we find entered amongst "Burgenses, sive liberi tenentes, Elizabetha filia Thomæ Hyatt, Cuspina Bowden, vidua, Alicia Toller vidua." In the progress of the case a table was produced in evidence of the old usages of the borough, from which Luders† gives the following extract :— "The customes and freedomes of the said borough, used tyme out of mind, and in general words confirmed in charter by King Edward I, and after by his successors, kings and queenes of this realm ever since, doe partly concern :—

"*Free Burgesses.*—All those that had freehold within the borough, and would be free of the freedome, were made free by a fine and by an oath, and then they were called free burgesses.

"*Free men.*—All others, not having any freehold as aforesaid, and would be free of the freedome, were made free by fine and oath as aforesaid, and they were called free men.

"*Free women.*—The widow of a free burgess, or of a free man, hath her freedom during her widowhood."

In another list of *liberi homines* of the 19th of Elizabeth, the names of five women occur, and in a similar roll of *liberi burgenses* and *liberi homines* dating from the 21St of Elizabeth, the names of six-teen women are included. It will

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*2 Luders 13.

† 2 Luders 32.

be observed that a woman became liber *burgo* or *liber homo* of her own right, or by her own deed; whilst the right of a "free woman" only accrued to a widow from her deceased husband.

It will be noted that in the time of Queen Elizabeth women do not seem to have been slack in availing themselves of their civic and political rights ; yet that great Queen, little inclined to tolerate the shortcomings of female burgesses, is said to have reproached the women of Kent because they used their privileges so sparingly.

It is marvellous that Sir Edward Coke, who must have had, unless we are to credit him with "invincible ignorance," many of the facts already cited within his knowledge and recollection, should have ventured in the IV. Institute, by an arbitrary and wholly unsupported dictum, to deny to women the right to that Parliamentary Franchise which they were exercising freely enough down to his own day. Whether his masculine sex bias, manifest not only in this, but in other curious and unsupported *dicta* adverse to the just position of women, was aggravated by his unhappy domestic circumstances, it is not for us to say ; but beyond all question his pronouncement on this matter has helped largely to suppress the political freedom of women, copied, as it has been, without examination or inquiry, into one legal text-book after another. Yet, in justice even to Sir Edward Coke, it should be remembered, as was pointed out by the present Lord Chief justice, when acting as counsel in the case of Chorlton v. Lings, that the IV. Institute was not published till after Coke's death, and not having his revision, is of less high authority than the others. But as this is the sole legal authority on which the alleged disability of sex rests—all other voices being mere echoes of this dictum—I cite the actual text Coke is speaking directly of "spiritual assistants, procuratores *cleri,*" and only in this slight and passing way refers to the case of women. "And in many cases multitudes are bound by Acts of Parliament which are not parties to the elections of knights, citizens, and burgesses, as all they that have no freehold, or have freehold in ancient demesne, and *all women having freehold or no freedhold,* and men within the age of one-and-twenty years."* I submit that the seven words just cited offer but a slight and unsatisfactory excuse for the virtual disfranchisement, during the past two centuries and a half, of the female portion of the community. No doubt women must also take blame to themselves ; for had they diligently fulfilled their political duties throughout the troublous times which followed, there could be now no question of the re-enfranchisement of women, who would have been an active and essential part of the body politic. Sternly and clearly is the lesson taught, that the one substantial safeguard of political rights is the faithful performance of political duties. But, beyond all question, the weight of Coke's authority has borne heavily against women, since it has again and again been cited as adequate proof of the legal incapacity of women, under the common law of England to hold or enjoy political rights.

IV. Inst., p. 5.

So far did Sir Edward Coke carry his hostility to the action of women in public affairs, that we find from the Commons' Journals, for 1620, that, sitting in that year as member for Liskeard, he objected even to the examination of women as witnesses by the House of Commons, on the plea that "a woman ought not to speak in the congregation." On the particular occasion reported, this plea prevailed, and four * members were ordered to examine the lady—Mrs. Newdigate—and to report her evidence to the House. The weight of Coke's authority has not, however, led our modern Courts of Law to refuse to hear in public the testimony of women ; and there is no reason of common sense or justice why the "dead hand" of his mere opinion should be permitted to exclude them, in these days, from the polling booth.

Twenty years later, in 1640, on the occasion of an election for the county of Suffolk, the votes of some Puritan women, tendered for Puritan candidates, were taken by some of the clerks, but disallowed by the High Sheriff, Sir Simonds D'Ewes, " conceiving it a matter verie unworthy anie gentlemen, and most dishonourable in such an election to make use of their voices, *although they might in law have been allowed.*" One can almost see the grave□faced Puritan women, moved by duty to exercise the rights their more careless sisters were letting slip into abeyance. And thus the political activities of women, so remarkable in the days of the Plantagenets and Tudors, slackened under the rule of the Puritans, the Stuarts, and the Hanoverians, and women gradually ceased to vote. Still, no statute barred their ancient electoral rights, although it was manifestly not possible, when the chief claim to Parliamentary representation lay in the possession of freehold property, that women in any large numbers could exercise the Franchise. Even now, intestate freehold property only descends to females in default of male heirs. But with the first great extension, in the present century, of the voting rights of men, came the first statutory recognition of female incapacity. The Reform Act of 1832, passed by the Whig Government of Earl Grey, in all its dealings with the ancient franchises carefully employs the word "*person*," and raises no question of sex incapacity. But in dealing with the new franchises which it conferred, the use of the words "*male* person" expressly excluded women. When the Representation of the People Act of 1867, passed by Lord Derby's administration, was drafted, the word "man " was carefully used in every reference to the qualification or right of voting. Mr. John Stuart Mill, who was then in the House of Commons, wished to put on record the express statutory grant of the suffrage to women. He therefore moved an amendment, that instead of the word "man" the word "person " should be used throughout the Act. This was not carried, but another amendment, substituting the words "male person" was also rejected. Accordingly, some thousands of women claimed to vote under the new Act, and their claims were consolidated in two case—the one that of a woman-occupier in a town, the other that of a woman-freeholder in a county. These cases were argued before the then Court of Common Pleas, and in the result the judges declared, in defiance of history, precedent, and the ordinary construction of Parliamentary enactments, that a woman is legally incapacitated by her sex from voting, and that although in

other legal enactments the word " man" includes woman, in matters affecting the franchise it is not large enough to do so. In effect, Lord Chief Justice Bovill, and justices Byles, Willes, and Keating, committed themselves to the two very extraordinary doctrines—(1)That taxation and representation do not and need not go together, and (2) That one and the same word in Parliamentary enactments means *male and female* when duties and obligations are imposed, but "male" only when rights and privileges are conferred. From this decision no appeal was competent, the House of Commons having thought fit to confer on the Court of Common Pleas the full right of jurisdiction as to the interpretation of the Act, thus practically abdicating that authority which, by long, uniform, and immemorial tradition, belonged to the House alone, of being the sole legal judge of all matters relative to its own constitution and the qualifications of those who elect it. In examining the arguments of the Judges in giving their decision, it is impossible to resist the conviction that the real determining force was nothing more nor less than the same mere masculine sex bias which showed itself so painfully in the case of Sir Edward Coke. But the fact remains that great constitutional principles have been set aside in matters touching the freedom of women, and that the rights of half the nation have been summarily extinguished by a single decision of four judges. To Parliament only can women, therefore, look for redress.

The history of the local franchises enjoyed and exercised by women from time immemorial is more encouraging. In parochial government they possess full and free rights to elect and to be elected. Nor have they lost those rights as parishes have grown into towns. Parochial government is a government of Church and State in miniature. Every year overseers and waywardens are elected, rates levied, parish business discussed and churchwardens appointed. Women, when required, can be legally compelled to fill these offices. In the case of Rex v. Stubbs, it was finally decided that a woman may serve as overseer. This interesting case was heard in the year 1788, on the appointment of overseers of a township called the township of the monastery of Renton Abbey, in Staffordshire. One of the persons appointed was a Mrs. Stubbs, and the appointment was confirmed by the Sessions, but subject to the opinion of the Court of King's Bench. It was argued against the appointment that, if a woman were eligible because she was a "substantial householder," so might idiots and lunatics be eligible, as many of them were substantial householders. But Mr. Justice Ashurst confirmed the appointment, saying that the only qualification required of overseers by the Act 43 Eliz. c. 2, was that they should be "substantial householders"; and affirming that "the qualification has no reference to sex." It is right that it should be so ; the only "substantial householder" in a sparsely-populated district may be a woman; and, even of recent years, since the nation has become more populous, women have been obliged, by the needs of the parish, to take on themselves more than one parochial office. The earlier case of Olive *v*. Ingram, heard before the King's Bench in 1739, determined (1) that a woman might be chosen sexton, and (2) that a woman could vote in the election of a sexton. Sir

John Strange, then Solicitor-General, and afterwards Master of the Rolls, who took part in the case, says, in briefly reporting it (2 Strange, 1114) "as to the first, the Court seemed to have no difficulty about it, nor did I think proper to argue it, there having been many cases where offices of greater consequence have been held by women, and there being many women sextons now in London."

Both points were decided in the affirmative, the case, on account of its importance, having been four times before the Court before a final judgment was given. On one of these occasions Chief Justice Lee is reported to have cited a case (in a manuscript collection of Hakewell's), Catherine *v*. Surrey, in which it was expressly decided, that a *feme sole,* if she has a freehold, may vote for members of Parliament; and a further one (from the same collection), Holt *v*. Lyle, in which it was decided, that a *feme sole* householder may claim a voice for Parliament men; but, if married, her husband must vote for her; whilst Justice Page declared, "I see no disability in a woman from voting for a Parliament man." So closely, in the minds of our judges, were the local and Parliamentary franchises bound up, that a question as to the rights of women in local voting seemed to involve considerations as to their right to vote for Parliament men.

Yet, even in the matter of these local franchises, women have suffered, and do suffer, from legislative tinkering and sex-biassed decisions in our law courts.

Down to 1835, women, possessing the qualifications which entitled them to vote, voted freely in municipal elections, and in some important cities, such as London and Edinburgh, the civic rights even of married women, possessing a separate qualification from the husband, were well established. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, however (passed by the Whig administration of Lord Melbourne), was framed upon the evil precedent of the Reform Act of 1832, and by the use of the words "male persons," in treating of the franchises under it, disfranchised every woman in the boroughs to which it applied, and this disfranchisement lasted for thirty-four years.

Nevertheless, in non-corporate districts, women continued to vote as freely as before, and thus secured the ultimate restitution of the rights of their disfranchised sisters in incorporated districts ; for, when in 1869, on the consideration of the Municipal Franchise Bill of that year, these peculiar facts were brought to the notice of the House of Commons, and it was shown that the incorporation of any district involved the summary disfranchisement of the women ratepayers, the House, without a dissentient word, or any shadow of opposition, adopted the proposal to omit the word " male " before the word " person " in Section 1 of the Bill, and thus restored the rights of the women ratepayers, of whom many thousands voted, as a consequence of the passing of the Act, in the municipal elections of the following November.

Shortly after this, in the year 1870, the passing of the first Married Women's Property Act, enabled a wife to own and hold her own earnings, and thus to enjoy some, at least, of the advantages of property. It was hoped that the

passing of this Act would enable a small, but steadily-increasing, number of married women to become qualified as voters, against whose local rights had the good custom of the City of London influenced opinion elsewhere no objection could have been raised. But the case of the Queen *v*. Harrald, heard in the Queen's Bench, in January, 1872, decided that a married woman, though qualified by occupancy, and by payment of rates, and put on the Burgess List, cannot vote at the election of town councillors ; and further, that a woman, who is rightly on the Burgess List, but married before the election, is also disqualified from voting. In favour of the married woman it was argued that women are capable of voting, and do vote, that no exceptions are made by statute as to married women; and that "coverture" being no longer a bar to the holding of property, should, therefore, be no bar to the enjoyment of the incidents of property, such as voting. On the other hand, it was argued that a married woman is not a person in the eyes of the law. She is not *sui juris*. Curiously enough the words of the Lord Chief Justice (Cockburn), in giving judgment, show plainly that it is possible, in the discharge of the highest legal functions, to determine questions affecting the civil privileges of women, and yet be painfully ignorant of all matters relevant to the point to be decided upon. The Lord Chief Justice was obviously quite unconscious that women had possessed voting rights from time immemorial and speaks of the Act of 1869, which we have just briefly considered, as though it were the first concession of them, instead of being merely the restitution of such of them as had, possibly inadvertently, been taken away thirty-four years before. It scarcely seems fitting that questions so gravely affecting the interests of women—present and future—should be thus lightly determined upon by persons ignorant of so many of the relevant facts. Since this decision, the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 has given to all women fuller rights of property and contract, and for women married since that year has virtually abolished "coverture" in regard to property. Nevertheless, revising barristers, in general, follow the ruling of the Queen *v.* Harrald, and still treat married women, however fully qualified as ratepayers, as not being persons in the eye of the law, at least for purposes of voting. So great is the influence for evil of one evil precedent. For this limitation has now been most unjustifiably, extended to the voting of married women for Poor Law Guardians. The office of Poor Law Guardian is a parochial one, and there is no legal decision or precedent for this highhanded assumption of disqualification, which is the more grievous because every year the number of married women duly qualified to take part in local affairs is steadily increasing, and such women educated as they are, both by the duties of family life, and the control and administration of property, would form a most important and influential part of the electorate. These limitations are the more anomalous as women, both married and single, have been fulfilling the duties of Poor Law Guardians, and their right to do so has never been seriously questioned. Women also, both single and married, were nominated for the County Council elections. And here we come to two points worthy of very serious consideration. In the case of a man the presumption is that he who may vote, may be voted for,

unless provision to the contrary is expressly made ; and further that the Franchise being a duty as well as a right cannot be forfeited by non□user or laches. So much is this the case that the law carefully safeguards the temporarily suspended rights of lunatics and felons. In regard to women, however, our Law Courts have decided various cases on assumptions the converse of these. For instance, in the case of Chorlton *v*. Lings, the judges did not pretend to deny that women had in the early period of our history, taken part in Parliamentary elections, but practically they said, "How can you claim that women have the right to vote, when for two centuries they have not voted?" And, in the case of Beresford Hope and Lady Sandhurst, heard in 1889, the position taken up by the judges may be summed up in the question, " How can you contend that a woman, because she may vote for a County Councillor, may also be elected to the County Council, when, though women have so long voted in municipal matters, no woman has ever yet been elected to the Municipal Council?" These two cases give us warning enough to use to the full whatever civic and political rights we do possess, lest we should be the means of narrowing and limiting, not only our own rights, but those of other women. As a consequence of these recent decisions, it is for the present the law of the land, that a woman may not sit and act as a County Councillor, even though, as in the cases of Miss Cobden and Lady Sandhurst, the ratepayers give her a magnificent majority, nor as a County Alderman, though the Council, as in the case of Miss Cons, select her as one supremely fitted to discharge the functions of that office.

Curiously enough, when Lady Sandhurst's case was decided in the Court of Appeal, the Master of the Rolls took occasion to indulge in one of those *obiter dicta* from which women have suffered so much, dicta which presume either gross ignorance of law and of fact, or inveterate masculine bias. For, said he, "I take it that, by neither the Common Law nor the constitution of this country from the beginning of the Common Law until now, can a woman be entitled to exercise any public function."* Yet at the very time he spoke, women were acting as overseers, waywardens, churchwardens, Poor Law Guardians, and members of School Boards, which can scarcely be reckoned as private functions.

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*It may be worth mentioning in this connection, that in 1877 the Attorney-General of the day: in the House of Commons, expressed his doubt as to whether a woman could be a churchwarden. Women were acting as churchwardens at that very time, and one lady churchwarden during that Session signed and forwarded for presentation to Parliament a petition for the enfranchisement of women.

The absurd limitations and anomalies and contradictions of our present position are the more extraordinary, when we remember that they have been largely developed during the reign of a Queen, who as maiden, wife, and widow, has represented the highest estate of the realm. We, therefore, plead that the rights which the women of the past carelessly let slip, may be restored as the women of this age who desire to possess them. It has been said that one good precedent establishes a constitutional principle. We have pointed to precedents, but were there no ancient precedents, the spirit of the age demands the enfranchisement of women.

Still more strange is it that a judge would seem, even for a moment, to have forgotten that he held his dignified and important station by the authority of a Queen, whose high office is surely the supreme public function.

To sum up, at the present moment all the parochial franchises in England are exercised fully and freely by women possessing the necessary qualifications. These franchises include the right of voting at vestry meetings, and for overseers, churchwardens, waywardens, parish clerks and sextons; whilst qualified women are legally eligible to fill, and do sometimes actually fill, these several parochial offices. Women have also, when unmarried or widowed, the fully established right, if duly qualified, of voting for Poor Law Guardians, members of Local Boards, School Boards, Town Councils, and County Councils. There seems to be no legal obstacle to the election of a woman as a member of a Local Board, whilst women, married and unmarried alike, are at present sitting and acting as Poor Law Guardians and members of School Boards. Women do not seem to be eligible for Town Councillors, and recent judicial decisions have ruled that they may not, though elected by an overwhelming vote of the ratepayers, sit and act as County Counci1lors, or, though selected for the office by a large majority of the Council, as County Aldermen. The absurd illogicality of the whole position is apparent when it is added that though married women can sit and vote freely as members of School Boards and Boards of Guardians, their votes for members of these Boards, as well as for Town Councillors and County Councillors, based upon qualifications otherwise unquestionable, are frequently (though not uniformly), and possibly illegally, rejected on the ground that they are married.

Women have, moreover, in the past, not merely exercised the Parliamentary franchise, but seem to have taken part in the Great Councils of the nation, whilst we have given evidence that they have acted as High Sheriff, Marshal, Warden or Governor of a Castle, Keeper of a Prison ; none of which offices seem of recent years to have been entrusted to them.

The absurd limitations, anomalies and contradictions of our present position are the more extraordinary, when we remember hat hey have largely developed in the reign of a Queen, who as maiden, wife, and widow, has represented the highest estate of the realm. We, therefore, plead that the rights, which women of the past carelessly let slip, may be restored to the women of this age who desire to possess them. It has been aid that one good precedent establishes a constitutional principle. We have pointed to precedents, but were there no ancient precedents, the spirit of the age demands the enfranchisement of women.

Let us now consider the great modern need which has arisen for the emancipation of woman. The women householders and ratepayers of England are computed at less than a million, but even the enfranchisement of this small number will be a great safeguard to the sex generally, since no excluded class is ever safe in its rights. The press of work in Parliament is so great that every unrepresented class must suffer, and from the same cause every excluded class is still more endangered by the inclusion of other classes.

The Home Rule cry is growing fainter and fainter, that of "one man one vote" louder and louder. "One man one vote" means that property already deprived of its fair share of representation, when in the hands of women, is to suffer still further deprivation. This is a serious matter for women who have a large stake in the wealth of the country. One of the organs of the Gladstonian party calculates that the alteration of the Registration Laws, proposed by Sir George Trevelyan in the Newcastle resolution, will add two millions of men to the electorate. In these two millions are no inconsiderable part of the fluctuating population of men, labourers who do not want to labour, and workmen who have not sufficient self-respect to give a fair day's work for a fair day's wage, and are, therefore, continually on the move because no employer long retains their services. And even lower down on the social scale are the men who live on the labour, and, worse still, on the degradation of women. These men will be enfranchised, whilst the woman landowner, manufacturer, or trader—many of them finding employment for numbers of men—these women are, according to the programme of the Gladstonian Party, still to be kept outside the electorate. Sir George Trevelyan further proposes payment of members, "so that labour may have proper representation." It is believed that one-third of the women of England are bread winners for themselves and the families, and that seven-tenths of the women of England are dependant on their labour; but what protection is the labour of women to have? It is well known that Trades Unions have often objected to the free employment of female hands. It is reported that there is a chronic state of discontent among the male officials of the Post Office at the employment of women in Post Office work. We know that Parliament has more than once interfered with the labour of women. In the very last Session of Parliament it was enacted, by a clause of the Factories and Workshops Act, that no woman should he permitted to return to the workshop or factory within four weeks after giving birth to a child. Both Houses of Parliament seem to have been persuaded that women, unlike men, love hard work for its own sake, and through this insane love will imperil their own lives and that of their offspring. In vain did thoughtful women such as Mrs. Fawcett, Mrs. Garrett Anderson, Lady Goldsmid, and others urge that women work from sheer necessity and to secure the means to live. Our male Legislature, in the election of which women have to voice, refused to consider this plea, and legalised the enforced exclusion of mothers from their accustomed and best paid industry, but made no provision, or suggestion of provision, for their maintenance during the period of seclusion. And already demands are being made that the prohibited period should cover at least six months. The right to labour and the right to live must not become male prerogatives !

Payment of members, payment of election expenses, and payment of extra registration officials are all to be thrown on the rates.; and women, who, for the convenience of the Gladstonian Party, are to remain politically non-existent, are to pay their quota towards these expenses. Already they have to pay a proportion of election inquiry expenses when corrupt male voters abuse the privileges withheld from women. On three important occasions within the

last twenty-two years has Mr.Gladstone used his immense influence in Parliament to prevent the enfranchisement of women. More recently, at a time when he became the instrument of a valuable advertisement for a firm of soap manufacturers, whilst *en route* to Port Sunlight, Mr. Gladstone, at Wirral, took Lord Salisbury to task for declaring that whenever the question of "one man, one vote" comes before Parliament, the enfranchisement of women must also be considered. On this occasion Mr. Gladstone made use of exactly the same nautical simile which he used seven years ago, when he refused to have his Franchise vessel overweighted with Women's Suffrage. An unhappy simile indeed, because, in most cases of danger of shipwreck, the first thought in most Englishmen's minds is, " Let us save the women." Not so Mr. Gladstone. In 1884 he deliberately forced them overboard, in spite of the protest of many of his most faithful followers. And at Wirral and Port Sunlight he showed very clearly that the lives of women and, the labour of women are nothing to him. It would have been remarkable, had it not been in harmony with his previous utterances that, on a day when he was addressing the workpeople of a firm which employs nearly as many women as men (for Sunlight Soap Works employ 416 males and 385 females), that Mr.Gladstone should exultingly tell the men that "their interests were effectually guaranteed," because there had been placed in the hands of work men a fair share of political power, so that if the workman suffers he will suffer by his own negligence. In the morning Mr. Gladstone indicated that he would have no Parliamentary Reform programme weighted with Women's Suffrage, and in the afternoon he reminded the women that there was protection for the labour of men, but none for the labour of women. Yet women have to hold their own, not only against the capitalist, but against the competition of men in that struggle for existence, which makes men, even against their better nature, sometimes jealous of women in the labour market.

Nor is it simply for self-protective purposes alone that women seek political justice. Legislation occupies itself more and more with the interests of the home and the family, and the home and the family are paramount with women. The great social problem in all its manifold aspects, the great moral questions which are surging to the front, will tax all the political sagacity of the future ; nor can they be rightly solved without the help of the insight and experience of both halves of humanity, or without the recognition of justice between sex and sex, as well as between class and class. Mrs. Fawcett, in an admirable speech on Woman Suffrage, recently delivered, referred to the laws affecting the custody and guardianship of children and the laws affecting the relations between men and women as outrageously unjust, and cited a case reported in the *Times* of that very day, illustrating most painfully the injustice of masculine law and masculine opinion in matters affecting women. The case, heard before the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge was, briefly stated, as follows: —A Mr. Charles Russell, a married man, of Jesus College, Cambridge, had spoken to the prisoner, a girl of 17, asking her, according to his statement, to let him accompany her to her lodgings. Notwithstanding the fact that he admitted speaking to the prisoner first, no

attempt was made to charge this man with any share in her offence. On his evidence the girl was sentenced to a fortnight's imprisonment, whilst this married man, her senior in age, her superior in education and position, suffers no legal penalty whatever. So long as this base double code of morality and justice prevails, so long will men be degraded and so long will women suffer. But with the enfranchisement of women a nobler law and life will dawn, and man and woman shall no longer prey upon each other, oppressing or oppressed.

How soon shall this be? In the year 1873 Women's Suffrage formed part of the Liberal programme, approved at Birmingham. In 1891 it finds no place in the Liberal programme, approved at Newcastle-on-Tyne. As Mr. Balfour pointed out recently at Bury, the Liberals, who are shocked that one man should have two votes, find nothing shocking in the fact that the woman ratepayer and householder has no vote at all.

That nation is indeed foolish which does not use its greatest moral force. We know what France lost by the expatriation of the Huguenots. We know what Spain lost when the " Holy Inquisition" stifled the noblest aspirations of her children. How much longer is Mr. Gladstone, as leader of the misnamed Liberal Party, to perpetuate the "subjection of women," and restrain for his own purposes the great moral force in politics of the wonton of Great Britain and Ireland ? and how long will the Constitutional Party permit this deprivation and suppression of constitutional right ?

After the reading of this paper the following resolutions were adopted:—

Proposed by Mr. GREEN, seconded by Mr. WARD,

"That, in the opinion of this meeting, the Enfranchisement of Women is one of the most urgent Parliamentary reforms and that a petition be signed by the Chairman on behalf of this meeting and forwarded for presentation, praying the House of Commons to pass a measure which shall include all duly qualified women."

Proposed by Mr. BURLAND, seconded by Miss DUNN,

"That Memorials be forwarded to the Most Noble the Marquis of Salisbury, and to the Right Honourable Arthur James Balfour, M.P., praying that Her Majesty's Government will, during the Coming Session, introduce a measure to extend the Parliamentary Franchise to all duly qualified women, on the same conditions as it is, or may be, granted to men."

Copies of this Pamphlet, and other Papers, may be had from Mrs. WOLSTENHOLME ELMY, Congleton, Cheshire.

Printed at 74-76 Great Queen-street, London, W.C

[1] The Primrose League was an organization seeking to influence the British democracy with their Conservative principles .

[2] The reign of the Planatagenets lasted from 1216 to 1400, through the kings Henry III, Edward I, Edward II, Edward III and Richard II. The Tudors reigned from 1485 to 1603

through the monarchs Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Jane, Mary I, and Elizabeth I.

[3] John Selden (1584-1654). Jurist, politician and antiquary, among his many works is England's Epinomis, 1610 which is concerned with the progress of English law down to Henry II; published in his Tracts, 1683). His work established him as the father of English law-history. Cornelius Tacitus, 55-117 AD. *Annals* (Histories) were written ca. 100-110 AD, and were most likely intended to cover the period referred to as the Julio-Claudian period (through emperors Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero) ending with the death of Nero in 68 BACK

THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES,

WHAT IS THEIR PURPOSE?

THE object of the Women's Suffrage Societies is "to obtain the Parliamentary Franchise for women on the same terms as it is, or may be granted to men"; or, in other words, to obtain the removal of the disability imposed, on the ground of sex alone, on women who would otherwise be duly qualified electors.

This disability is shared by women with paupers, idiots and lunatics, criminals and minors.

Women who pay the Rates are, so far as the electoral law is concerned, in the same position as persons who are *on* the Rates.

Women who may have given such evidence of intellectual competence as *e.g.* that of being placed in the ranks of University Graduates, are in the same category with persons of unsound mind.

Women who as tax-payers contribute to the maintenance of reformatories and gaols are on the same footing as the irreclaimable inmates of those institutions. A criminal, who on coming out of prison betakes himself to an honest life, can in due time qualify himself as an elector. To women, no such opportunity is afforded.

Women are largely responsible for the nurture and education of young persons of both sexes. These young persons, on reaching the age of twenty-one, will, if men, be able to qualify as electors. The women who have brought them up are regarded as in a state of tutelage during their whole lives.

Is this common sense ?

It may be argued that the Parliamentary vote is not withheld from women on the ground of their alleged resemblance to any of the above mentioned classes, but in view of grave considerations as to the probable results of their taking part in affairs of State. If this be so, it may be pertinent to ask whether the same considerations might not justify the prohibition by law of the employment of women on Education Committees, as Poor Law Guardians, Factory Inspectors, Physicians and Surgeons, and in other posts of public responsibility? Yet hardly anyone would propose to deprive the State of the services of women in these capacities.

It is claimed that the proposed reform would bring with it a better representation of important interests and sentiments, a fuller measure of justice all round, and a more widely diffused sense of civic responsibility. The burden of

justifying the existing disability seems to lie on those who maintain the outworn tradition of exclusion.

Price ld. per dozen, or 8d. per 100.

LONDON SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE, 58, Victoria Street, S.W.

Printed by SAMUEL SIDDERS, 17 & 19, Ball Street, Kensington, W.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE A.B.C. OF VOTES

FOR WOMEN.

BY

MARION HOLMES

PUBLISHED BY THE WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE,

1, Robert Street, Adelphi, W.C.

THE

A.B.C. OF VOTES FOR WOMEN,

BY

MARION HOLMES.

Almost invariably the statement that the vote is denied to "criminals, lunatics, imbeciles, paupers, children—and women" raises a laugh. Many women themselves seem to think that a good joke is hidden in the phrase. Yet, seeing that the consequences of disqualification are so serious, it is hardly probable that the sapient persons who drew up this list did it in a jocular mood. They doubtless had in their minds certain well or ill-defined reasons as to why each disqualification was imposed. That being so, it is as well that women, instead of acquiescing in so dubious a joke, should try to find out why their sex is placed in such sinister company, and, having understood, if the action be based on just and reasonable grounds, submit patiently and

humbly ; or, if not, then rebel for the honour and status of womanhood all over the world.

The Value of the Vote.

The first thing to be clearly grasped is the value and power of this right that is denied to us.

It is acknowledged that some of the fiercest fights in history have waged round the question, "To vote or not to vote." The South African war of a decade ago, for which we paid such heavy toll in blood and money, was ostensibly undertaken to gain this very point for the Outlander. Men have fought and rioted, burnt and pillaged, murdered and died to make this right their own. Their very bitterness of the struggle to gain possession of it proves its value and power. Men do not fight and suffer so fiercely for a thing of little worth.

The right of voting confers upon the individual and the nation the dignity of self-government. The voters give to certain individuals the power to make the laws. The laws determine the conditions under which the people shall live. The non-voters have to obey the laws and submit to the conditions without having the power to alter or influence them. In a word, the difference between the voter and the non-voter is the difference between bondage and freedom.

"**Criminals—"**

The power of the franchise being such then, it is easily understood why criminals and lunatics should not be allowed to exercise it. Their exclusion is based on palpably reasonable grounds.

The criminal is an outlaw, a menace to the safety and well-being of the rest of the community. He is not prepared to recognise and obey the restrictions that it is found necessary to impose for the common good. He desires to gratify his own greed, licence, or cruelty at the expense of others. He destroys and wrecks, instead of builds up and consolidates the fabric of society. Manifestly he must not be allowed to say what laws shall be imposed upon others when be is not prepared to obey them himself.

"**Lunatics and lmbeciles—"**

The lunatic or imbecile is incapable of forming a clear and sane judgement; he therefore must not exercise power that has an effect upon the lives and happiness of other people. (True, the imposition of this disqualification would seem to imply that all voters had passed some sort of test to prove their intellectual fitness to vote. This is not the case; it applies only to those who are medically certified to be unfit—quite a nice distinction in its way.)

"Paupers—"

The pauper disqualification is based on rather different grounds from the rest. The right to the franchise is, roughly speaking, supposed to be a *quid pro quo* for services rendered to the State. That being so, it is easy to see how these

despised members of society came to be put upon the list.

From the present point of view of the State the pauper is a burden. He does not contribute to the upkeep or prosperity of the country; his maintenance imposes a tax upon the industry of others, and be performs no useful service in return. Therefore he must not be allowed to dictate to his "benefactors" what conditions shall rule. (It will be readily seen that the word pauper—surely one of the ugliest in our language; let us hope it will soon become obsolete!—is used in this connection in its strictly limited sense as signifying the *helpless and friendless* parasite upon a nation's industry. Many voters on the registers could be disqualified on the grounds that their maintenance imposes a tax upon the industry of others, and they give no useful service in return.)

"Children—"

Children, too, are disqualified on palpable and legitimate grounds. Immature judgment and want of experience must not dictate to wiser and more responsible heads. But children necessarily occupy an unique position in the community. From them no services are exacted; it is not expected or desired that they should be self-supporting—in theory that is—in any self-respecting State. They are not compelled to contribute to the revenues, or to suffer the same penalties for misdeeds and breaches of the law that are imposed upon the more fully fledged members of society. The State—to a certain very imperfect extent—recognises that the needs and wants of its children should be the object of its most tender consideration and care.

" —and Women!"

But we may well ask what points of resemblance are there then between woman and the rest of her disqualified companions? Why has sex been made a reason for inclusion in this list ?

It cannot be urged against her that she is a natural criminal, or a menace to the safety of the State. Indeed, on the contrary women are naturally more law abiding than men. It is estimated that male offenders against the law are as five to one compared with female offenders. It may be urged that the percentage of women prisoners has shown an extraordinary and phenomenal increase during the last three or four years. But I do not think that any one is prepared to contend that this is anything but a passing state of affairs arising out of abnormal and unprecedented conditions—not a permanent one.

It cannot be said either that women as a whole exhibit the peculiar characteristics of lunatics or imbeciles. There are foolish women truly, but then there are also foolish men, and they are permitted to vote, while the cleverest woman in the world would be turned away from the doors of a British polling booth. Women practise as doctors, nurses, teachers; they hold high positions in the literary, journalistic, and artistic worlds. They conduct important businesses with skill and ability. They are to be found in every department of industry that needs intelligence. Indeed, the most responsible work of the country—education—is very largely in the hands of women. Quite four-fifths of the teachers are drawn from the ranks of the sex that is

placed on the same political level as lunatics and imbeciles.

The reasons too that apply to the exclusion of paupers and children cannot be considered as applicable to women. The State does not provide them with free food and housing and clothing. Many of them are compelled—if they would live—to go out and earn their bread in mills, workshops, offices, hospitals, schools. And the married women in the homes, whose industry apparently counts for nothing, inasmuch as it is not recognised by any monetary standard, are many of them working harder than their sisters in the workshops and factories. The fact too that women are the rearers and guardians of children—a State's most valuable asset—removes from them all fear of being regarded as parasites on a nation's industry. They are compelled also to discharge their full responsibilities; they have to pay the same taxes, rates, and rent as men. They are expected to fulfil all the burdens and duties of responsible citizens—yet they are denied the one privilege that makes citizenship a vital and living thing.

Sex as a Disqualification.

We are driven to the conclusion, then, that men who uphold the justice of women's exclusion, really think there is some natural defect attaching to the sex itself that renders them unfit for this particular form of responsibility. This idea of woman's natural disability seems to have been voiced quite frankly in years gone by. In 1790 a learned writer explained that the people who should not be included in the county franchise were those who "lie under natural incapacities, and therefore cannot exercise a sound discretion, or (who are) so much under the influence of others that they cannot have a will of their own in the choice of candidates. Of the former description are women, infants, idiots, lunatics; of the latter persons receiving alms and revenue offices."

Now of course had it been meant that this position should be maintained, women should have been kept in the mental condition of children; *i.e.,* totally uneducated. The present position that they have attained renders such a statement as the above ludicrous, and that is why it always raises a laugh. But the effect of it is not ludicrous. This linking of sex with mental and moral disqualifications has had the result of lowering the status of that sex in every department in life—industrial, legal, and domestic—with all the penalties and disabilities attaching to an inferior status, and women cannot afford any longer to have it regarded as a joke.

Woman's Industrial Status.

It is in the industrial world that the denial of the power to influence legislation is most keenly felt, and consequently it is there that the glaring inequalities between the voters and the non-voters are most apparent.

Take the important question of all—that of wages. In nearly every kind of work in which men and women compete the voteless women are paid at a rate varying from 25 to 50 per cent. lower than the men. And this not only in the terrible sweated trades where women so largely preponderate (some statistics put the percentage of women in these trades as high as 90), but in the

better paid branches of industry, in Government employ, and in skilled and trained trades and crafts. [1]

I have only space here to quote a few examples out of an inexhaustible list.

The Post Office, the largest employer of labour in the country, pays its clerks at the following rates:

Men, 2nd Division Lower Grade … …	£70 to 250~
Women, 2nd Class … …	£65 to 110
Men, 2nd Division Higher Grade … …	£250 to 350
Women, 1st Class … …	£15 to 140

In the District and Provincial offices the scale is :

	Men.	Women.
First Class Sorting Clerks	45/- to 56/ -	18 to 40/-
Second Class Sorting Clerks	28/- to 35 -	15/- to 25/-

Yet the work done by these variously paid individuals is the same.

In spite of the strong position that women occupy in the educational world, and the fact that they are admittedly at least as skilful and successful in their work as men, there is no Education Committee in England which pays them the same rate of wages.

The exact rate varies in different places, but, as a rule, a difference in the scale of one-half to two-thirds is steadily maintained from boy and girl pupil teacher to fully qualified men and women. (It is interesting and instructive to learn that in Norway the women in Government employ in the Postal Telegraphic Department had their wages raised within a few months of their gaining the right to vote, and in Wyoming, where women have the vote. Equal pay for equal work is the rule at least in the teaching profession).

In the Government factories the same unfair conditions prevail as in other branches of employment. The working men, through their representatives, have been able to wrest a Trades Union rate of wages for all men in Government employ. The women who have no representatives were naturally overlooked when this law was passed, with the consequence that their average wages in many of the Government factories are 15s. a week, whilst for the men the lowest rate is 23s.

And all through the various departments of industry this invidious distinction is to be found. It is not based on any inferiority or in equality in the standard of *work*, but on sex and sex alone. It has been calculated that the average male worker's wage is about 18s. per week, and the average woman worker's 7s. From the Government down to the smallest and meanest exploiter of cheap labour, women are looked upon as fair prey.

The "Protected" Sex.

It is an axiom that economic power follows political power. The history of trades-unionism proves that conclusively enough. Before the enfranchisement of the working man in 1867 none of their efforts could secure the passing of an Act to legalise Trades Unions and to protect their funds. But in 1869, after the working men had gained political power, a provisional measure giving

temporary protection was hurried through, and in 1871 a full Act was passed which conceded most of their demands. The status of the agricultural labourer, both in wages arid in social condition, has risen considerably since his enfranchisement in 1884. The miners since they have had direct representation, have wrung concession after concession from the powers that be, and the terrible strikes that 20 or 30 years ago used periodically to paralyse the mining industry have practically ceased.

People—conveniently blind people—who wish to silence the clamorous demands of the women of to-day contend that the men use the power they have gained in the Trades' Unions to protect the women's interests equally with their own. Some even say that they accord them a chivalrous precedence and consideration that would be promptly withdrawn as soon as women were admitted to equal political rights. Lord Curzon has said that one of "fifteen sound, valid, and incontrovertible arguments against the extension of the franchise to women" is that "woman, if placed by the vote on an absolute equality with man, would forfeit much of that respect which the chivalry of man has voluntarily conceded to her, and which has hitherto been her chief protection." He also gives as another of the "fifteen sound," etc.: "The vote is not required for the removal of hardships or disabilities from which woman is now known to suffer. Where any such exist they can be equally well removed or alleviated by a legislature elected by men." [2]

But unfortunately for his lordship's reasoning, facts, disagreeable, hard-headed facts, prove quite the contrary. Man's attitude towards woman in the labour market, whether he stands either in the relation of employer or competitor, is not distinguished by the chivalrous respect that is supposed to be a concession to her weakness, or by a generous desire to legislate for her interests at the expense of his own.

Under the present system it must not be forgotten that men's and women's industrial interests often clash, and it is not given to many people to be just and impartial when the vital questions of livelihood and wages are at stake. The men and women are competitors; work is scarce; the difficulties of earning a living are very great, and the ever present nearness of starvation and unemployment drives the workers into desperate hostility towards their competitors. The average man will welcome any excuse to reduce the number of his trade rivals, and so increase, as he thinks, his own chances of getting work.

Up-to-Date Chivalry.

Trade unionists, instead of using their power to gain for women the same advantages they have gained for themselves, use it often to close avenues of employment against them, often under high sounding excuses, such as fear that their health or their morals will suffer. Everyone will remember the petition of certain miners against the employment of women at the pit brow. They gave as their reason for objecting to it, that the language and customs with which the women were thus brought into contact, were degrading and unfit, and tended to lower their moral standard. Evidently the miner only

uses "language" when at his work—there was no suggestion that in the homes, where we presume the women are brought into even more intimate relationship with them, they are not fit associates. Labour members quite openly state when attempts are made to forbid women to work in certain trades, that they want it done so that there may be more work for men. Mr. John Burns' most frequently advanced remedy for unemployment is the curtailing of the work of women. Mr. Sydney Buxton also admitted only the other day that it was very desirable, in the interests of men, that female labour in the Post Office should be greatly reduced. [3]

Indeed, many men politicians and others seem to think that it really does not matter if a woman starves, so long as a man gets work. Yet the necessities of life are a human need—not a question of sex. And if a woman has to face the struggle for existence, as so many millions of them have to do to-day, hunger and unemployment are as disastrous for her as they are for her brothers.

To leave her in this fierce struggle unprotected, with no weapon of defence such as men possess in the vote, no means of compelling the attention of those who make the law to her needs and desires, is to impose upon her fearful odds. It is against human nature to expect the man who climbs to place and power on the suffrages of his constituents, and who must of necessity consider their demands and interests first and foremost, to give even a secondary place to their trade rivals. He has to consider votes—there non voters can safely be put on one side. And to expect high and unselfish consideration to a competitor, who is driven by her bitter necessities to snatch at any chance of underselling, who is ready always to do his work for a lower wage, is to expect the average British workman to be very little lower than the angels.

Woman's Legal and Domestic Status.

The most cursory study of woman's legal position in this country can only make us thankfully acknowledge that the majority of men are considerably better than the laws they make. Nevertheless, we have to recognise that however kind and considerate individual men may be to their own womenfolk, the Law is the concrete expression of man's attitude towards woman in the mass, and in the eyes of the law woman is a creature of inferior status, the dependent, not the equal of her husband, not entitled to the same rights or the same privileges, either with regard to the ownership or inheritance of property or the guardianship of children.

Undoubtedly woman's legal position has been greatly improved since the Married Women's Property Act became law in 1882—indeed, many politicians claim that the passing of that Act removed all cause for complaint on her part—so easy is it to bear another's ills!—still the idea of man's right of ownership over his wife's person and liberty remains deeply ingrained. [4] Never a week passes but some flagrant case of cruelty or injustice to a wife comes before a court, and is condoned by a paltry fine, or a totally inadequate punishment. "Things have come to a pretty pass in this country," remarked an

indignant husband recently, when ordered to pay a ten shilling fine for assaulting his young wife, "when a man can't thrash his own wife in his own kitchen."

One Parent Only.

A married woman is not the legal parent of her own children. Every child, according to our laws, has only one parent, who can decide its future, where it shall live, how it shall be educated, what religion it shall be taught, how much shall be spent upon it, whether it shall be vaccinated or not. For a child born in wedlock that parent is the father. For one born out of wedlock the only parent is the mother. She alone, in that case, is responsible for the care and welfare of the child ; she alone is held responsible and punished if the child be neglected or suffer from neglect. Indeed, even where fatherhood is admitted by the man the law will not admit it, for a learned judge ruled quite recently that, "no illegitimate child can be recognised as the blood relation of its father."

The divorce law sets up a different standard of morality for men and women. A moral standard is insisted upon for women, and any deviation from that can be punished by divorce; an immoral one is permitted to men.

"With All My Worldly Goods I Thee Endow." [5]

The laws of inheritance and intestacy uphold in the strongest possible way man's prior right to the possession of property. In nearly all cases they ignore the woman until all the male heirs are exhausted. In cases of intestacy landed property goes to sons before daughters. If a wife die without a will the husband enjoys full and lifelong possession of her estates or money. If a husband die intestate the wife is only entitled to one-third of his personal property if he have children, and half if there be no children. In default of other next-of-kin the other half goes to the Crown. In the case of a daughter or son dying intestate the mother inherits nothing; the whole goes to the father, or the father's next of kin.

A wife may spend her whole life in hard work; she may save and deny herself necessities to help her husband to amass considerable wealth, and yet her share in it is absolutely nothing. She can claim nothing, and he can if he choose, for a whim, or in a fit of spleen or spite, will it all away from her when he dies. For all her services rendered as a wife and a housekeeper she can claim only the lowest form of wages—a subsistence wage.

Lady Maclaren points out in her Women's Charter that although the law fixes upon the husband the responsibility of supporting his wife and children, yet it avoids the necessary steps to make this obligation legally effective:—

(1) By not compelling the husband to work.

(2.) By not giving the woman any direct claim on his earnings even if he do work.

(3) By not fixing any scale suitable to his means on which a wife should be maintained so long as the two live together.

(4.) By not admitting that a wife's work, either as housekeeper or as

assistant in business, bas any money value;

(5.) And finally, by not giving to a widow any claim on her husband's property of which his will cannot deprive her.

"Constant and Well-grounded Fear."

Of course there are cases where apparent leniency is shewn to the woman, such as the rule which holds a wife free from criminal responsibility if the crime be committed in the husband's presence. But this privilege of exemption is based on the assumption that in such a case "she acted thus being in constant and well grounded fear, stronger than the fear naturally inspired by the law." A very interesting admission on the part of the law of the power of chastisement and authority vested in husbands, but not exactly a conception of matrimony tending to increase the self-respect and dignity of wives.

However, all these inequalities are inevitable under the present male monopoly of legislative power. The man voter and the man legislator must recognise the man's needs first, and Lord Curzon's touching faith in the willingness and ability of a male electorate to deal not only justly but generously by women cannot unfortunately in the face of such facts be shared by them.

"Some Objections—and the Antis."

In all the multitude of societies that have sprung up within the last few years around the now happily burning question of Votes for women, none has added to the gaiety of nations (and the roll-call of the Suffragettes) as much as that eminently aristocratic body the Anti-Suffrage Society. Their arguments have provided much food for thought—and laughter.

One is reluctant to attribute to them the once frequently-heard injunction to "go home and wash the baby," or "darn the socks," or "cook the dinner," for even the witless loafer is beginning to recognise that the woman's movement is not to be stopped or influenced by such remarks as these. The parrot cry, that the "woman's place is the home," is, however, still brought forward persistently by them, as if it were a well-founded and reasonable argument against the admission of women to political life. "The home is the place for women," they say. "Their interests are the caring and training of children—politics do not concern them. Really, to hear many of the "Antis" talk, one would imagine that all the women of this country were sheltered inmates of happy homes—or that if they were not, it was somehow their own fault. Yet they must know as well as we that there are literally millions of women to whom such a statement is a mockery.

"In Poverty, Hunger and Dirt."

What kind of hones are the noisome, foul dens in which our sweated women workers drag out a miserable existence? Homes in which baby faces are white with hunger, baby feet blue with cold, baby hands set to hard and unfitting toil because the few miserable pence they can earn are necessary for

the family exchecker. What time for the training, and careful rearing of children has the mother, who must work for 16 and 17 hours a day to earn her pittance of a shilling, or even less? The case that was tried the other day in a London Court, when a woman who was summoned for not sending her children to school regularly, explained that she was compelled to do scrubbing at an Infirmary all day, and washing at "home" every night from eight to one or two o'clock, to support her family, is no isolated one of exceptionally bad conditions. It is common enough.

There are thousands of homes in this country that would not exist if the women did not go out and labour with their heads and hands to keep a roof over their own and their children's heads.

Of course, no one is foolish enough, or even desires, to deny that the women as a sex do spend more time in the homes than the men, and that the interests of great numbers of them are largely concerned with matters of home life. But this is an added reason for women having the vote, not one for denying it to them. Politics and the home life are intimately concerned with each other. The price of food, housing, sanitation, food adulteration—nay, even the sleeping and breathing space of the family, the baby's bottle and cradle and clothes—all these are made matters of legislation.

When we hear of statesmen discussing whether babies should be fed on natural mother's milk, humanised milk, or sterilised milk, whether they should sleep in bed with their mothers or in banana boxes, we realise how the most intimate duties of the mother are made the subjects of political discussion. The woman in the home needs to be an ardent politician indeed in these days, or she will be liable to find herself mulcted of many a fine for running counter to rules and regulations that have been passed over her head, with the best intentions in the world of merely doing her duty according to the light that is in her.

A Disappearing "Argument."

The contention that as physical force is the basis of Government woman must not be allowed to take part in it, because she could not, if necessary, compel obedience to the law, is an antiquated method of reasoning that even the "antis" are now beginning to abandon. Carried to its logical conclusion it would mean that the strongest men should be the lawmakers, and that politics should become a matter of fisticuffs or wrestling, in an even more pronounced fashion than it is to-day. Left to itself physical force is a blind and unintelligent power capable of neither government nor control. Mental and moral force directs it, and makes it, according to its direction, either valuable and helpful or dangerous and destructive. Women are just as capable of exercising mental and moral force as men. Government—the power to compel obedience—is not so much a question of strength of arm, as of strength of will.

Physical force can neither kill nor destroy a superior mental or moral force, as has been proved up to the hilt by the recent militant demonstrations of the Suffragettes. No amount of it has succeeded in putting back their agitation, or

destroying their enthusiasm and devotion. No amount of it ever will.

The Adult Suffrage Bogey.

But it is the question of adult suffrage that seems to be one of the greatest stumbling blocks to many of the "antis." “If you give women the vote you are opening the door to adult suffrage," they say. Yet, that this is clearly a matter of personal opinion and speculative surmise is proved at every meeting they hold, for while the majority of the speakers will dolefully prophecy how adult suffrage will follow votes for women as the night follows day; there is sure to be one at least who will endeavour to prove that the granting of this measure will mean the submerging of Liberalism and the stoppage of all progress for generations to come!

As a matter of fact, neither of these prophecies is founded on reason and probability, but on a tyrannical desire on the part of both objectors to withhold power until they are assured it will be used in the way they would each prefer. One can imagine the storm of indignation that would be aroused if the question of how their vote would be cast were openly made the reason, by either of the political parties, for not extending it to any section of men. It would be a wholesome reflection, too, for every working man who would block this reform to remember how every objection urged against extending the franchise to women was urged against its extension to himself by the holders of power in days gone by.

Unworthy Fears.

The fears entertained by Lord Curzon and others of his ilk that women would introduce an unbalanced, deplorable and unduly excitable element into political life, may surely be allayed by the experience of other countries. New Zealand, Australia, the four States of America, are all unanimous in stating that the women’s vote has been used to accelerate social and moral reform: that sweated labour, bad housing, immorality, the drink problem, bad conditions affecting women and children, have all been made the subject of attack, and that, as a consequence of its effective help in these matters, the social, political, and moral status of the country bas been raised. By what method of reasoning do these chivalrous gentlemen assume that English women will act differently, or in a worse way, than the women of other countries? It is not a very gracious or grateful attitude to assume towards those who have served their country as well as British women have; who have responded with such patriotic generosity when the nation has appealed for their aid in times of war and stress, who, by their high intellectual and moral standard have helped so materially to raise the level of English national life. To imagine that their influence will prove a menace to good and effective legislation is an insult that all self respecting women should resent.

The Matter in a Nutshell.

But all the objections brought against this question after all only serve to

emphasize the fact that the opposers of it are actuated by prejudice, either blind or wilful, not by logic, or a sense of right and justice. For the one great salient truth remains, that no single reason can be adduced for giving the franchise to men that does not apply with equal force to women. Women need the vote for exactly the same reasons that men need it. Without it they have no means of redressing their grievances or voicing their special needs and desires. They deserve it for exactly the same reasons that men deserve it. They perform all the duties of responsible citizenship, they contribute valuable and indispensable service to the State.

In claiming it they are not begging for a privilege—

THEY ARE DEMANDING A RIGHT

MARION HOLMES.

[1] Sweated trades: Homebased industries, unregulated by labour laws, and specifically aimed at absorbing the women workforce which was not hired in the factories. The word hints at over-work and underpay.

[2] George Curzon, 1859 - 1925, elected as MP for the Conservative Party in 1886,made Secretary of State for India in 1891, and later Viceroy of India, but lost the confidence of his superiors and was taken out of office in 1905. Here he (among other things) ardently opposed women's franchise, and was instrumental in forming the Anti-Suffrage League in 1908. When Parliament voted over the 1918 Qualification of Women Act., Lord Curzon voted against it. It was, however, passed.

[3] Statesman Sydney Charles Buxton, 1853-1934. Appointed under-secretary of state for the Colonies in 1892, Postmaster-general with a seat in the Cabinet in 1905. In 1910 he became President of the Board of Trade, where his sympathetic views on the working classes came to show in some of the reform legislations he saw through, most importantly the National Insurance Act of 1911, which aimed at giving ordinary workers assistance with health care, as well as securing aid to the unemployed.

[4] This Act allowed women to own and administer their own property.

[5] From the Book of Common Prayer, and said by the parties getting married in church, "With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow."

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Published by the Women's Freedom League.

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PARLIAMENTARY FRANCHISE FOR WOMEN
1904

To the Editor of "The Times"

Sir,—Amidst the various questions of more or less urgency which at the present moment beset the public mind, the division on March 16th on Sir Charles McLaren’s resolution, "That the disabilities of women in respect of the Parliamentary franchise ought to be removed by legislation,” has hardly received the attention which from its importance it would seem to demand. On this, the first opportunity of bringing the question of women's suffrage before the present Parliament, the gratifying result was obtained that the Resolution was carried by a majority of 114, the votes being 182 to 68. That the total of members present was comparatively small, was no doubt partly due to the fact that the resolution could have no immediate practical consequences; but may it not have been also that it reflected a general attitude towards the question, a willingness to consider it, an unwillingness to pronounce decidedly on either side?

Those who have long watched the movement for the enfranchisement of women notice that within the last 20 years a marked change has taken place in public opinion with regard to it. The tone of mingled disapproval and derision, once so common, has to a great extent disappeared, and a disposition is shown to give the question a fair hearing, with an undertone of prophecy "it will come.” The change is no doubt due to various causes. Elections have ceased to be the scenes of disorder and riot of which we read in earlier days, and the shrinking naturally felt by persons of refinement from the idea of women's participation in such orgies has passed away with the occasion for it. For many years women have been in the habit of voting for School Boards, Poor Law guardians, &c. Their voting power bas been exercised with insight and discrimination, and they have not been unpleasantly transformed into something different from what they were before. Women who vote are, in fact, no more distinguishable in manners and appearance from those who do not than men who vote are distinguishable in outward demeanour from those who do not. And while the experiment of municipal voting has been successfully carried out at home, the further step of the extension of the Parliamentary franchise has been taken in

many of our Colonies with none of the evil consequences which has been feared. In New Zealand the suffrage was granted in 1893. The example was followed by South Australia in 1894, by Western Australia in 1900, by New South Wales in 1902. Tasmania has recently followed, and as including the several States of the Commonwealth, the suffrage for the Federal Parliament was granted in 1902. These facts are surely of great significance, claiming the serious consideration of thoughtful persons. In the contiguous States there must have been opportunity for closely observing the working of the experiment and the result has proved an incitement to imitation. We are told that in New Zealand the addition of women to the electorate made no difference in the balance of political parties. As regards Australia, the evidence was conflicting. It was stated in the Parliamentary debate that “women had voted there with the result not only that men of good standing and character had been returned, but the cause of Labour had been everywhere supported”; while, on the other hand, the Sydney correspondent of the "Globe" writes that "the recent Federal elections have shown that the Australian woman voter is opposed to Socialist principles and takes a more practical and common sense view of public matters than do many of the sterner sex. The Labour party clamoured for the female franchise, and now it has become conceded they find it against them." Probably the explanation of these contradictory statements is to be found in the fact that "the women's voice" is not, as is sometimes assumed, a solid sub-stance to be deposited whole in one quarter or another, but that, like the men's vote, it is composed of varied elements, which may preponderate in different proportions in different localities.

The impossibility of ascertaining where "the woman's vote" would go, has no doubt been a hindrance to the adoption of women's suffrage as a Government measure by either of our political parties. Liberals are convinced that women would vote Conservative and are unwilling to do anything which might strengthen their opponents. Conservatives, as such, are not predisposed to favour a considerable constitutional change, and they are by no means so certain that it would be to their advantage as to be prepared to risk the fortune of their party on chance. All sides are, however, glad to secure the help of women in party warfare; and among the causes contributing to the change which has been noted in public opinion, perhaps none has been more potent than the eagerness everywhere shown to summon women into the political arena. In the words of the late Lord Iddesleigh:—

"You may have women taking part in public meetings, making speeches, and canvassing, as any man would do, throughout an election; but when it comes to going into the polling booth to give a vote in a peaceable manner, protected by the ballot, then you say you demoralize

and lower her character. Is that common sense"?

Can the politicians who have achieved success largely by calling to their aid the zeal and energy of women turn round upon them and declare that though they are quite competent to advise and influence men in the use of their votes, they are not fit to vote themselves, that they are out of place in the field of politics and should confine themselves to their proper sphere—the home?

As we all know, there are many people who do not much care about being consistent; but there are signs that the services of women will no longer for the most part be at the disposal of candidates for election who, while seeking their help, refuse to support their claim to the vote, and the untenableness of the position may be brought home to such candidates in a way which they cannot afford to disregard. At a meeting held at Bristol in May 1903, a resolution, moved by so gentle and moderate a social reformer as Miss. F. Davenport Hill, "That, in the opinion of this meeting, women should work only for those candidates for Parliament who pledge themselves to support the Parliamentary enfranchisement of women," was carried unanimously. Similar resolutions are being adopted, either at public meetings or silently by individual women, in all parts of the country. That women should arrive at the conclusion that they will no longer take part in the indefinite postponement of this question would surely not be unreasonable, even if the reform were regarded as affecting only one□half of the community; but the advocates of women's suffrage do not so regard it. They believe that measures tending to make women stronger, more independent, less heavily weighted in the battle of life, will increase the vigour—physical, intellectual and moral—of our race, and that while women would most directly and consciously gain by enfranchisement men would share the benefits. The well□known Labour leader, Mr. Keir Hardie, declaring that this is "as much a man's question as it is a woman's question" refers to the way in which women are used to keep down wages, and says·—

"By treating women—I am speaking now from the working class point of view—as equals, by conceding to them every concession which men claim for themselves, the women will play the part of the equal, not only in regard to wages, but in all other matters appertaining to industrial life. . . . . The possession of the franchise itself would give women a new standing, a new increase of power, and would enable them to win for themselves concessions which are to□day withheld."

How strongly this has been felt by working women has been shown by petitions from 29,300 textile workers in Lancashire, 303,184 in Yorkshire, 4,300 in Cheshire, 8.600 tailoresses in the West Riding of York, and by recent petitions and deputations from many thousands of working women in the Potteries, Leicester, Hinckley, and other places;

but it is still more striking and significant that working men are beginning to recognise their interest in the matter, as is shown by a petition presented by Mr. Shackleton from 71 trade and labour councils and 62 trade unions, representing over 100,000 workmen, and one presented by Mr. Keir Hardie from the Independent Labour party.

Those who have worked in the face of much discouragement for the enfranchisement of women are now animated by a fresh stimulus, that of a nearer and more confident hope. The movement is supported by a constantly increasing body of adherents, new societies or committees springing up all over the country. We look to the Press for its powerful aid in bringing into view new facts, throwing fresh light on the situation; and we trust that a calm and unprejudiced consideration of the case as it now stands will ere long bring about a reform which, while beneficial to all classes of the community, can be injurious to none.

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Anti-Suffrage Arguments

Anti-Suffragists say that the "The Voter, in giving a vote, pledges himself to uphold the consequences of his vote at all costs " and that "women are physically incapable of making this pledge."

What does this Mean?

When the issue at a General Election is PEACE or WAR, and a man votes for WAR, does he himself have to fight?

No! !

The men who fight are seldom qualified to vote, and the men who vote are never compelled to fight.

What Is the Voters part in War?

He is called upon to PAY THE BILL.

Are Women Physically incapable of this ?

Apparently **NOT.**

They are forced to pay in equal proportions with the men who

alone have made the decision. Surely this is not fair! Since men and women are equally involved in the consequences, should not men and women equally have power to decide ?

"But some matters discussed in the House of Commons concern men more than women."

True, but just as many concern women more than men.

Is not the Housing Problem a woman's question since

"Woman's Place Is the Home?"

Are not EDUCATION, a Pure Milk Supply, and a Children's Charter questions for women, since

"The Woman's Business is to look after the Baby?"

Is not the Taxation of Food a woman's question since women are

"The Housekeepers of the Nation?"

Women claim **votes**, not because they are, or want to be, LIKE MEN, but because they are **Different,** and have somewhat different interests and different views. They want the vote as a tool, with which to do **not Men's Work, but Women's Work,** which men have left undone, or are trying unsuccessfully to do.

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LATEST INTELLIGENCE

FROM

THE PLANET VENUS

REPRINTED, BY PERMISSION, FROM "FRASER'S MAGAZINE"

CENTRAL SOCIETY FOR WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE,

25. VICTORIA STREET, WESTMINSTER.

LATEST INTELLIGENCE FROM THE

PLANET VENUS

(Reprinted, by Permission, from "Fraser's Magazine")

IT may be reckoned among those things not generally known that within a short time direct telescopic communication, by means of signals, has been established between the earth and the planet Venus, and that at certain stations regular interchange of intelligence is now carried on. The results have hitherto been kept secret, partly, it is said, owing to the disappointment of the astronomers at finding in the new country but a mirror of our own, with an hereditary constitutional monarchy, two Houses, a civilisation in about the same stage of advancement as ours, and political and social institutions generally similar. The single remarkable difference presented to their notice is one they are loth to reveal, for fear, we believe, of the family discords it might possibly excite at home, and we are the first to acquaint our readers with the curious fact that in the planet Venus, though the present sovereign happens to be a king, all political business, electoral and parliamentary, is allotted to the women. Women only have the right to vote or to sit in the House of Commons, and the Upper House is formed of the eldest daughters of

deceased Peers. Politics, therefore, are included among the usual branches of ladies' education, but except in this respect their social condition presents no unusual features.

This monopoly by women of political power is as old as their system of government, and until a few years ago no one dreamt of complaining or of questioning of its wisdom. But a pamphlet advocating the enfranchisement of males has lately been published by a clever female agitator, and caused a considerable stir. It is not pretended that a majority of the sex ask or even desire the privilege. The plea put forward is abstract justice backed by possible expediency, and, the cry once sounded, arguments are not wanting, petitions flow in, idle men have taken the matter up and find supporters among the younger women, and last night a member of the Government redeemed the pledge made to her constituents last election, to bring forward a bill for removing the electoral disabilities of men. She has no lack of supporters, some sincere, some interested. Her greatest difficulty was in persuading the House to treat the measure seriously. The notion of admitting young cornets, cricketers, and fops of the Dundreary pattern to a share in the legislation, the prospect of Parliamentary benches recruited from the racecourse, the hunting-field, and the billiard-room, was a picture that proved too much for the gravity of the Commons. A division, however, was insisted upon by the original proposer. At this juncture the leader of the Opposition, a lady as distinguished by her personal attractions as by her intelligence, moderation, common sense, and experience, arose and made the following forcible speech, which we transcribe for the benefit of all such as it may directly or indirectly, concern :

“Madam,—Before proceeding to state my opinions on this question, or my reasons for holding them, 1 wish to impress on you a sense of the importance of the measure just brought forward, that it may at least obtain from you the attention it deserves. 1 must urge you not to allow party or personal, motives to blind you to its nature and bearings. The supporters of Male Suffrage are seeking not only to introduce a startling innovation into a system of government that has hitherto worked remarkably well, but in so doing they would tamper with the foundations of society, and in a blind cry for equality and suppositious justice ignore the most elementary laws of nature. The question is not a political, it is a scientific and physiological one. About the equality of the sexes we may go on

disputing for ever, but with regard to their identity there can be no manner of doubt. No one has ever ventured to assert it. Each sex has its special sphere mission—call it what you will, originally assigned to it by nature, appropriated by custom. What now are the special and distinguishing natural characteristics of the male sex ? Assuredly muscular strength and development. With less quickness of instinct, flexibility and patience than women, men are decidedly our superiors in physical power. Look at individuals, men of all classes - mark their capability for, nay their enjoyment of, exertion and exposure. If these do not naturally fall to their lot they find artificial employment for their faculties in violent games and athletic exercises; some indeed go as far as to seek it in the distant hunting grounds and prairies of uncivilised continents. This quality of theirs has its proper outlet in the active professions. To man, therefore, war and navigation, engineering and commerce, agriculture and trade, their perils and toils, their laurels and gains; to man, in short, all those callings in which his peculiar endowment of greater physical force and endurance of physical hardships is a main and necessary element. Those with superior mental gifts will turn to such scientific pursuits as specially demand courage, exposure, and rough labour. It is most essential that their energies should not be diverted from these channels. We should then have bad soldiers, bad ships, bad machines, bad artisans. Government, on the other hand, is no game to be played at by amateurs. The least of its functions claims much honest thought and watchfulness. Either, then, the manly professions will suffer, or else—and this is the worst danger of the two—the suffrage will be carelessly exercised, and the mass of new voters, without leisure to think and judge for themselves, will be swayed by a few wire-pullers, unprincipled adventurers, who, seeking only to feather their own nests, will not hesitate to turn to account the ignorance and preoccupation of the electors.

“Now turn to the woman. Her organisation no less clearly defines her sphere. With finer natural perceptions than man, less ungovernable in her emotions, quicker and clearer in intellect, physically better fitted for sedentary life, more inclined to study and thought, everything seems to qualify her specially for legislation. For the judicious application of general rules to particular cases, peculiar delicacy of instinct is required, and in no capacity have any but women been known to approach the ideal of government—that perfect rule—all-efficient, yet unfelt.

“Take the family as a rough type of the nation. To whom, at home, is naturally allotted the government of young children ? To the mother. To whom that of the domestic household ? To the mistress. Widowers and bachelors are proverbially the slaves and victims of spoilt children and ill-trained servants. In all such home, matters the husband defers to his wife, and would as soon expect to have to instruct her in them as she to teach him fortification, boxing, or mechanics. Little time or thought, indeed, has the professional man to spare for household superintendence; how much less for matters requiring such careful study as the government of a nation. The clergyman, wearied with his day's visiting, of the sick, teaching or preaching; the doctor after his rounds; the merchant or tradesman overwhelmed with business; what they require when their daily toil is over is rest, relaxation, not to be set down to work out complex social and political problems, to study the arguments for and against the several measures to which members offer to pledge themselves, and to form a judgment on the merits of respective candidates. What time or opportunity have they for qualifying themselves to do so ? But the wives of these men, on the other hand, have lives comparatively unoccupied, and of physical and intellectual leisure enough and to spare. Here, then, is a commodity ; there a demand and a field for it, and this surplus, so to speak, of time, strength, and attention with us has been always applied to the science of government, nor do I see how a happier or more judicious arrangement could have been made.

“I will proceed now to enumerate a few of the dangers to which the enfranchisement of men would inevitably expose us. Male voters will view each political question in a narrow professional light, irrespective of its justice or general expediency. Large proprietors will stand up for the game laws, eldest sons for primogeniture. Publicans, brewers, and railway directors will exercise a baneful, blind, one-sided influence on our counsels. An impartial debate or decision will soon become a thing of the past, fairness sink into the shade, and a majority of direct pecuniary interest turn the scale in all cases.

“Again, the bulk of the national property being in the hands of the men, the openings and temptations to bribery would be enormously increased. Few women have the power, had they the will, to offer bribes sufficient to suborn a constituency, but when millionaires are admitted to the suffrage we may expect to see parliamentary

elections bought and sold, and going like other wares, to the highest bidder.

"But there is a more alarming danger still. The muscular force of the community being male, an opportunity would be afforded for an amount of intimidation it would shock us now even to contemplate. Right has ever been might in our land. Shall we reverse our motto? Shall we, Who have ever taken pride in the fact that our counsels are swayed by reason and judgment alone—a fact from which men have benefited at least as much as women— invite the fatal indefensible element of force to enter in and meddle with our elections, and let the hustings become the scene of such struggles and riots as in certain countries where, by a singular distortion of judgment, the management of political affairs is thrust entirely on the men ? Supposing that the suffrage were irrespective of sex, and supposing it to happen that the men in a wrong cause were arrayed against and outvoted by the women in a right, would they not, as they could, use force to compel the women to submit ? And here we are threatened with a relapse into barbarism from which the present constitution of our State affords so admirable a guarantee. And that something of the sort, would ensue I have little doubt. Probably the next step would be to oust women altogether from the legislature—the standard of female education would then decline, and woman would sink lower and lower both in fact and in the estimation of men. Being physically weak, she must always, among the rough and uneducated classes, be especially exposed to ill-treatment. Of this in our country, I am happy to say, there are but rare instances, nevertheless. But there are lands where men monopolise the suffrage, and where a state of things exists among the lower classes—let us hope the upper and civilised orders do not realise it, for their apathy would otherwise be monstrous— which if widely and thoroughly known would be recognised as the darkest page of modern history, something to which a parallel, must be in the worst days of legalised slavery. Penal laws have utterly failed as a remedy, and it is obvious that they must always do so. What has been our guard against this particular evil? Is it not that point in our social system which raises woman's position, both actually and in the eyes of the men of her class, by entrusting to her functions of general importance, which she is at least as well qualified by nature to fill as man, and which we take care that her education shall fit her for, as a man's, necessarily unequal, semi-professional, and engrossing, can

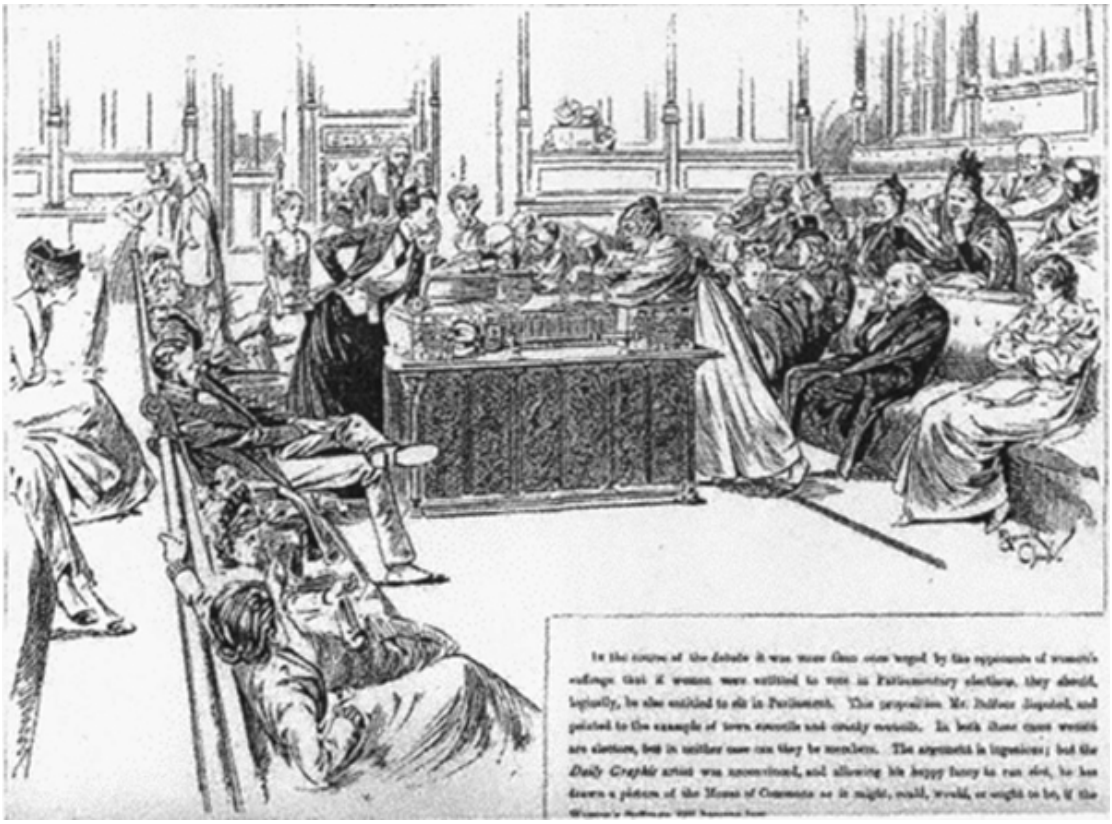
never do ? Thus men have an irksome, thankless, exacting, life-long labour taken off their hands, which are left free to work out their fame and fortune ; educated women their faculties turned to the best account; while among the lower orders, the artificial superiority conferred on the female sex by its privilege of the suffrage, raising the woman's status in fact and in the eyes of her husband, acts as an effectual check on domestic tyranny of the worst sort, and the nation has the advantage of being governed by that section of the community whose organisation, habits, and condition best enable them to study political science.

"That any wrong is done to men by the existing arrangement, I entirely deny. Most of them are married, and it is so seldom that a wife's political opinions differ materially from her husband's, that the vote of the former may fairly be said to represent both. The effect on the sex itself would be most undesirable. It is a fatal mistake to try to turn men into women, to shut them up indoors, and set them to study blue-books and reports in their intervals of business, to enforce on them an amount of thought, seclusion, and inaction, so manifestly uncongenial to their physical constitution, which points so plainly to the field, the deck, the workshop, as the proper theatre for their activity. The best men are those who are most earnest and laborious in their professions, and do not trouble themselves with politics. Already they have sufficient subjects to study - special studies imperatively necessary for their respective occupations. Do not let us put another weight on the shoulders of those who, from the cradle to the grave, have so much less leisure than ourselves for reflection and acquiring political knowledge, or else, let us look no more for calm and judicious elections, but to see candidates supported from the lowest motives, and members returned by a majority of intimidation, bribery, private interest, or at best by chance, all through the ill-advised enfranchisement of an enormous body of muscular indeed, but necessarily prejudiced, ignorant, and preoccupied members of society."

The honourable member here resumed her seat amid loud cheers. On a division being taken, the motion was rejected by an overwhelming majority, and the question of Male Suffrage may be considered shelved from the present in the planet Venus.

B.T. (Bertha Jones. The text was published in 1875.Ed. note)

Women's Printing Society, Ltd. 66 and 68, Whitcomb St., W.C.



(Illustration from *Daily Graphic*, 1892, which envisions what universal suffrage for women would look like)

THE ENGLISHWOMAN Vol. VIII, no 22, 1910

SAYINGS OF SUFFRAGE WEEK

Of 1867 and 1910.

The Conciliation Bill is the natural complement of the Reform Bill of 1867, which recognised the household as the unit to be represented. [1]

Of Progress.

This is a progressive age; it is only those who stand still who obstruct

Sir Edward Grey's opinion. [2]

The debates on the Conciliation Bill have secured that no Reform Bill and no extension of the franchise to men will be passed without extending the franchise to women.

Of Ignorance in Governments.

We have to deal with a Government which—until women have the vote—is necessarily ignorant of their wants.

Of the Position of the Conciliation Bill.

It is exasperating because it shows the helplessness in a democratic country of persons without a vote.

Of Patience.

We must have patience, but not the patience which refuses conflict.

Of Political Extremists.

Supporters of Women's Suffrage are becoming constantly more moderate; it is their opponents who are going to extremes.

Of the Bill as a Magic Mirror.

Mr. Asquith stood revealed as a high old Tory; Balfour as a Liberal; Winston Churchill as a wobbler; and Lloyd George as a lawyer. [3]

Of Conciliation.

Talk of conciliation and compromise is a sign of strength, not of weakness. When a man talks of dying in the last ditch, you may he sure that a ditch is his normal habitation.

Of an Imperfect Bill.

I would rather have all women over six feet high and all those who bear the name of Amelia Jane enfranchised than that they should get nothing at all.

Of the Vote for One Woman.

But the enfranchisement of even one woman would be more politically momentous than the passage of any of these gentlemen's projects. That single vote would for ever sweep away sex as a barrier against suffrage. .

Of a Women's Council.

The main objection to the idea of a women's advisory Council is that there are no women's questions, though there is a woman's point of view.

Of Indirect Representation for Women.

It is absurd to say that working women are adequately represented by the men who are their rivals in industry.

Of Women's Sphere.

When men reproach women with going out of their homes, they should remember that it was under men's legislation that they were forced to do so.

Of Ruling the World.

The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, but it is the hand that drops the ballot-paper into the box that rules the State.

Of 'The same terms as Men.'

Those who do not like the Conciliation Bill should remember that man's foolish Franchise arrangements are not the women's fault.

Of a Democratic Franchise.

A Democratic Franchise is not a numerical Franchise, but one which represents all classes.

Of the Basis of Government

Governments rest not upon force, but upon the consent of the governed.

Of Amending the Bill

If Messrs. Lloyd George and Churchill can find a way of broadening our Bill without narrowing its chances, so much the better.

Of Government by Majority.

We men have our elected representatives in the House of Commons, and they have decided by a bigger majority than can be obtained against the veto of the House of Lords, in favour of the Bill, and we are demanding that it shall be carried into law.

Of Narrow Interests.

The more women care about other things than the vote, the more they want the vote to get these things.

Of Neglecting Home.

Apparently a woman is not neglecting her home when she is dragging half-drunken men out of public-houses to vote, but she does neglect it if she votes herself

Of Staying at Home.

Fortunate women will not go back to their happy homes till they know that their less fortunate sisters have homes fit to live in.

Of Work.

In so far as any woman proves herself to be a good worker, she is working for Women's Suffrage.

Of Lord Cromer.

Lord Cromer knows that he has come too late; he should have left Egypt ten years ago. [4]

Of Votes and Wages.

Women's wages are largely fixed by custom, and may be slowly raised without an economic revolution by the aid of the vote.

Of Rights

The only right in the world is the right of men and women to do their duty.

Of Political Abilities.

If eight women ministers and ex-ministers engaged in a. conference holding twenty-one meetings, yet coming to no earthly conclusion, what kind of criticism would they have received from the opposite sex?

Of Women's Unpracticality.

Women are less fired than men, by immediate profit, and are apt for wide generalisations and ideals, without which politics is a shabby game of beggar-my-neighbour.

Of Intelligence.

Some people think that the less intelligence a woman has, the easier it is to convince her that her husband is intelligent, and that if a woman thinks at all, there will be trouble in the family.

Of Effeminacy.

Effeminacy is a bad imitation by men of women's natural qualities, best curable by being brought face to face with the real thing. Politics would be less effeminate if they were more feminine.

Of Suffrage and Work for Party.

Do not allow yourselves to be used in this way by men who are at the same time denying to you the most elementary sign and symbol of citizenship.

Of Chivalry.

What kind of chivalry is that which requires women to enter the industrial arena while denying them the weapons which men find necessary?

Of Depression.

It is a sin for a Suffragist to be depressed.

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[1] In 1867 Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881, leader of House of Commons from 1858 and responsible for reforming the parliament) introduced a bill that would extend the franchise to male adult householder living in a borough constituency and to male lodgers who paid £10 for their board. The Reform Bill of 1867 thus gave the vote to 1.5 million more men. In 1910 the Conciliation Bill was proposed in order to extend the vote to women. It was not passed, and spurred renewed unrest and militant opposition.

[2] Sir Edward Grey (1862-1933), member of Liberal Party and Foreign secretary from 1905-

1916 under Campbell-Bannerman and Herbert Asquith.

[3] Arthur James Balfour, Conservative. Prime Minister 1902-5, fierce opponent to Irish home-rule (Bloody Balfour), Foreign secr. Under Lloyd George (see below), and responsible for the statement in 1917 declaring government support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, which led to the founding of Israel in 1948. Lloyd George, Liberal. Foreign secretary under Asquith 1905-16, and ousting Asquith from office in 1916. Prime minister from 1916 to 1922. Winston Churchill was at this point (1910) Home secretary.

[4] Lord Cromer (the Earl of Cromer) was responsible for consolidating absolute rule in Cairo. He was the British Agent in Egypt from 1883 and ruled until he returned to England in 1907.

from: *The Englishwoman* vol. V no. 14, 1909, pp. 123-132.

THE VOTERS' PETITION FOR WOMEN'S FRANCHISE

I

THE extraordinary position of British women during a general election must be obvious to anyone who considers the matter with an unbiassed mind. On the one hand, our services are demanded not only to bring reluctant voters to the polling-booth, but also to explain the point of view of the party for which we are working. On the other hand, many candidates who avail themselves eagerly enough of our influence refuse to listen to our claim for direct representation. Women, it seems, may employ their best energies in the interests of men, but not for their own ends. Their rights and aspirations must take a subordinate place, to be considered at men's good will and pleasure, and domestic reforms that cry out for immediate legislation, and have the approval of men and women of all shades of opinion, are postponed in favour of some Bill that involves what is dearest to the heart of the average politician—a good party fight.

To-day, more than ever before, appeals are being made to women to come to the rescue of their country. The press of all parties urges upon women the duty of

exerting themselves to the utmost to further the success of party views ; our time, our energy, our money are claimed on public grounds. This must mean one of two things: either that women are capable of forming a sound judgment on public affairs, or that, though they are incapable of doing so, men are willing to, pretend, for a time, that they are capable, and so use them as puppets for their own ends. If women are capable of understanding what they are urged to press upon electors, the last shred of reason for refusing them a vote disappears, for they already, as taxpayers and as citizens responsible before the law, fulfil every obligation which carries with it the right to vote. Nor will the plea avail that it is contrary to the interests of society for women to court publicity, for it is at the very crisis of publicity, when every eye is fixed on the polling-booth, that they are dragged forward and thrust into the hustle, and no means of influence they possess is scouted, from the Duchess of Devonshire's celebrated kiss, [1] to the persuasive appeal of the candidate's affectionate wife. Is it fair, is it playing the game, is it decent, for men who have had no hesitation in profiting by a woman's labours to turn round, as soon as they have gained their seats, and say that she unsexes herself by showing interest in public affairs; that her nature unfits her for any sphere but home; that she loses every title to chivalrous respect if she claims a voice in politics ? One thing at least is clear. It is the obvious duty of every anti-suffragist candidate to proclaim, at the outset, his determination to

discourage any appearance of women before the electors on his behalf ; he must openly object to their canvassing or speaking for him, or wearing his colours; for if he accepts aid, he is guilty by his own admission of helping to degrade an entire sex—including, in almost every case, his female relatives and friends—for the sake of his own personal, advantage.

Successful candidates have been very polite in acknowledging the service of the ladies. Even Mr. Asquith, the arch-enemy of our cause, condescends to tender his thanks to the women Liberals. ‘I must not,’ he said, in his speech after election, ‘except the ladies from my thanks; for whatever may be going on in the streets, I have never been at an election in Fife where women have shown the same amount of interest and enthusiasm. At every meeting they have been to the fore, and their keenness and applause, their intelligent appreciation of what was going on, and their healthy influence on the masculine members of the community, have had not a little to do with keeping things in a satisfactory condition.’

Why is it that the intelligence and enthusiasm that Mr. Asquith so much appreciated may not be exercised in the actual ballot? How long will women be content to be put off with pretty speeches; to do the dirty work for men while they are refused equality of citizenship? At every election-time we are told by either party, ‘You must wait patiently. The country is in great danger. Serious issues are at stake. Put aside your own grievances, and work for us, and all in due

time you will reap your reward.’ But the election once over all mention of the promised test is dropped, to be brought forward once more as a bait at the next.

Fortunately for the cause of women's suffrage a large number of women have already decided to be dupes no longer, but to work for their own hand. They have made up their minds that the only way to obtain the suffrage is to toil for that, and that alone; to show the electors that they really desire the vote and mean to get it.

Our real work is to convince the electors of what our cause means and of its justice. There is no such good opportunity for this as at elections, when all thoughts are turned to politics, and when every converted elector can bring pressure to bear on the candidate he supports. We must capture the vote-holders, and through them the attention of the candidate. And we must go further than the candidates: Parliament in its corporate capacity must be brought to understand that the enfranchisement of women is practical politics. Petitions from the unfortunate class who are non-voters and can do nothing with Parliament except petition it ought, one would think, to receive some attention on that very account. But this is not the case; experience has shown us the uselessness of making this sort of appeal ourselves; it is like speaking through a telephone with no one at the other end. But voters are on a very different footing; you can't cut them off. Members of Parliament are bound to lay every petition from their constituents before the House, and a goodly number

of petitions in favour of Women's Franchise would make it impossible for any Government to shunt the question.

Influenced by these considerations. the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies determined to take advantage of the elections to obtain signatures to a voters' petition in favour of women's suffrage, and a large army of volunteers was enrolled for this purpose. The workers were of all ages—from the white−haired pioneer of the feminist movement, who had spent her life in promoting the interests of her sex, to the girl in her teens just fresh from school. Among them were to be found mothers old and young, graduates, professional women, women of independent means, and working women of every kind. Young and old, strong and fragile alike, stood patiently at the entrances to the polling stations, for hours at a time, through rain and wind, asking electors to sign a petition in favour of the enfranchisement of their sex.

It was amusing through the long day to watch the procession of voters, the Masters of England, as they came to the polling stations—the healthy, the infirm, the defective, the blind; the navy, the merchant, the shop-keeper, the publican, the professional man, the retired officer. Some appeared to be in a desperate hurry, as if they grudged the few minutes claimed by the State. Others hung about before and after, discussing the chances of the election or indulging in chaff. Many of the voters were brought by smart lady canvassers; many were accompanied by their wives.

Among the throng of electors were men in bath-chairs taken charge of by policemen, and mere boys—probably for the most part youthful lodgers. All were entertaining to watch, and almost all did their best to pretend not to see the women waiting with the petition. Regretfully we must state that a considerable number of London voters came to the polling stations the worse for liquor. This was true not only of what are usually known as the ‘working classes,’ but of a number of well-dressed men who should have been gentlemen. The fact that a certain proportion of the electors poll when not fully responsible for their actions emphasises the absurdity of the contention that women must not be allowed to vote because they are not capable of exercising that duty with sound judgment. On the whole, our experience at the stations did not tend to increase our respect for the British elector, though we received much kindness and courtesy from individuals. It is impossible to speak too highly of the kindness, consideration, and sympathy shown us by the police. Their interest in our proceedings was marked; and they had much encouraging praise for the endurance with which we stuck to our posts through all weathers. The election agents of both parties also treated us, as a rule, with perfect civility.

Owing to the outrage on the polling-booths at Bermondsey by members of the militant section in the late by-election, no women were allowed by the police inside schoolyards (the polling stations are mostly at schools), and there is no doubt this went far

to spoil our chance of getting signatures. The business was so very public, and many an elector of goodwill felt shy and disinclined to sign a woman's petition in such a conspicuous manner. That this is true was proved by the fact that at town halls in a big thoroughfare far fewer signatures were obtained than in the by-streets; and at one school, where in the evening the suffragists were allowed to stand inside the yard, one worker obtained ninety-nine signatures in an hour, instead of about fifteen or twenty at most.

The early hour at which the polls open (eight o'clock) was a trial on a winter's morning. If a worker living in Kensington had to be at Bromley or Norwood by 8 am. a very early breakfast was necessitated, and tales of porridge made over-night and hastily warmed over a lamp before fires were lit in the morning have not been uncommon.

It was not always a cheering reception that the cold and nervous suffragist received from the early voter. At one station the first man to poll arrived in a fine motorcar, wrapped in furs. He was timidly approached with the usual request, ‘Sign your petition? I'll be d—d first. I hate all women,’ and more loud swearing. ‘Never mind, miss,’ said a sympathetic policeman, ‘the gentlemen haven't begun to poll yet.’

The following are a few samples of remarks made to and about our workers in the London constituencies:—

Liberal Agent. —‘You'll excuse my saying so,

miss; but you've made this afternoon very pleasant to us. I'm sure you must be very cold in all this rain and wet. I'm just going round the corner to get a drop of something hot myself, and if you'll allow me I'll be pleased to bring you something.'

Liberal Agent.—'I know these suffragettes. Nine-tenths of 'em old, and nine-tenths of 'em ugly. The whole lot of 'em unmarried, and nine-tenths couldn't get married if they tried. Yah!'

At Westminster a strange old gentleman, half Socialist, half street-preacher, fired off an amazing indictment:—'Give *you* votes? Think of the soldiers and sailors and policemen and firemen and hall-porters in uniform who vote—(implied, a monstrous regiment)—and you would add to them *the women!* The women, who produce all the blind, deaf-and-dumb, hump-backed, knock-kneed, swivel -eyed children; and fill all the asylums and workhouses! Vote, indeed!'

More than one person objected to women having the vote because thereby their wages would be raised, 'and there's not enough money to go round among the men, as it is.' To this objector (he hailed from Battersea) the suffragist rather meekly suggested, 'You see, we've got to live; and we aren't all married.' 'I know it!' he exclaimed, tragically. 'I know you've got to live; that's the dreadful part of it. Perhaps I might as well sign your petition.'

Another elector objected to signing on the same score that our wages would be raised. He felt rather sore about it, he said, because a woman had got his

job. It was suggested to him that probably she was paid much less than he for the same work; he knew it, and that appeared to be his only consolation. The idea that if her wages were the same as his he would probably not have lost his post came as a new suggestion. He signed the petition.

A man in Knightsbridge, who was in the act of signing, suddenly gave back the pencil ‘Oh, I forgot! All my relations are “antis.”’

Allied with him was the young gentleman in North London, who, when asked to sign, raised his hat politely. ‘Ah, no, I really cannot! My young lady friends would laugh at me.’ The girl with the petition took his measure. ‘That's perfect nonsense,’ she said severely. ‘No one would take the trouble to laugh at you. You must sign the petition at once.’ And he did.

At Poplar a departing voter was pursued with the stereotyped question, ‘Will you sign our woman's suffrage petition?’ and, turning, disclosed the visage of a negro, showing his teeth in a patronising grin. To the wet and weary canvasser this seemed the last straw. It brings the full humiliation of the women's position home to one to think that the alien man, albeit scarcely removed from the savage are withheld from the best of our sex.

Then there was the old man who, after long discourse about the twenty years he had been a Chelsea voter, was pleased to sign our document, and ended up by saying, when asked for his voting number, ‘’Twas mostly spite, but they had not put him on the register this year.’

From a country town in one of the Home Counties comes a most encouraging story. At the close of a long, weary day of standing in snow and biting wind, a lady was approached by the Chief Constable of the Borough. ‘I'm glad to see you here, miss,’ he said. ‘You have done us all good. I have never seen the men so orderly at the polling stations before.’ In the same town the local paper, in its account of the election, said the ladies outside the polling-booths were an example to all for their patience and endurance, and had gained much sympathy.

At Ampthill an old man, George Berry, read the petition over and said he was glad to sign it, because he had signed a similar petition fifty years before in Manchester.

At Barnsley in Yorkshire, the suffragists had one of the most encouraging experiences of the whole campaign. The day before the election, the Liberals, without any suggestion from the women, put up a huge poster with ‘Vote for Walton and the Enfranchisement of Women’[2] on it. Not long afterwards the Conservatives followed their example, and a rival poster appeared with ‘Vote for Groser and the Enfranchisement of Women.’ Throughout the Barnsley district there was great enthusiasm for our cause and large numbers of voters signed the petition. At Royston some miners took charge of the petition while the women workers went away to obtain some much-needed refreshment, and the police gave all the help they could. When the poll was declared, the number of signatures obtained for our petition—

7560—was put up in the local newspaper office together with the results of the poll.

In one or two parts of London ‘antis’ appeared at the polls; ladies engaged in jotting down they didn't quite know what. It was an awkward situation. According to them we behaved shamefully in speaking to the electors, so they had to be silent. But they obligingly explained they were putting down a mark for every one who wouldn't sign our petition when asked. Upon that our worker moved off; the next polling station she knew was for the moment ‘unmanned,’ and we left the ‘antis’ in possession.

On returning an hour after, she was greeted with, ‘Where *have* you been? I have been looking for you everywhere—I can't speak to them myself, and there is nothing to write down.’ The lady was chaffed a little on the futility of her task, and asked how she could do such a wicked thing as to congregate at the polling- booths when she ought to be at home ? She replied with passionate heat, ‘We hate it—it's all your fault.’ Well, we hated it too, but we stuck to it, and made no suggestions of ‘pairing.’ I suppose there were not many ‘anti’ women to be found to undertake this dreary duty, so men were placed at certain stations to say, ‘Are you against Woman's Suffrage?’ One of these confided to our petition-holder that he was really in favor of Women's Suffrage, and would like to sign for us, but he was put there by his employer, and couldn't refuse the job.

Innumerable excuses were given by electors for refusing to sign our petition, but certain reasons

recurred incessantly in all parts of London, more particularly that based on the conduct of the militant-suffragists. A list of reasons against signing the petition was drawn up by one of our workers and may prove amusing.

Why they wouldn't sign our Petition:—

Because, he hadn't time.
Because he didn't approve of our objects.
Because he ‘had an old woman at home.’
Because he ‘had four at home.’
Because he was afraid his wife might get a vote.
Because his wife might not get one.
Because it might lead to adult suffrage.
Because we were not asking for adult suffrage.
Because he wished we were all drowned.
Because he wished we were all burnt.
Because it would add to the heavy expense of elections.
Because we should get the vote without any such petition.
Because women ought all to be married.
Because women were entering men's professions.
Because if he died his wife might get a vote.
Because he was too drunk to hold a pencil.
Because many other things were urgent.
Because we oppose the Liberal.
Because he had just signed an anti□vivisection petition.
Because we ought to stay at home.

Because women would next sit in Parliament.
Because he objected to militant tactics.
Because women were too good to mix in politics.
Because we should add to the Conservative vote.
Because we should add to the Liberal vote.
Because it was against his principles to sign any document.
Because his friends might not like it.
Because we hadn't asked him.
Because we had asked him.
Because none of the great European Powers had adopted it.
Because he couldn't do it in public.
Because it wouldn't do him any good.
Because he had a wife already.
Because he couldn't understand.
Because women were inferior beings.
Because Adam was made to rule over woman.
Because we couldn't fight

A common reason alleged both in favour of and against women's suffrage, was that it would lead to a strict measure of temperance reform. In this connection, the opinion confided to us by a chairwoman is worth noting. Weary of the drudgery of ‘keeping’ her husband for six months on end and doing the work of the house as well, Mrs. S—went out for a little relaxation; This is how she related her experience :—

‘I'd put back the dinner and run out with the baby to see the procession; where come back, Bill was dishin’ it up hisself in a narsty timper. “That's your

woman's suffrage," he says, "men gettin' their own Sunday dinner." "No 'taint," I says, "it's more than that." Last night I met 'im comin' down the street with some of 'is companions, a very small 'at on the side of 'is 'ead, a-doing the Christy Minstrel. [3] "Woman's suffrage," I said, "will be more than 'arf the public-'ouses shut," I said, "and that will stop your gallop, my man."

[At time of going to press the full number of signatures to the petition is not known. This article will therefore be concluded in the April number. - ED]

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[1] Georgiana, the 5th Duchess of Devonshire, 1757 - 1806. The Duchess of Devonshire was the first woman to campaign for a candidate in an election. This was in the Westminster election in 1784 (the candidate was Charles Fox). The reference to the duchess' kiss hints at her alleged use of the kiss to win votes.

[2] Alfred A. Walton (1816-1883), working-class activist and liberal reformer who tried to unify the different sections of British Radicalism and to secure the representation of labour in parliament.

[3] Christy Minstrels is the name for a black-faced entertaining group, originally founded by Edwin P. Christy in 1846 in the U.S. Christy himself retired in the mid-50s, and his group disbanded soon after. E. P. Christy was well-known as a ballad singer. In 1857, however, J. W. Raynor and Earl Pierce founded a new establishment, and opened as Raynor & Pierce's Christy Minstrels in London that year. These shows enjoyed considerable popularity, and existed into the first decade of the twentieth century. As this genre spread, the name Christy Minstrels came to denote any black faced minstrel show, and this is how it is by the woman in the text.

from: *The Englishwoman* Vol. V. no. 15 April 1910. pp.243-6.

THE VOTERS' PETITION F0R

WOMEN'S FRANCHISE

II

IN our last issue we published an article on the Voters' Petition, which was organized during the General Election by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. The signatures to this petition number over 800,000, and were gathered during the election from between two and three hundred constituencies in Great Britain. As we explained in our former article, the petition was confined to men voters, and in each case the voter's number was appended to the name and address of the signatory, thus showing conclusively that electors, and electors only, are the petitioners on this occasion. The number of signatures obtained is most encouraging, especially considering the great difficulties under which they were collected and the shortness of the time at the disposal of workers. The Anti- Suffragists boasted loudly of their petition of 254,000 signatures, gathered together during many months of hard labour. Suffragists had only the fortnight or so of the elections in which to obtain these 800,000 names.

In cases where a Committee Room was opened in constituencies a short time before the election, voters were invited to come in and sign the petition, the name and address given being in each case verified by a reference to the Parliamentary Register. Other names were obtained for the petition at the same time by house- to-house canvassing. By far the greater number were, however, secured at the polling-stations as already described. It is believed that this petition is the first that has ever been obtained at the polls in like manner, and it speaks volumes for the enthusiasm inspired by our cause that women of the educated class should have come forward in hundreds to undertake the unpleasant and humiliating task of standing in the gutter, craving justice from learned and ignorant alike. Those who undertook this duty were one and all women who, in the struggle for liberty, are careful to

obey the law in every particular, and to whom unconstitutional methods of propaganda are forbidden by their principles. Officials and organizers of the Societies were of course assisting, but the majority of workers were ordinary members of a local branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

The fact that no suffragist was allowed under cover meant a heavy loss to the petition. As we pointed out in our last number, the publicity of the occasion made many of the voters ashamed to sign when they might readily have done so in greater privacy. Also the wind and rain, which prevailed during the greater part of the election time, rendered electors less inclined to stop and listen to arguments. It cannot be claimed, therefore, that all who declined to sign, or persistently refused to recognize the existence of the canvasser, were opponents of women's suffrage. The genuine hurry of the electors, too, necessarily militated against success. Most of them had to poll on their way to or from work—often at some distance from home—or during their dinner hour, and were naturally impatient of any delay. In the rush, many came and went without having their attention called to the petition at all, while others signed in such haste that their signatures were illegible.

The genuine character of the voters' petition for Women's Suffrage is shown by the open way in which signatures were obtained. There were none of those attempts at confusing the real issues which are so dear to the heart of the 'Anti's.' The following paragraph from the *Sussex Daily News* of February 17th shows what care was taken by collectors of signatures for our petitions to ensure that every signature was genuine:—

> Doubtless in your part of the world the non-militant Suffragettes were pretty busy during the elections collecting voters' signatures for their petition. They could not organize the collection thoroughly everywhere, of course. Moreover, unlike many people who get up petitions, they refused to accept signatures which were not absolutely genuine. I myself, for example (in order to see what would happen), endeavoured to sign the petition in two constituencies in which I do not reside, was cross-examined, and then ruthlessly turned away. Nevertheless, the number of actual electors' signatures obtained, I hear, is at least a quarter of a million. Those politicians who believe there was not much electoral opinion behind the Suffrage movement will have to modify their views.

Some disappointment is felt that it has not been possible to arrange for the presentation of all petitions in the Open House. A petition may be presented in two ways. It can either be 'presented in Open House' or 'laid upon the table.' In the first case, the member presenting the petition, standing up, says, 'I present a petition from the electors of So-and-So in favour of the enfranchisement of women.' In the second, the member in charge of the petition places it in a basket behind the Speaker's chair. This, however, does not mean that no attention is called to the document. Two separate records of every petition presented to the House appear in the Parliamentary Papers. Every day a blue paper is published, and a copy sent to every Member of Parliament, giving the agenda for the day in the Commons, and also some information about the business of the previous day, including mention of all petitions presented in the House. The blue papers during March contain, therefore, daily reference to the Great Voters' Petition. At the time of writing the petitions are being presented in the House at the rate of ten to twenty a day. Periodically a White Paper appears, dealing with the petitions presented to Parliament. This paper mentions all petitions presented since its last issue, stating the number of signatures and other particulars. Every petition presented to Parliament undergoes a strict, scrutiny by a Select Committee on Public Petitions, with a view to making sure that there are not, among the signatures, several in the same handwriting. It is well known that the Anti-Suffrage Petition came badly through this Ordeal.

Considering all things, 800,000 signatures is a number to be very proud of. So many of the enfranchised have never pressed, by petition or otherwise, for the enfranchisement of others, and it will be impossible to urge again that the question of women's suffrage is one to which the electorate are entirely indifferent Another encouraging sign was the sympathy shown at suffrage meetings during the elections, resolutions being carried at thousands crowded and enthusiastic gatherings.

We regret that the London Press has so far ignored the petition and the lesson it bears. The Provincial Press, however, has adopted a more sympathetic attitude, and all over the country notices of the presentation of the local petitions to Parliament by the member are appearing from day to day. Judging from the number of signatures there seems to be most enthusiasm for

women's enfranchisement in the North: Manchester, North of England Society, for instance, securing as many as 47,853 signatures, Glasgow 25,237, as against 29,000 obtained by the London Society.

This is probably because the economic independence of women is better established in the important manufacturing centres than in any other part of the country. Women's claim for equal citizenship does not seem so unnatural to men who are accustomed to regard them as breadwinners, capable of maintaining themselves.

It is unquestionable that in the event of any Reform Bill being brought in by the Government, the demand for the inclusion of women will at least receive careful consideration. Over 340 members of the present House have declared themselves in favour of the enfranchisement and the suffrage societies are endeavouring to win over those who hold indefinite opinions.

A clear proof that the demand for the women's enfranchisement is gaining more and more support in the country is furnished by the extraordinarily rapid increase in the number of suffrage societies of all kinds. Within a year fifty new societies have been added to the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies alone.

No. 20

A WORD TO WORKING WOMEN

You are constantly told that if you get the Vote your wages will rise.

Is this true? **NO!**

How do men raise their wages?

By Trades Unions.

What women's wages have risen most in the last fifty years ?

Those of women in Domestic Service, the largest women's industry.

Their wages are higher now than they have ever been.

Counting their board, and lodging, and washing, a girl of 15 begins at about 10/- to 12/- a week and can rise to 25 or 23/- a week by the time she is 30 or 35. experienced nurses, cooks and housekeepers get far more.

Have they a Vote ? **NO!**

Have they even a Union? **NO!**

Why have their wages risen?

Because this is work that women can do better than men, and because more skilled servants are **demanded** than can be **supplied.**

It is the same with all work.

It is short **supply**, and large **demand** which raises wages, not the Vote.

Agricultural labourers**,** who have Votes, are working in parts of the country at lower wages than their own daughters who have no Votes.

Unemployed workmen**,** who have Votes, are tramping the country without any wages at all.

Do not be led away by humbug and false promises—but

Think for yourself!

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