

OPINIONS OF WOMEN ON WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE.

MISS COBBE*

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

So far from the truth is the reiterated statement of certain honourable M.P.s that "women do not desire the franchise," That in my large experience I have scarcely ever known a woman possessed of ordinary common sense, and who had lived 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, 1878.[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 WOODHOUSE

(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.