

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?

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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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