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Appendix A

ON MARRIAGE (1832–33?)

by Harriet Taylor

Holograph MS, Mill-Taylor Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics. Untitled and unsigned, but in Taylor's hand. Dated on physical evidence. Not published. For a description of the MS, and comment on it, see xxx-xxxi and lviii-lix above.

if i could be providence to the world for a time, for the express purpose of raising the condition of women, I should come to you to know the *means*—the *purpose* would be to remove all interference with affection, or with any thing which is, or which even might be supposed to be, demonstrative of affection—In the present state of womens minds, perfectly uneducated, and with whatever of timidity and dependance is natural to them increased a thousand fold by their habits of utter dependance, it would probably be mischievous to remove at once all restraints, they would buy themselves protectors at a dearer cost than even at present—but without raising their natures at all, it seems to me, that once give women the desire to raise their social condition, and they have a power which in the present state of civilization and of mens characters, might be made of tremendous effect. Whether nature made a difference in the nature of men and women or not, it seems now that all men, with the exception of a few lofty minded, are sensualists more or less—Women on the contrary are quite exempt from this trait, however it may appear otherwise in the cases of some—It seems strange that it should be so, unless it was meant to be a source of power in demi-civilized states such as the present—or it may not be so—it may be only that the habits of freedom and low indulgence in which boys grow up and the contrary notion of what is called purity in girls may have produced the appearance of different natures in the two sexes—As certain it is that there is equality in nothing, now—all the pleasures such as there are being mens, and all the disagreables and pains being womens, as that every pleasure would be infinitely heightened both in kind and degree by the perfect equality of the sexes. Women are educated for one single object, to gain their living by marrying—(some poor souls get it without the churchgoing in the same way—they do not seem to me a bit worse than their honoured sisters)—To be married is the object of their existence and that object being gained they do really cease to exist as to anything

worth calling life or any useful purpose. One observes very few marriages where there is any real sympathy or enjoyment of companionship between the parties—The woman knows what her power is, and gains by it what she has been taught to consider "proper" to her state—The woman who would gain power by such means is unfit for power, still they *do* use this power for paltry advantages and I am astonished it has never occurred to them to gain some large purpose: but their minds are degenerated by habits of dependance—I should think that 500 years hence none of the follies of their ancestors will so excite wonder and contempt as the fact of legislative restraint as to matters of feeling—or rather in the expressions of feeling. When once the law undertakes to say which demonstration of feeling shall be given to which, it seems quite inconsistent not to legislate for *all,* and say how many shall be seen, how many heard, and what kind and degree of feeling allows of shaking hands—The Turks is the only consistent mode—

I have no doubt that when the whole community is really educated, tho' the present laws of marriage were to continue they would be perfectly disregarded, because no one would marry—The widest and perhaps the quickest means to do away with its evils is to be found in promoting education—as it is the means of all good—but meanwhile it is hard that those who suffer most from its evils and who are always the best people, should be left without remedy. Would not the best plan be divorce which could be attained by *any, without any reason assigned,* and at small expence, but which could only be finally pronounced after a long period? not *less* time than two years should elapse between suing for divorce and permission to contract again—but what the decision will be *must* be certain at the moment of asking for it—*unless* during that time the suit should be withdrawn—

(I feel like a lawyer in talking of it only! O how absurd and little it all is!)—In the present system of habits and opinions, girls enter into what is called a contract perfectly ignorant of the conditions of it, and that they should be so is considered absolutely essential to their fitness for it!—But after all the one argument of the matter which I think might be said so as to strike both high and low natures is—Who would wish to have the person without the inclination? Whoever would take the benefit of a law of divorce must be those whose inclination is to separate and who on earth would wish another to remain with them against their inclination? I should think no one—people sophisticate about the matter now and will not believe that one "*really would wish to go.*" Suppose instead of calling it a "law of divorce" it were to be called "Proof of affection"—They would like it better then—

At this present time, in this state of civilization, what evil would be caused by, first placing women on the most entire equality with men, as to all rights and privileges, civil and political, and then doing away with all laws whatever relating to marriage? Then if a woman had children she must take the charge of them, women would not then have children without considering how to maintain them. Women would have no more reason to barter person for bread, or for any thing else, than men have—public offices being open to them alike, all occupations would be divided between the sexes in their natural arrangement. Fathers would provide for their daughters in the same manner as for their sons—

All the difficulties about divorce seem to be in the consideration for the children—but on this plan it would be the women's *interest* not to have children—*now* it is thought to be the womans interest to have children as so many *ties* to the man who feeds her.

Sex in its true and finest meaning, seems to be the way in which is manifested all that is highest best and beautiful in the nature of human beings—none but poets have approached to the perception of the beauty of the material world—still less of the spiritual—and there never yet existed a poet, except by the inspiration of that feeling which is the perception of beauty in all forms and by all the means which are given us, as well as by *sight.* Are we not born with the *five* senses, merely as a foundation for others which we may make by them—and who extends and refines those material senses to the highest—into infinity—best fulfils the end of creation—That is only saying—*Who enjoys most, is most virtuous*—It is for *you*—the most worthy to be the apostle of all loftiest virtue—to teach, such as may be taught, that the higher the *kind* of enjoyment, the *greater* the *degree*—perhaps there is but one class to whom this *can* be *taught*—the poetic nature struggling with superstition: *you* are fitted to be the saviour of such—

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Appendix B

PAPERS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS (1847–50?)

by Harriet Taylor and J.S. Mill

Holograph MSS, Mill-Taylor Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics. The title of the first fragment is in Harriet Taylor's hand at the end; those of the second, third, and fourth fragments are in Mill's hand, that of the fifth has been supplied. The MSS are in Mill's hand (except for a few corrections in pencil by Taylor in the first and fourth, indicated in variant notes, and in repeated parts of the second); however, her title for the first, our knowledge of their working habits, and the apparent status of these fragments as preparatory for her "Enfranchisement of Women" suggest that they should be attributed jointly, if not solely to her. For descriptions of the MSS, and comment on them, see lxxii-lxxiv above.

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1.

Rights Of Women—and Especially With Regard To The Elective Franchise—By A Woman—Dedicated To Queen Victoria

a great number of progressive changes are constantly going forward in human affairs and ideas, which escape the notice of unreflecting people, because of their slowness. As each successive, step requires a whole generation or several generations to effect it, and is then only one step, things in reality very changeable remain a sufficient length of time without perceptible progress, to be, by the majority of cotemporaries, mistaken for things permanent and immovable—and it is only by looking at a long series of generations that they are seen to be, in reality, always moving, and always in the same direction.

This is remarkably the case with respect to Privileges and Exclusions. In every generation, the bulk of mankind imagine that all privileges and all exclusions, then existing by law or usage, are natural, fit and proper, even necessary: [a]except[a] such as happen to be, just at that time, in the very crisis of the struggle which puts an end to them—which rarely happens to more than one set or class of them at a time. But when we take all history into view we find that its whole course is a getting rid of privileges and exclusions. Anciently all was privilege and exclusion. There was not a person or class of persons who had not a line marked round them which they were in no case permitted to overstep. There was not a function or operation in society, sufficiently desirable to be thought worth guarding, which was not rigidly confined to a circumscribed class or body of persons. Some functions were confined to particular families—some to particular guilds, corporations, or societies. Whoever has any knowledge of ancient times knows that privilege and exclusion was not only the general rule in point of fact, but [b]that nothing else was in[b] accordance with the ideas of mankind. Whenever any action or occupation, private or public, was thought of, it seemed natural to everybody that there should be some persons who were allowed to do the action or follow the occupation, and others who were not. People never thought of inquiring why it should be so, or what there was in the nature of the particular case to require it. People seldom ask reasons for what is in accordance with the whole spirit of what they see round them, but only for what jars with that spirit. Even bodily freedom, the right to use one’s own labour for one’s own benefit, was once a

privilege, and the great majority of mankind were excluded from it. This seems to the people of our day something monstrously unnatural, to people of former days it seemed the most natural of all things. It was very gradually that this was got rid of, through many intermediate stages, of serfage, villenage &c. Where this did not exist, the system of castes did: and that appears profoundly unnatural to us, but so profoundly natural to Hindoos that they have not yet given it up. Among the early Romans fathers had the power of putting their sons to death, or selling them into slavery: this seemed perfectly natural to them, most unnatural to us. To hold land, in property, was throughout feudal Europe the privilege of a noble. This was only gradually relaxed and in Germany there is still much land which can only be so held. Up to the Reformation to teach religion was the exclusive privilege of a male separate class, even to read the Bible was a privilege: Those who lived at the time of the Reformation and who adopted it, ceased to recognize this case of privilege and exclusion, but did not therefore call in question any others. Throughout the Continent political office and military rank were exclusive privileges of a hereditary noblesse, till the French revolution destroyed these privileges. Trades and occupations have almost everywhere ceased to be privileges. Thus exclusion after exclusion has disappeared, until privilege has ceased to be the general rule, and tends more and more to become the exception: it now no longer seems a matter of course that there should be an exclusion, but it is conceded that freedom and admissibility ought to prevail, wherever there is not some special reason for limiting them. Whoever considers how immense a change this is from primitive opinions and feelings, will think it nothing less than the very most important advance which has hitherto been made in human society. It is nothing less than the beginning of the reign of justice, or the first dawn of it at least. It is the introduction of the principle that distinctions, and inequalities of rights, are not good things in themselves, and that none ought to exist for which there is not a special justification, grounded on the greatest good of the whole community, privileged and excluded taken together.

Considering how slowly this change has taken place and how very recent is its date, it would be surprising if many exclusions did not still exist, by no means fitted to stand the test which until lately no one ever thought of applying to them. The fact that any particular exclusion exists, and has existed hitherto, is in such a case no presumption whatever that it ought to exist. We may rather surmise that it is probably a remaining relic of that past state of things, in which privilege and exclusion were the general rule. That the opinions of mankind have not yet put an end to it is not even a presumption that they ought not, or that they will not hereafter do so.

We propose to examine how far this may be the case with one of the principal remaining cases of privilege, the privilege of sex: and to consider whether the civil and political disabilities of women have any better foundation in justice or the interest of society than any of the other exclusions which have successively disappeared.[*]

In the first place it must be observed that the disabilities of women are exactly of the class which modern times most pride themselves on getting rid of—disabilities by birth. It is the boast of England that if some persons are privileged by birth, at least none are disqualified by it—that anybody may rise to be a peer, or a member of parliament, or a minister—that the path to distinction is not closed to the humblest. But it *is* closed irrevocably to women. A woman is born disqualified, and cannot by any exertion get rid of her disabilities. This makes her case an entirely peculiar one in modern Europe. It is like that of the negro in America, and worse than that of the roturier formerly in Europe, for *he* might receive or perhaps buy a patent of nobility. Women's disqualifications are the only indelible ones.

It is also a peculiarity in the case, that the persons disqualified are of the same race, the same blood, the same parents, as the privileged, and have even been brought up and educated along with them. There are none of the excuses grounded on their belonging to a different class in society. The excluded, have the same advantages of breeding and social culture, as the admitted, and have or might have the same educational advantages of all sorts.

It is necessary to protest first of all against a mode of thought on the subject of political exclusions which though less common than it once was is still very common, viz. that a prohibition, an exclusion, a disability, is not an evil or a grievance in itself. This is the opinion of many grave, dignified people, who think that by uttering it they are shewing themselves to be sound, sage, and rational, superior to nonsense and sentimentality. Where is the grievance, they say, of not being allowed to be an elector? What good would it do you to be an elector? Why should you wish to be one? They always require you to point out some distinct loss or suffering, some positive inconvenience which befals you from anything you complain of. This class of persons are enemies of all sorts of liberty. They say to those who complain. Have you not liberty enough? What do you want to do more than you do at present? And what is strange is, that they think this is shewing peculiar good sense and sobriety. It is a doctrine however which they are not fond of applying to their own liberties. Suppose that a law were made forbidding them ever to go beyond the British isles, and that when they complained they were answered thus: Is not

Great Britain large enough for you? Are not England, Scotland and Ireland fine countries? Is there not variety enough in them for any reasonable taste? Why do you want to go to foreign countries? Your proper place is at home. Your duties are there. You have no duties to perform abroad, you are not a sailor, or a merchant, or an ambassador. Stay at home.—Would they not say—"My good friend, it is possible that I may never wish to go abroad at all; or that if I do wish, it may not be convenient: but that does not give you any right to say I *shall* not go abroad. It is an injustice and a hardship to be told that even if I do wish to go I shall not be permitted. I shall probably live all my life in this house, but that is a very different thing from being imprisoned in it."—What these people (who deem their notions wise because they are limited) think there is no harm in cutting off from the life of anybody, except themselves, is precisely what makes the chief value of life. They think you lose nothing as long as you are not prevented from having what you have and doing what you do: now the value of life does not consist in what you have or do, but in what you may have and may do. Freedom, power, and hope, are the charms of existence. If you are outwardly comfortable they think it nothing to cut off hope, to close the region of possibilities, to say that you shall have no carrière, no excitement, that neither chance nor your own exertions shall ever make you anything more or other than you now are. This is essentially the doctrine of people legislating for others. Nobody legislates in this way for himself. When it comes home to them personally all feel that it is precisely the *inconnu,* the indefinite, to be cut off from which would be unbearable. They know that it is not the thing they please to do, but the power of doing *as* they please, that makes to them the difference between contentment and dissatisfaction. Everybody, for himself, values his position just in proportion to the freedom of it: yet the same people think that freedom is the very thing which you may subtract from in the case of others, without doing them any wrong. The grievance they think is merely ideal: but they find in their own case that these ideal grievances are among the most real of any.[*]

"The proper sphere of women is domestic life." Putting aside the word "proper" which begs the question, what does this assertion mean? That no woman is qualified for any other social functions than those of domestic life? This will hardly be asserted, in opposition to the fact not only of the numerous women who have distinguished themselves as writers, but of the great number of eminent sovereigns who have been women—not only in Europe but in the East where they are shut up in zenanas. The assertion therefore can only be supposed to mean that a large proportion of mankind must devote themselves mainly to domestic management, the bringing up of children &c. and that this kind of employment is one particularly suitable for women. Now, taking this for what it is

worth, is it in other cases thought necessary to dedicate a multitude of people from their birth to one exclusive employment lest there should not be people enough, or people qualified enough, to fill it? It is necessary that there should be coalheavers, paviours, ploughmen, sailors, shoemakers, clerks and so forth, but is it therefore necessary that people should be *born* all these things, and not permitted to quit those particular occupations? Still more, is it necessary that because people are clerks or shoemakers they should have no thoughts or opinions beyond clerking or shoemaking? for that is the implication involved in denying them votes.

The occupations of men, however engrossing they may be considered, are not supposed to make them either less interested in the good management of public affairs, or less entitled to exercise their share of influence in those affairs by their votes. It is not supposed that nobody ought to have a vote except idle people. A shoemaker, a carpenter, a farmer have votes. Those who say that a scavenger or a coalheaver should *not* have a vote, do not say so on account of his occupation but on account of his poverty or want of education. Let this ground of exclusion be admitted for one sex just as far as for the other. Whatever class of men are allowed the franchise, let the same class of women have it.

If a woman's habitual employment, whether chosen *for* or *by* her, is the management of a family, she will be no more withdrawn from that occupation by voting in an election than her neighbour will be withdrawn by it from his shop or his office.[†]

The feeling, however, which expresses itself in such phrases as "The proper sphere of women is private life," "Women have nothing to do with politics" and the like, is, I believe, not so much any feeling regarding women as women, as a feeling against any new and unexpected claimants of political rights. In England especially there is always a grudging feeling towards all persons who unexpectedly profess an opinion in politics, or indeed in any matter not concerning their own speciality. There is always a disposition to say, What business is that of yours? When people hear that their tradespeople, or their workpeople, concern themselves about politics, there is almost always a feeling of dislike accompanying the remark. It seems as if people were vexed at finding more persons than they expected in a condition to give them trouble on that subject. Men have the same feeling about their sons unless the sons are mere echoes of their own opinions: and if their wives and daughters claimed the same privilege, their feeling would be that of having an additional disagreeable from a quarter they did not expect.

The truth is, everybody feels that whether in classes or individuals, having an opinion of their own makes them more troublesome and difficult to manage: and everybody is aware, in all cases but his own, that the intrinsic value of the opinion is very seldom much of an equivalent. But this is no more than the ministers of despotic monarchs feel with regard to popular opinion altogether. It is an exact picture of the state of mind of Metternich. It is much more consistent in *him.* He says, or would say, Leave politics to those whose business it is. But these other people say, No; some whose business it is not peculiarly may and ought to have opinions on it, but others, workpeople for instance, and women, ought not. Constitutionalists and Liberals are right against Metternich only on grounds which prove them to be wrong against those whom they would exclude. Metternich is wrong because if none but those who make politics their business, had opinions and could give votes, all the rest would be delivered blindfold into the hands of those professional politicians. This argument is good against excluding anybody, especially any class or kind of persons. It is a very great evil that any portion of the community should be left politically defenceless. To justify it in any case it must be shewn that still greater evils would arise from arming the class with opinions and votes. It may possibly admit of being maintained that this *would* be the result of giving votes to very ignorant or even in some cases to very poor people. But it is impossible to shew that any evils would arise from admitting women of the same social rank as the men who have votes.

Objection, “You would have perpetual domestic discussion.” If people cannot differ in opinion on any important matter and remain capable of living together without quarrelling, there cannot be a more complete condemnation of marriage: for if so, two people cannot live together at all unless one of them is a mere cipher, abdicating all will and opinion into the hands of the other, and marriage can only be fit for tyrants and nobodies.

But the proposition is false. Do not married people live together in perfect harmony although they differ in opinions and even feelings on things which come much nearer home than politics do to most people? Does it not often happen for instance that they hold different opinions in religion? And have they not continually different opinions or wishes on innumerable private matters without quarrelling? People with whose comfort it is incompatible that the person they live with should think differently from them in politics or religion will if they marry at all generally marry a person who has either no opinions or the same sort of opinions with themselves. Besides, by discouraging political opinions in women, you only prevent independent disinterested opinions. In a woman, to have no political opinions, practically means to have the political

opinions which conduce to the pecuniary interest or social vanity of the family. If honest opinions on both sides would make dissension between married people, will there not be dissension between a man who has an opinion and a conscience in politics and a woman who sees what she thinks the interests of the family sacrificed to what seems to her a matter of indifference? except indeed that the man's public spirit is seldom strong enough to hold out long against the woman's opposition, especially if he really cares for her. Now when women and men really live together, and are each other's most intimate associates, (which in the ancient republics they were not) men never can or will be patriotic or public spirited unless women are so too. People cannot long maintain a higher tone of feeling than that of their favourite society. The wife is the incarnate spirit of family selfishness unless she has accustomed herself to cultivate feelings of a larger and more generous kind: while, when she has, her (in general) greater susceptibility of emotion and more delicate conscience makes her the great inspirer of those nobler feelings in the men with whom she habitually associates.

A part of the feeling which makes many men *dislike* the idea of political women, is, I think, the idea that politics altogether are a necessary evil, a source of quarrelsome and unamiable feelings, and that their sphere of action should be restricted as much as possible, and especially that home, and social intercourse, should be kept free from them, and be retained as much as possible under influences counteractive of those of politics. One would imagine from this manner of looking at the subject, that the danger in modern times was that of too much political earnestness: that people generally felt so strongly about politics as to require a strong curb to prevent them from quarrelling about it when they meet. The fact however we know to be that people in general are quite lukewarm about politics, except where their personal interests or the social position of their class are at stake, and when that is the case women have already as strong political feelings as men have. And this wish to keep the greater interests of mankind from being thought of and dwelt on when people are brought together in private, does not really prevent ill feeling and ill blood in society, but only causes it to exist about things not worth it. Where is the benefit of hindering people from disliking each other on matters involving the liberty or the progress of mankind, only to make them hate each other from petty personal jealousies and piques? Active minds and susceptible feelings will and must interest themselves about something, and if you deny them all subjects of interest except personal ones, you reduce the personal interests to a petty scale, and make personal or social vanities the primum mobile of life: now personal rivalities are a much more fruitful source of hatred and malice than differences of political opinion.

How vain the idea that the way to make mankind amiable is to make them care for nothing except themselves and the individuals immediately surrounding them. Does not all experience shew that when people care only for themselves and their families, then unless they are held down by despotism, every one's hand is against every one, and that only so far as they care about the public or about some abstract principle is there a basis for real social feeling of any sort? One reason why there is scarcely any social feeling in England, but every man, entrenched within his family, feels a kind of dislike and repugnance to every other, is because there is hardly any concern in England for great ideas and the larger interests of humanity. The moment you kindle any such concern, if it be only about negroes or prisoners in gaols, you not only elevate but soften individual character; because each begins to move in an element of sympathy, having a common ground, even if a narrow one, to sympathize on. And yet you would prevent the sympathetic influence of women from exercising itself on the great interests. Observe, by the way, that almost all the popular movements towards any object of social improvement which have been successful in this country, have been those in which women have taken an active part, and have fraternized thoroughly with the men who were engaged about them: Slavery abolition, establishment of schools, improvement of prisons. In the last we know that a woman[*] was one of the principal leaders, and in all three the victory was chiefly due to the Quakers among whom women are in all points of public exertion as active as men. Probably none of these things would have been effected if women had not taken so strong an interest in them—if the men engaged had not found a constant stimulus in the feelings of the women connected with them, and a necessity for excusing themselves in the eyes of the women in every case of failure or shortcoming. And will any one say that the harmony of domestic life or of social intercourse was rendered less because women took interest in these subjects? It will be said, they were questions peculiarly concerning the sympathies and therefore suitable to women. But they were also subjects which concerned people's self interest and were therefore sources of antipathy as well as sympathy: and there have been few subjects on which there has been more party spirit and more vehement opposition of political feeling, than on West India slavery and on the Bell and Lancaster schools.[†]

"What is the use of giving women votes?" Before answering this question it may be well to put another: What is the use of votes at all? Whatever use there is in any case, there is in the case of women. Are votes given to protect the particular interests of the voters? Then women need votes, for the state of the law as to their property, their rights with regard to children, their right to their own person, together with the extreme maladministration of the

courts of justice in cases of even the most atrocious violence when practised by men to their wives, contributes a mass of grievances greater than exists in the case of any other class or body of persons. Are votes given as a means of fostering the intelligence of the voters, and enlarging their feelings by directing them to a wider class of interests? This would be as beneficial to women as to men. Are votes given as a means of exalting the voters in social position and estimation? and to avoid making an offensive distinction to their disadvantage? This reason is strong in the case of women. And this reason would suffice in the absence of any other. Women should have votes because otherwise they are not the equals but the inferiors of men.

So clear is this, that any one who maintains that it is right in itself to exclude women from votes, can only do it for the express purpose of stamping on them the character of inferiors.

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2.

Women—(Rights Of)

the rights of women are no other than the rights of human beings. The phrase has come into use, and become necessary, only because law and opinion, having been made chiefly by men, have refused to recognize in women the universal claims of humanity. When opinion on this subject shall be further advanced towards rectification, neither “rights of women” nor even “equality of women” will be terms in use, because neither of them fully expresses the real object to be aimed at, viz. the negation of all distinctions among persons, grounded on the accidental circumstance of sex.

The present legal and moral subjection of women is the principal, and likely to be the latest remaining relic of the primitive condition of society, the tyranny of physical force. Society sets out from the state of lawlessness in which every one’s hand is against every one, and each robs and slays a weaker than himself when he has any object to gain by it: the next stage is that in which the races and tribes which are vanquished in war are made slaves, the absolute property of their conquerors, this by degrees changes into serfdom, or some other limited form of dependence, and in the course of ages mankind pass through various decreasing stages of subjection on one side and privilege on the other, up to complete democracy which the advanced guard of the human species are now just reaching: so that the only arbitrary distinction among human beings, which the one or two most advanced nations do not now, at least in principle, repudiate, is that between women and men. And even this distinction, although still essentially founded on despotism, has assumed a more mitigated form with each step in the general improvement of mankind, whether we compare age with age, people with people or class with class: which was also the case with all the other social tyrannies, in their progress towards extinction.

It deserves particular remark, that at every period in this gradual progress, the prevailing morality of the time (with or without the exception of a few individuals superior to their age) invariably consecrated all existing facts. It assumed every existing unjust power or privilege as right and proper, contenting itself with inculcating a mild and forbearing exercise of them: by which inculcation no doubt it did considerable good, but which it never failed to balance by enjoining on the sufferers an unresisting and uncomplaining submission to the power itself. Morality

recommended kind treatment of slaves by their masters, and just rule by despots over their subjects, but it never justified or tolerated either slaves or subjects in throwing off the yoke, and wherever they have done so it has been by a plain violation of the then established morality. It is needless to point out how exactly the parallel holds in the case of women and men.

In the position of women as society has now made it, there are two distinct peculiarities. The first is, the domestic subjection of the larger portion of them. From this, unmarried women who are either in independent or in self-dependent pecuniary circumstances are exempt; so that by the admission of society itself, there is no inherent necessity for it, and the time cannot be far off when to hold any human being, who has past the age which requires to be taken care of and educated by others, in a state of compulsory obedience to any other human being (except as the mere organ and minister of the law) will be acknowledged to be as monstrous an infraction of the rights and dignity of humanity, as slavery is at last, though tardily, among a small, comparatively advanced part of the human race, felt to be. Practically the evil varies, in the case of women, (as it did in the case of slaves) from being slowly murdered by continued bodily torture, to being only subdued in spirit and thwarted of all those higher and finer developements of individual character of which personal liberty has in all ages been felt to be the indispensable condition.

The other point of the question relates to the numberless disabilities imposed on women by law or by custom equivalent to law; their exclusion from most public and from a great number of private occupations, and the direction of all the forces of society towards educating them for, and confining them to, a small number of functions, on the plea that these are the most conformable to their nature and powers. It is impossible here to enter, with any detail, into this part of the subject. Three propositions however may be laid down as certain. First; that the alleged superior adaptation of women to certain occupations, and of men to certain others, does not, even now, exist, to anything like the extent that is pretended. Secondly, that so far as it does exist, a rational analysis of human character and circumstances tends more and more to shew, that the difference is principally if not wholly the effect of differences in education and in social circumstances, or of physical characteristics by no means peculiar to one or the other sex. Lastly; even if the alleged differences of aptitude did exist, it would be a reason why women and men would generally occupy themselves differently but no reason why they should be forced to do so. It is one of the aberrations of early and rude legislation to attempt to convert every supposed natural fitness into an imperative obligation. There was an apparent natural reason why the children

should follow the occupation of their parents; they were often familiar with it from childhood, and had always peculiar facilities for being instructed in it: but this natural fitness, converted into a law, became the oppressive and enslaving system of Castes. Good laws, laws which pay any due regard to human liberty, will not class human beings according to mere general presumptions, nor require them to do one thing and to abstain from another on account of any supposed suitableness to their natural or acquired gifts, but will leave them to class *themselves* under the natural influence of those and of all the other peculiarities of their situation, which if left free they will not fail to do quite as well, not to say much better, than any inflexible laws made for them by pedantic legislators or conceited soi-disant philosophers are ever likely to do.

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3.

The Rights Of Women To The Elective Franchise And Its Advantages

statement of the principle—perfect equality.

Although this requires no proof, necessary to consider the subject as usually treated and reply categorically to objections either to it as a principle or as a matter of practice.

Prevailing opinion is that some change is needed but not fundamental, only of degree—above all that the change shall not alter the principle of inequality, foundation of present condition.

Present state of opinion *divided into* the following:

Largest class, both men and women, composed of those who take things for granted because they are so and have always been so—have a natural fear of making any alteration in the relations on which they are accustomed to think the best things in life depend. We would prove to them that tho' the best things in life *did* depend on those relations as they are, the relation under its present conditions is worn out and no longer affords to either party a life either well or sufficiently filled for the spirit of the present time which requires more developement of the spiritual and less of the physical instead of the contrary. True, education is the great want of the time, but people have scarce begun to perceive in what *sense* of education—that which modern developement requires should be the desire, power and habit of using the person's own mind, instead of (as almost all educationists seem to think) *filling* the mind with an undigested mass from the minds of others, in consequence of which process the most educated people now are among the most ignorant—witness not only the (absurdly) called educated *classes* but preeminently the collegiate, legal, clerical, professional men. Placeman, clergyman, barrister, doctor, has each something to say on one subject—in the majority of cases this something is what he has heard from others and therefore comes from him deadborn—if an active minded person, he is found to talk interestingly on his one subject, but let conversation be anything worthy the name of general, and the profound ignorance and inactivity of intellect presented by the educated classes in England is the only thing capable of exciting the mind in intercourse with them.

After all the objections that are made both by men and women have been considered, one may perhaps put it down as a fact that they are all based on the supposition that conceding equal political rights to women would be contrary to the interests of men. Some think it would be contrary to their *real* interests, some to their *selfish* interests. We think they would be not only in accordance with, but greatly advantageous to, the interests of men with perhaps the exception of interests if such they can be called, as no man in the present day would venture to &c. It would probably put a stop to the sort of license of indulgence which everybody is now agreed in discountenancing:—

A great part of the feeling which resists the political equality of women is a feeling of the contrast it would make with their domestic servitude.

The evils of women's present condition all lie in the necessity of dependence, the just cause of complaint lies here and not elsewhere.

Objections made by common place women }
— by common place men } to freedom for women

Historical parallel between men and women sovereigns.

The expression "Rights of Women," it is the fashion among women and among a certain vulgar class of men to affect to receive with a sneer and to endeavour to drown with ridicule. In neither case does this appear to be because they really regard it as meaningless, for if the same people are asked why they receive it so, they invariably grow angry and this mode of reception perpetuates itself because the intense constitutional shyness of Englishmen makes them of all things fear ridicule and this phrase as well as the idea it includes has always hitherto been put down by ridicule. Commonplace women's aversion to it has more meaning—it contains the everlasting dread of the givers of the loaves and fishes[*] —their lively imagination exaggerates the disagreeables of having to work instead of being worked for, which their education having precluded all notions of public spirit or personal dignity, far from being revolted at the idea of dependence, elevates submission into a virtue *per se.* They enormously exaggerate both the talent and the labour required for the external details of life, unaware that they give as much labour and fritter away as much talent in executing badly those domestic details which they enlarge upon as arguments against women's emancipation, as would be sufficient to conduct both the public and private affairs of either an individual or a family. Is it not true that half the time of half the women in

existence is passed in worthless and trashy work, of no benefit to any human being?

Objection. Well bred people never exercise the power which the law gives them. But all their conduct takes the bent which has been given to the two characters by the relation which the law establishes. The woman’s whole talent goes into the inducing, persuading, coaxing, caressing, in reality the seducing, capacity. In whatever class in life, the woman gains her object by seducing the man. This makes her character quite unconsciously to herself, petty and paltry.

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4.

Why Women Are Entitled To The Suffrage

1st. Because it is just.

2nd. Because women have many serious practical grievances from the state of the law as it regards them.

3rd. Because the general condition of women, being one of dependence, is in itself a grievance, which their exclusion from the suffrage stamps and perpetuates.

4th. Reply to objections.

The exclusion of women from the suffrage becomes a greater offence and degradation in proportion as the suffrage is opened widely to all men. When the only privileged class is the aristocracy of sex the slavery of the excluded sex is more marked and complete.

Notion that giving the suffrage does no good; a shallow fallacy. The greatest good that can be done for women and the preparation of all others is to recognize them as citizens—as substantive members of the community instead of mere *things* belonging to members of the community. One of the narrownesses of modern times, in England, is that the indirect effects produced by the *spirit* of institutions are not recognized and therefore the immense influence on the whole life of a person produced by the fact of *citizenship* is not at all felt.

Even according to the most moderate reformers the suffrage should include clerks and other educated persons who are dependent on employers. These are not turned out of their employments for voting against their employers, only because there is a point of honour on the subject. There ought to be the same between married people.—

To suppose that one person’s freedom of opinion must merge in that of the other and that they could not vote differently at an election without quarrelling is a satire on marriage and a reductio ad absurdum of it. All persons, men and women, in the present age, are entitled to mental independence and marriage like other institutions must reconcile itself to this necessity.

The queen professes to live and act perfectly conscientiously, does she ask her husband's opinion and submit to it in all her acts as queen? is not this a case of married persons exercising their separate freedom of opinion and conduct?

The principle that all who are taxed should be represented, would give votes not only to single women but to married women whose property is settled.

Women should either not be allowed to have property or should have all which follows from the possession of property.

The man acquires the points of character that belong to one who is always having homage paid to the power vested in him, self-important, domineering, with more or less politeness of form according to his breeding, and more or less suavity according to his temper—the difference in the case of a well bred man being mainly this, that as he does not need to assert what never is disputed, so he does not do so, but contents himself with accepting the position which the law assigns and which the woman yields to him, it being a main point in the ways of well bred people that all occasions of bringing wills into active collision, are avoided, sometimes by a tacit compromise in which however the chief part always remains with the strongest, sometimes because that which knows itself to be the weakest makes a graceful retreat in time. In this as in other relations, good breeding does not so much affect the substance of conduct as the manner [a]of it[a] . When the man is ill bred the manner is coarse, tyrannical, brutal, either in a greater or in a less degree; there is superfluous self assertion, and of an offensive kind, well bred people's self assertion is only tacit, until their claims are in some way resisted, but they are not therefore less tenacious of all that [b]the law[b] gives them, and are often not less really inflated by self-worship caused by the [c]worship[c] they receive from dependents of every description.

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5.

[Reform: Ends And Means]

Political

No hereditary privileges whatever.

No exclusion from the suffrage, but an educational qualification (qu. what?)

Complete freedom of speech, printing, public meetings and associations, locomotion, and industry in all its branches.

No church establishment or paid clergy; but national schools and colleges without religion.

Social

All occupations to be alike open to men and women; and all kinds and departments of instruction.

Marriage to be like any other partnership, dissoluble at pleasure, and not merging any of the individual rights of either of the parties to the contract. All the interests arising out of marriage to be provided for by special agreement.

The property of intestates to belong to the state, which then undertakes the education, and setting out in life, of all descendants not otherwise provided for.

No one to acquire by gift or bequest more than a limited amount.

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Appendix C

ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN (1851)

by Harriet Taylor Mill

Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review, LV (July, 1851), 289-311. Headed, "Art I.—*The New York Tribune for Europe.* October 29th, 1850", running titles, "Enfranchisement of Women"; unsigned. Offprinted with title, repaged 1-23, and identified as "Reprinted from the 'Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review,' for July, 1851," with the printer's identification ("London: Waterlow and Sons, Printers, 65 to 66, London Wall, London") added at the end, but otherwise identical. Reprinted in *Dissertations and Discussions,* II, 411-49, where the title is footnoted, "*Westminster Review,* July 1851." Issued as a pamphlet, London: Trubner, 1868, where the title page reads, "*Enfranchisement of Women* by Mrs. Stuart Mill. Reprinted from the 'Westminster Review' for July, 1851." London: Trubner and Co., 60, Paternoster Row, 1868. Price One Penny", paged 1-22, title repeated on 1; no running heads. Not listed in Mill's bibliography of his writings, where various items are identified as "joint productions" with Harriet Taylor Mill. There are no corrections or emendations in the copies of the offprint and pamphlet in the Somerville College Library. For comment on the essay, see xxxi-xxxii and lxxiv-lxxvii above.

The text below is that of the *Westminster,* the last in Harriet Taylor Mill's lifetime (she died in 1858, before the 1st ed. of *D&D*), which has been collated with the offprint, the 1st and 2nd eds. of *D&D,* and the pamphlet. In the footnoted variants, "59" indicates *D&D,* 1st ed., "67", *D&D,* 2nd ed., and "68", the pamphlet.

Though the copy-text is that of 1851, the text below is headed by the introductory note written by Mill for the version in *D&D,* it is separated from the main text by a row of asterisks.

all the more recent of these papers[*] were joint productions of myself and of one[†] whose loss, even in a merely intellectual point of view, can never be repaired or alleviated. But the following Essay is hers in a peculiar sense, my share in it being little more than that of an editor and amanuensis. Its authorship having been known at the time, and publicly attributed to her, it is proper to state, that she never regarded it as a complete discussion of the subject which it treats of, and, highly as I estimate it, I would rather it remained unacknowledged, than that it should be read with the idea that

even the faintest image can be found in it of a mind and heart which in their union of the rarest, and what are deemed the most conflicting [a]excellences[a] , were unparalleled in any human being that I have known or read of. While she was the light, life, and grace of every society in which she took part, the foundation of her character was a deep seriousness, resulting from the combination of the strongest and most sensitive feelings with the highest principles. All that excites admiration when found separately in others, seemed brought together in her: a conscience at once healthy and tender; a generosity, bounded only by a sense of justice which often forgot its own claims, but never those of others; a heart so large and loving, that whoever was capable of making the smallest return of sympathy, always received tenfold; and in the intellectual department, a vigour and truth of imagination, a delicacy of perception, an accuracy and nicety of observation, only equalled by her profundity of speculative thought, and by a practical judgment and discernment next to infallible. So elevated was the general level of her faculties, that the highest poetry, philosophy, oratory, or art, seemed trivial by the side of her, and equal only to expressing some small part of her mind. And there is no one of those modes of manifestation in which she could not easily have taken the highest rank, had not her inclination led her for the most part to content herself with being the inspirer, prompter, and unavowed coadjutor of others.

The present paper was written to promote a cause which she had deeply at heart, and though appealing only to the severest reason, was meant for the general reader. The question, in her opinion, was in a stage in which no treatment but the most calmly argumentative could be useful, while many of the strongest arguments were necessarily omitted, as being unsuited for popular effect. Had she lived to write out all her thoughts on this great question, she would have produced something as far transcending in profundity the present Essay, as, had she not placed a rigid restraint on her feelings, she would have excelled it in fervid eloquence. Yet nothing which even she could have written on any single subject, would have given an adequate idea of the depth and compass of her mind. As during life she continually detected, before any one else had seemed to perceive them, those changes of times and circumstances which ten or twelve years later became subjects of general remark, so I venture to prophecy that if mankind continue to improve, their spiritual history for ages to come will be the progressive working out of her thoughts, and realization of her conceptions.

* * * * *

most of our readers will probably learn from these pages for the first time, that there has arisen in the United States, and in the most civilized and enlightened portion of them, an organised agitation on a new question—new, not to thinkers, nor to any one by whom the principles of free and popular government are felt as well as acknowledged, but new, and even unheard of, as a subject for public meetings and practical political action. This question is, the enfranchisement of women; their admission, in law and in fact, to equality in all rights, political, civil, and social, with the male citizens of the community.

It will add to the surprise with which many will receive this intelligence, that the agitation which has commenced is not a pleading by male writers and orators *for* women, those who are professedly to be benefitted remaining either indifferent or ostensibly [b]hostile: it[b] is a political movement, practical in its objects, carried on in a form which denotes an intention to persevere. And it is a movement not merely *for* women, but *by* them. Its first public manifestation appears to have been a Convention of Women, held in the State of Ohio, in the spring of 1850. Of this meeting we have seen no report. On the 23rd and 24th of October last, a succession of public meetings was held at Worcester, in Massachusetts, under the name of a "Women's Rights Convention," of which the president was a woman,[*] and nearly all the chief speakers women; numerously reinforced, however, by men, among whom were some of the most distinguished leaders in the kindred cause of negro emancipation. A general and four special committees were nominated, for the purpose of carrying on the undertaking until the next annual meeting.

According to the report in the New York *Tribune,* above a thousand persons were present throughout, and "if a larger place could have been had, many thousands more would have attended." The place was described as "crowded from the beginning with attentive and interested listeners."[†] In regard to the quality of the speaking, the proceedings bear an advantageous comparison with those of any popular movement with which we are acquainted, either in this country or in America. Very rarely in the oratory of public meetings is the part of verbiage and declamation so small, that of calm good sense and reason so considerable. The result of the Convention was in every respect encouraging to those by whom it was summoned: and it is probably destined to inaugurate one of the most important of the movements towards political and social reform, which are the best characteristic of the present age.

That the promoters of this new agitation take their stand on principles, and do not fear to declare these in their widest extent,

without time-serving or compromise, will be seen from the resolutions adopted by the Convention, part of which we transcribe:

Resolved—That every human being, of full age, and resident for a proper length of time on the soil of the nation, who is required to obey the law, is entitled to a voice in its enactment; that every such person, whose property or labour is taxed for the support of the government, is entitled to a direct share in such government, therefore,

Resolved—That women are entitled to the right of suffrage, and to be considered eligible to office, . . . and that every party which claims to represent the humanity, the civilization, and the progress of the age, is bound to inscribe on its banners, equality before the law, without distinction of sex or colour.

Resolved—That civil and political rights acknowledge no sex, and therefore the word “male” should be struck from every State Constitution.[*]

Resolved—That, since the prospect of honourable and useful employment in after life is the best stimulus to the use of educational advantages, and since the best education is that we give ourselves, in the struggles, employments, and discipline of life; therefore it is impossible that women should make full use of the instruction already accorded to them, or that their career should do justice to their faculties, until the avenues to the various civil and professional employments are thrown open to them.

Resolved—That every effort to educate women, without according to them their rights, and arousing their conscience by the weight of their responsibilities, is futile, and a waste of labour.

Resolved—That the laws of property, as affecting married persons, demand a thorough revisal, so that all rights be equal between them, that the wife have, during life, an equal control over the property gained by their mutual toil and sacrifices, and be heir to her husband precisely to that extent that he is heir to her, and entitled at her death to dispose by will of the same share of the joint property as he is.[†]

The following is a brief summary of the principal demands:

1. *Education* in primary and high schools, universities, medical, legal, and theological institutions.

2. *Partnership* in the labours and gains, risks and remunerations, of productive industry.

3. *A coequal share* in the formation and administration of laws—municipal, state, and national—through legislative assemblies, courts, and executive offices.[‡]

It would be difficult to put so much true, just, and reasonable meaning into a style so little calculated to recommend it as [c]that[c] of some of the resolutions. But whatever objection may be made to some of the expressions, none, in our opinion, can be made to the demands themselves. As a question of justice, the case seems to us too clear for dispute. As one of expediency, the more thoroughly it is examined the stronger it will appear.

That women have as good a claim as men have, in point of personal right, to the suffrage, or to a place in the jury-box, it would be difficult for anyone to deny. It cannot certainly be denied by the United States of America, as a people or as a community. Their democratic institutions rest avowedly on the inherent right of everyone to a voice in the government. Their Declaration of Independence, framed by the men who are still their great constitutional authorities—that document which has been from the first, and is now, the acknowledged basis of their polity, commences with this express statement:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.[*]

We do not imagine that any American democrat will evade the force of these expressions by the dishonest or ignorant subterfuge, that “men,” in this memorable document, does not stand for human beings, but for one sex only, that “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” are “inalienable rights” of only one moiety of the human species, and that “the governed,” whose consent is affirmed to be the only source of just power, are meant for that half of mankind only, who, in relation to the other, have hitherto assumed the character of [d]*governors*[d] . The contradiction between principle and practice cannot be explained away. A like dereliction of the fundamental maxims of their political creed has been committed by the Americans in the flagrant instance of the negroes; of this they are learning to recognise the turpitude. After a struggle which, by many of its incidents, deserves the name of heroic, the abolitionists

are now so strong in numbers and in influence that they hold the balance of parties in the United States. It was fitting that the men whose names will remain associated with the extirpation, from the democratic soil of America, of the aristocracy of colour, should be among the originators, for America and for the rest of the world, of the first collective protest against the aristocracy of sex, a distinction as accidental as that of colour, and fully as irrelevant to all questions of government.

Not only to the democracy of America, the claim of women to civil and political equality makes an irresistible appeal, but also to those radicals and chartists in the British islands, and democrats on the Continent, who claim what is called universal suffrage as an inherent right, unjustly and oppressively withheld from them. For with what truth or rationality could the suffrage be termed universal, while half the human species [e]remain[e] excluded from it? To declare that a voice in the government is the right of all, and demand it only for a part—the part, namely, to which the claimant himself belongs—is to renounce even the appearance of principle. The chartist who denies the suffrage to women, is a chartist only because he is not a lord;[†] he is one of those levellers who would level only down to themselves.

Even those who do not look upon a voice in the government as a matter of personal right, nor profess principles which require that it should be extended to all, have usually traditional maxims of political justice with which it is impossible to reconcile the exclusion of all women from the common rights of citizenship. It is an axiom of English freedom that taxation and representation should be co-extensive. Even under the laws which give the wife's property to the husband, there are many unmarried women who pay taxes. It is one of the fundamental doctrines of the British constitution, that all persons should be tried by their peers, yet women, whenever tried, are tried by male judges and a male jury. To foreigners the law accords the privilege of claiming that half the jury should be composed of themselves; not so to women. Apart from maxims of detail, which represent local and national rather than universal ideas, it is an acknowledged dictate of justice to make no degrading distinctions without necessity. In all things the presumption ought to be on the side of equality. A reason must be given why anything should be permitted to one person and interdicted to another. But when that which is interdicted includes nearly everything which those to whom it is permitted most prize, and to be deprived of which they feel to be most insulting, when not only political liberty but personal freedom of action is the prerogative of a caste; when even in the exercise of industry, almost all employments which task the higher faculties in an important field, which lead to distinction, riches, or even pecuniary

independence, are fenced round as the exclusive domain of the predominant section, scarcely any doors being left open to the dependent class, except such as all who can enter elsewhere disdainfully pass by; the miserable expediencies which are advanced as excuses for so grossly partial a dispensation, would not be sufficient, even if they were real, to render it other than a flagrant injustice. While, far from being expedient, we are firmly convinced that the division of mankind into two castes, one born to rule over the other, is in this case, as in all cases, an unqualified mischief; a source of perversion and demoralization, both to the favoured class and to those at whose expense they are favoured, producing none of the good which it is the custom to ascribe to it, and forming a bar, almost insuperable while it lasts, to any really vital improvement, either in the character or in the social condition of the human race.

These propositions it is now our purpose to maintain. But before entering on them, we would endeavour to dispel the preliminary objections which, in the minds of persons to whom the subject is new, are apt to prevent a real and conscientious examination of it. The chief of these obstacles is that most formidable one, custom. Women never have had equal rights with men. The claim in their behalf, of the common rights of mankind, is looked upon as barred by universal practice. This strongest of prejudices, the prejudice against what is new and unknown, has, indeed, in an age of changes like the present, lost much of its force; if it had not, there would be little hope of prevailing against it. Over three-fourths of the habitable world, even at this day, the answer, “it has always been so,” closes all discussion. But it is the boast of modern Europeans, and of their American kindred, that they know and do many things which their forefathers neither knew nor did; and it is perhaps the most unquestionable point of superiority in the present above former ages, that habit is not now the tyrant it formerly was over opinions and modes of action, and that the worship of custom is a declining idolatry. An uncustomary thought, on a subject which touches the greater interests of life, still startles when first presented; but if it can be kept before the mind until the impression of strangeness wears off, it obtains a hearing, and as rational a consideration as the intellect of the hearer is accustomed to bestow on any other subject.

In the present case, the prejudice of custom is doubtless on the unjust side. Great thinkers, indeed, at different times, from Plato to Condorcet,[*] besides some of the most eminent names of the present age, have made emphatic protests in favour of the equality of women. And there have been voluntary societies, religious or secular, of which the Society of Friends is the most known, by whom that principle was recognised. But there has been no

political community or nation in which, by law, and usage, women have not been in a state of political and civil inferiority. In the ancient world the same fact was alleged, with equal truth, in behalf of slavery. It might have been alleged in favour of the mitigated form of slavery, serfdom, all through the middle ages. It was urged against freedom of industry, freedom of conscience, freedom of the press; none of these liberties were thought compatible with a well-ordered state, until they had proved their possibility by actually existing as facts. That an institution or a practice is customary is no presumption of its goodness, when any other sufficient cause can be assigned for its existence. There is no difficulty in understanding why the subjection of women has been a custom. No other explanation is needed than physical force.

That those who were physically weaker should have been made legally inferior, is quite conformable to the mode in which the world has been governed. Until very lately, the rule of physical strength was the general law of human affairs. Throughout history, the nations, races, classes, which found themselves the strongest, either in muscles, in riches, or in military discipline, have conquered and held in subjection the rest. If, even in the most improved nations, the law of the sword is at last discountenanced as unworthy, it is only since the calumniated eighteenth century. Wars of conquest have only ceased since democratic revolutions began. The world is very young, and has but just begun to cast off injustice. It is only now getting rid of negro slavery. It is only now getting rid of monarchical despotism. It is only now getting rid of hereditary feudal nobility. It is only now getting rid of disabilities on the ground of religion. It is only beginning to treat [f any *men*f] as citizens, except the rich and a favoured portion of the middle class. Can we wonder that it has not yet done as much for women? As society was constituted until the last few generations, inequality was its very basis; association grounded on equal rights scarcely existed; to be equals was to be enemies; two persons could hardly co-operate in anything, or meet in any amicable relation, without the law's appointing that one of them should be the superior of the other. Mankind have outgrown this state, and all things now tend to substitute, as the general principle of human relations, a just equality, instead of the dominion of the strongest. But of all relations, that between men and women being the nearest and most intimate, and connected with the greatest number of strong emotions, was sure to be the last to throw off the old rule and receive the new: for in proportion to the strength of a feeling, is the tenacity with which it clings to the forms and circumstances with which it has even accidentally become associated.

When a prejudice, which has any hold on the feelings, finds itself reduced to the unpleasant necessity of assigning reasons, it thinks

it has done enough when it has re-asserted the very point in dispute, in phrases which appeal to the pre-existing feeling. Thus, many persons think they have sufficiently justified the restrictions on women's field of action, when they have said that the pursuits from which women are excluded are *unfeminine,* and that the *proper sphere* of women is not politics or publicity, but private and domestic life.

We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or any individual for another individual, what is and what is not their "proper sphere." The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which they are able to attain to. What this is, cannot be ascertained, without complete liberty of choice. The speakers at the Convention in America have therefore done wisely and right, in refusing to entertain the question of the peculiar aptitudes either of women or of men, or the limits within which this or that occupation may be supposed to be more adapted to the one or to the other.[*] They justly maintain, that these questions can only be satisfactorily answered by perfect freedom. Let every occupation be open to all, without favour or discouragement to any, and employments will fall into the hands of those men or women who are found by experience to be most capable of worthily exercising them. There need be no fear that women will take out of the hands of men any occupation which men perform better than they. Each individual will prove his or her capacities, in the only way in which capacities can be proved—by trial; and the world will have the benefit of the best faculties of all its inhabitants. But to interfere beforehand by an arbitrary limit, and declare that whatever be the genius, talent, energy, or force of mind of an individual of a certain sex or class, those faculties shall not be exerted, or shall be exerted only in some few of the many modes in which others are permitted to use theirs, is not only an injustice to the individual, and a detriment to society, which loses what it can ill spare, but is also the most effectual mode of providing that, in the sex or class so fettered, the qualities which are not permitted to be exercised shall not exist.

We shall follow the very proper example of the Convention, in not entering into the question of the alleged differences in physical or mental qualities between the sexes; not because we have nothing to say, but because we have too much; to discuss this one point tolerably would need all the space we have to bestow on the entire subject.* But if those who assert that the "proper sphere" for women is the domestic, mean by this that they have not shown themselves qualified for any other, the assertion evinces great ignorance of life and of history. Women have shown fitness for the highest social functions, exactly in proportion as they have been admitted to them. By a curious anomaly, though ineligible to even

the lowest offices of state, they are in some countries admitted to the highest of all, the regal, and if there is any one function for which they have shown a decided vocation, it is that of reigning. Not to go back to ancient history, we look in vain for abler or firmer rulers than Elizabeth; than Isabella of Castile, than Maria Teresa; than Catherine of Russia; than Blanche, mother of Louis IX of France; than Jeanne d'Albret, mother of Henri Quatre. There are few kings on record who contended with more difficult circumstances, or overcame them more triumphantly, than[h] these. Even in semi-barbarous Asia, princesses who have never been seen by men, other than those of their own family, or ever spoken with them unless from behind a curtain, have as regents, during the minority of their sons, exhibited many of the most brilliant examples of just and vigorous administration. In the middle ages, when the distance between the upper and lower ranks was greater than even between women and men, and the women of the privileged class, however subject to tyranny from the men of the same class, were at a less distance below them than any one else [i]was[i] , and often in their absence represented them in their functions and authority—numbers of heroic chatelaines, like Jeanne de Montfort, or the great Countess of Derby[*] as late even as the time of Charles I, distinguished themselves not only by their political but their military capacity. In the centuries immediately before and after the Reformation, ladies of royal houses, as diplomatists, as governors of provinces, or as the confidential advisers of kings, equalled the first statesmen of their time: and the treaty of Cambray, which gave peace to Europe, was negociated in conferences where no other person was present, by the aunt of the Emperor Charles V, and the mother of Francis I.[†]

Concerning the fitness, then, of women for politics, there can be no question, but the dispute is more likely to turn upon the fitness of politics for women. When the reasons alleged for excluding women from active life in all its higher departments, are stripped of their garb of declamatory phrases, and reduced to the simple expression of a meaning, they seem to be mainly three: [j] the incompatibility of active life with maternity, and with the cares of a household; secondly, its alleged hardening effect on the character; and thirdly, the inexpediency of making an addition to the already excessive pressure of competition in every kind of professional or lucrative employment.

The first, the maternity argument, is usually laid most stress upon, although (it needs hardly be said) this reason, if it be one, can apply only to mothers. It is neither necessary nor just to make imperative on women that they [k]shall[k] be either mothers or

nothing; or that if they [l]have[l] been mothers once, they shall be nothing else during the whole remainder of their lives. Neither women nor men need any law to exclude them from an occupation, if they have undertaken another which is incompatible with it. No one proposes to exclude the male sex from Parliament because a man may be a soldier or sailor in active service, or a merchant whose business requires all his time and energies. Nine-tenths of the occupations of men exclude them *de facto* from public life, as effectually as if they were excluded by law; but that is no reason for making laws to exclude even the nine-tenths, much less the remaining tenth. The reason of the case is the same for women as for men. There is no need to make provision by law that a woman shall not carry on the active details of a household, or of the education of children, and at the same time practise a profession or be elected to Parliament. Where incompatibility is real, it will take care of itself: but there is gross injustice in making the incompatibility a pretence for the exclusion of those in whose case it does not exist. And these, if they were free to choose, would be a very large proportion. The maternity argument deserts its supporters in the case of single women, a large and increasing class of the population, a fact which, it is not irrelevant to remark, by tending to diminish the excessive competition of numbers, is calculated to assist greatly the prosperity of all. There is no inherent reason or necessity that all women should voluntarily choose to devote their lives to one animal function and its consequences. Numbers of women are wives and mothers only because there is no other career open to them, no other occupation for their feelings or their activities. Every improvement in their education, and enlargement of their faculties—everything which renders them more qualified for any other mode of life, increases the number of those to whom it is an injury and an oppression to be denied the choice. To say that women must be excluded from active life because maternity disqualifies them for it, is in fact to say, that every other career should be forbidden them in order that maternity may be their only resource.

But secondly, it is urged, that to give the same freedom of occupation to women as to men, would be an injurious addition to the crowd of competitors, by whom the avenues to almost all kinds of employment are choked up, and its remuneration depressed. This argument, it is to be observed, does not reach the political question. It gives no excuse for withholding from women the rights of citizenship. The suffrage, the jury-box, admission to the legislature and to office, it does not touch. It bears only on the industrial branch of the subject. Allowing it, then, in an economical point of view, its full force; assuming that to lay open to women the employments now monopolized by men, would tend, like the breaking down of other monopolies, to lower the rate of

remuneration in those employments, let us consider what is the amount of this evil consequence, and what the compensation for it. The worst ever asserted, much worse than is at all likely to be realized, is that if women competed with men, a man and a woman could not together earn more than is now earned by the man alone. Let us make this supposition, the most unfavourable supposition possible, the joint income of the two would be the same as before, while the woman would be raised from the position of a servant to that of a partner. Even if every woman, as matters now stand, had a claim on some man for support, how infinitely preferable is it that part of the income should be of the woman's earning, even if the aggregate sum were but little increased by it, rather than that she should be compelled to stand aside in order that men may be the sole earners, and the sole dispensers of what is [m]earned.[m] Even under the present laws respecting the property of women,[*] a woman who contributes materially to the support of the family, cannot be treated in the same contemptuously tyrannical manner as one who, however she may toil as a domestic drudge, is a dependent on the man for subsistence. As for the depression of wages by increase of competition, remedies will be found for it in time. Palliatives might be applied immediately; for instance, a more rigid exclusion of children from industrial employment, during the years in which they ought to be working only to strengthen their bodies and minds for after life. Children are [n]necessarily[n] dependent, and under the power of others; and their labour, being not for themselves but for the gain of their parents, is a proper subject for legislative regulation. With respect to the future, we neither believe that improvident multiplication, and the consequent excessive difficulty of gaining a subsistence, will [o]always[o] continue, nor that the division of mankind into capitalists and hired labourers, and the regulation of the reward of labourers mainly by demand and supply, will be for ever, or even much longer, the rule of the world. But so long as competition is the general law of human life, it is tyranny to shut out one half of the competitors. All who have attained the age of self-government, have an equal claim to be permitted to sell whatever kind of useful labour they are capable of, for the price which it will bring.

The third objection to the admission of women to political or professional life, its alleged hardening tendency, belongs to an age now past, and is scarcely to be comprehended by people of the present time. There are still, however, persons who say that the world and its avocations render men selfish and unfeeling; that the struggles, rivalries and collisions of business and of politics make them harsh and unamiable; that if half the species must unavoidably be given up to these things, it is the more necessary that the other half should be kept free from them; that to preserve

women from the bad influences of the world, is the only chance of preventing men from being wholly given up to them.

There would have been plausibility in this argument when the world was still in the age of violence, when life was full of physical conflict, and every man had to redress his injuries or those of others, by the sword or by the strength of his arm. Women, like priests, by being exempted from such responsibilities, and from some part of the accompanying dangers, may have been enabled to exercise a beneficial influence. But in the present condition of human life, we do not know where those hardening influences are to be found, to which men are subject and from which women are at present exempt. Individuals now-a-days are seldom called upon to fight hand to hand, even with peaceful weapons; personal enmities and rivalities count for little in worldly transactions, the general pressure of circumstances, not the adverse will of individuals, is the obstacle men now have to make head against. That pressure, when excessive, breaks the spirit, and cramps and sours the feelings, but not less of women than of men, since they suffer certainly not less from its evils. There are still quarrels and dislikes, but the sources of them are changed. The feudal chief once found his bitterest enemy in his powerful neighbour, the minister or courtier in his rival for place: but opposition of interest in active life, as a cause of personal animosity, is out of date, the enmities of the present day arise not from great things but small, from what people say of one another, more than from what they do; and if there are hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, they are to be found among women fully as much as among men. In the present state of civilization, the notion of guarding women from the hardening influences of the world, could only be realized by secluding them from society altogether. The common duties of common life, as at present constituted, are incompatible with any other softness in women than weakness. Surely weak minds in weak bodies must ere long cease to be even supposed to be either attractive or amiable.

But, in truth, none of these arguments and considerations touch the foundations of the subject. The real question is, whether it is right and expedient that one-half of the human race should pass through life in a state of forced subordination to the other half. If the best state of human society is that of being divided into two parts, one consisting of persons with a will and a substantive existence, the other of humble companions to these persons, attached, each of them to one, for the purpose of bringing up *his* children, and making *his* home pleasant to him; if this is the place assigned to women, it is but kindness to educate them for this, to make them believe that the greatest good fortune which can befal them, is to be chosen by some man for this purpose, and that every other

career which the world deems happy or honourable, is closed to them by the law, not of social institutions, but of nature and destiny.

When, however, we ask why the existence of one-half the species should be merely ancillary to that of the other—why each woman should be a mere appendage to a man, allowed to have no interests of her own, that there may be nothing to compete in her mind with his interests and his pleasure, the only reason which can be given is, that men like it. It is agreeable to them that men should live for their own sake, women for the sake of men: and the qualities and conduct in subjects which are agreeable to rulers, they succeed for a long time in making the subjects themselves consider as their appropriate virtues. Helvetius has met with much obloquy for asserting, that persons usually mean by virtues the qualities which are useful or convenient to themselves.[*] How truly this is said of mankind in general, and how wonderfully the ideas of virtue set afloat by the powerful, are caught and imbibed by those under their dominion, is exemplified by the manner in which the world were once persuaded that the supreme virtue of subjects was loyalty to kings, and are still persuaded that the paramount virtue of womanhood is loyalty to [p]men[p] . Under a nominal recognition of a moral code common to both, in practice self-will, and self-assertion form the type of what are designated as manly virtues, while abnegation of self, patience, resignation, and submission to power, unless when resistance is commanded by other interests than their own, have been stamped by general consent as pre-eminently the duties and graces required of [q]women. The[q] meaning being merely, that power makes itself the centre of moral obligation, and that a man likes to have his own will, but does not like that his domestic companion should have a will different from his.

We are far from pretending that in modern and civilized times, no reciprocity of obligation is acknowleged on the part of the stronger. Such an assertion would be very wide of the truth. But even [r]this[r] reciprocity, which has disarmed tyranny, at least in the higher and middle classes, of its most revolting features, yet when combined with the original evil of the dependent condition of women, has introduced in its turn serious evils.

In the beginning, and [s]among[s] tribes which are still in a primitive condition, women were and are the slaves of men for [t]the[t] purposes of toil. All the hard bodily labour devolves on them. The Australian savage is idle, while women painfully dig up the roots on which he lives. An American Indian, when he has killed a deer, leaves it, and sends a woman to carry it home. In a state somewhat more advanced, as in Asia, women were and are the slaves of men for

[u]the[u] purposes of sensuality. In Europe there early succeeded a third and milder dominion, secured not by blows, nor by locks and bars, but by sedulous inculcation on the mind; feelings also of kindness, and ideas of duty, such as a superior owes to inferiors under his protection, became more and more involved in the relation. But it did not for many ages become a relation of companionship, even between [v]unequals; the[v] lives of the two persons were apart. The wife was part of the furniture of home, of the resting-place to which the man returned from business or pleasure. His occupations were, as they still are, among men, his pleasures and excitements also were, for the most part, among men—among his equals. He was a patriarch and a despot within four walls, and irresponsible power had its effect, greater or less according to his disposition, in rendering him domineering, exacting, self-worshipping, when not capriciously or brutally tyrannical. But if the moral part of his nature suffered, it was not necessarily so, in the same degree, with the intellectual or the active portion. He might have as much vigour of mind and energy of character as his nature enabled him, and as the circumstances of his times allowed. He might write the *Paradise Lost,*[*] or win the battle of Marengo.[†] This was the condition of the Greeks and Romans, and of the moderns until a recent date. Their relations with their domestic subordinates occupied a mere corner, though a cherished one, of their lives. Their education as men, the formation of their character and faculties, depended mainly on a different class of influences.

It is otherwise now. The progress of improvement has imposed on all possessors of power, and of domestic power among the rest, an increased and increasing sense of correlative obligation. No man now thinks that his wife has no claim upon his actions but such as he may accord to her. All men of any conscience believe that their duty to their wives is one of the most binding of their obligations. Nor is it supposed to consist solely in protection, which, in the present state of civilization, women have almost ceased to need: it involves care for their happiness and consideration of their wishes, with a not unfrequent sacrifice of their own to them. The power of husbands has reached the stage which the power of kings had arrived at, when opinion did not yet question the rightfulness of arbitrary power, but in theory, and to a certain extent in practice, condemned the selfish use of it. This improvement in the moral sentiments of mankind, and increased sense of the consideration due by every man to those who [w]have[w] no one but himself to look to, has tended to make home more and more the centre of interest, and domestic circumstances and society a larger and larger part of life, and of its pursuits and pleasures. The tendency has been strengthened by the changes of tastes and manners which have so

remarkably distinguished the last two or three generations. In days not far distant, men found their excitement and filled up their time in violent bodily exercises, noisy merriment, and intemperance. They have now, in all but the very poorest classes, lost their inclination for these things, and for the coarser pleasures generally; they have now scarcely any tastes but those which they have in common with women, and, for the first time in the world, men and women are really companions. A most beneficial change, if the companionship were between equals; but being between unequals, it produces, what good observers have noticed, though without perceiving its cause, a progressive deterioration among men in what had hitherto been considered the masculine excellences. Those who are so careful that women should not become men, do not see that men are becoming, what they have decided that women should be—are falling into the feebleness which they have so long cultivated in their companions. Those who are associated in their lives, tend to become assimilated in character. In the present closeness of association between the sexes, men cannot retain manliness unless women acquire it.

There is hardly any situation more unfavourable to the maintenance of elevation of character or force of intellect, than to live in the society, and seek by preference the sympathy, of inferiors in mental endowments. Why is it that we constantly see in life so much of intellectual and moral promise followed by such inadequate performance, but because the aspirant has compared himself only with those below himself, and has not sought improvement or stimulus from measuring himself with his equals or [x]superiors.[x] In the present state of social life, this is becoming the general condition of men. They care less and less for any sympathies, and are less and less under any personal influences, but those of the domestic roof. Not to be misunderstood, it is necessary that we should distinctly disclaim the belief, that women are even now inferior in intellect to men. There are women who are the equals in intellect of any men who ever lived: and comparing ordinary women with ordinary men, the varied though petty details which compose the occupation of most women, call forth probably as much of mental ability, as the uniform routine of the pursuits which are the habitual occupation of a large majority of men. It is from nothing in the faculties themselves, but from the petty subjects and interests on which alone they are exercised, that the companionship of women, such as their present circumstances make them, so often exercises a dissolvent influence on high faculties and aspirations in men. If one of the two has no knowledge and no care about the great ideas and purposes which dignify life, or about any of its practical concerns save personal interests and personal vanities, her conscious, and still more her unconscious influence, will, except in rare cases, reduce to a

secondary place in his mind, if not entirely extinguish, those interests which she cannot or does not share.

Our argument here brings us into collision with what may be termed the moderate reformers of the education of women; a sort of persons who cross the path of improvement on all great questions; those who would maintain the old bad principles, mitigating their consequences. These say, that women should be, not slaves, nor servants, but companions; and educated for that office, (they do not say that men should be educated to be the companions of women). But since uncultivated women are not suitable companions for cultivated men, and a man who feels interest in things above and beyond the family circle wishes that his companion should sympathize with him in that interest; they therefore say, let women improve their understanding and taste, acquire general knowledge, cultivate poetry, art, even coquet with science, and some stretch their liberality so far as to say, inform themselves on politics; not as pursuits, but sufficiently to feel an interest in the subjects, and to be capable of holding a conversation on them with the husband, or at least of understanding and imbibing his wisdom. Very agreeable to him, no doubt, but unfortunately the reverse of improving. It is from having intellectual communion only with those to whom they can lay down the law, that so few men continue to advance in wisdom beyond the first stages. The most eminent men cease to improve, if they associate only with disciples. When they have overtopped those who immediately surround them, if they wish for further growth, they must seek for others of their own stature to consort with. The mental companionship which is improving, is communion between active minds, not mere contact between an active mind and a passive. This inestimable advantage is even now enjoyed, when a strong-minded man and a strong-minded woman are, by a rare chance, united: and would be had far oftener, if education took the same pains to form strong-minded women which it takes to prevent them from being formed. [y]The modern, and what are regarded as the improved and enlightened modes of education of women, abjure, as far as words go, an education of mere show, and profess to aim at solid instruction, but mean by that expression, superficial information on solid subjects. Except accomplishments, which are now generally regarded as to be taught well if taught at all, nothing is taught to women thoroughly. Small portions only of what it is attempted to teach thoroughly to boys, are the whole of what it is intended or desired to teach to women.[y] What makes intelligent beings is the power of thought: the stimuli which call forth that power are the interest and dignity of thought itself, and a field for its practical application. Both motives are cut off from those who are told from infancy that thought, and all its greater applications, are other people’s business, while theirs is to make themselves

agreeable to other people. High mental powers in women will be but an exceptional accident, until every career is open to them, and until they, as well as men, are educated for themselves and for the world—not one sex for the other.

In what we have said on the effect of the inferior position of women, combined with the present constitution of married life, we have thus far had in view only the most favourable cases, those in which there is some real approach to that union and blending of characters and of lives, which the theory of the relation contemplates as its ideal standard. But if we look to the great majority of cases, the effect of women's legal inferiority on the character both of women and of men must be painted in far darker colours. We do not speak here of the grosser brutalities, nor of the man's power to seize on the woman's earnings, or compel her to live with him against her will. We do not address ourselves to any one who requires to have it proved that these things should be remedied. We suppose average cases, in which there is neither complete union nor complete disunion of feelings and [z of z] character; and we affirm that in such cases the influence of the dependence on the woman's side, is demoralizing to the character of both.

The common opinion is, that whatever may be the case with the intellectual, the moral influence of women over men is almost always salutary. It is, we are often told, the great counteractive of selfishness. However the case may be as to personal influence, the influence of the position tends eminently to promote selfishness. The most insignificant of men, the man who can obtain influence or consideration nowhere else, finds one place where he is chief and head. There is one person, often greatly his superior in understanding, who is obliged to consult him, and whom he is not obliged to consult. He is judge, magistrate, ruler, over their joint concerns; arbiter of all differences between them. The justice or conscience to which her appeal must be made, is his justice and conscience: it is his to hold the balance and adjust the scales between his own claims or wishes and those of another. His is now the only tribunal, in civilized life, in which the same person is judge and party. A generous mind, in such a situation, makes the balance incline against its own side, and gives the other not less, but more, than a fair equality; and thus the weaker side may be enabled to turn the very fact of dependence into an instrument of power, and in default of justice, take an ungenerous advantage of generosity; rendering the unjust power, to those who make an unselfish use of it, a torment and a burthen. But how is it when average men are invested with this power, without reciprocity and without responsibility? Give such a man the idea that he is first in law and in opinion—that to will is his part, and hers to submit; it is absurd

to suppose that this idea merely glides over his mind, without sinking into it, or having any effect on his feelings and practice. The propensity to make himself the first object of consideration, and others at most the second, is not so rare as to be wanting where everything seems purposely arranged for [a]permitting[a] its indulgence. If there is any self-will in the man, he becomes either the conscious or unconscious despot of his household. The wife, indeed, often succeeds in gaining her objects, but it is by some of the many various forms of indirectness and management.

Thus the position is corrupting equally to both; in the one it produces the vices of power, in the other those of artifice. Women, in their present physical and moral state, having stronger impulses, would naturally be franker and more direct than men; yet all the old saws and traditions represent them as artful and dissembling. Why? Because their only way to their objects is by indirect paths. In all countries where women have strong wishes and active minds, this consequence is inevitable: and if it is less conspicuous in England than in some other places, it is because Englishwomen, saving occasional exceptions, have ceased to have either strong wishes or active minds.

We are not now speaking of cases in which there is anything deserving the name of strong affection on both sides. That, where it exists, is too powerful a principle not to modify greatly the bad influences of the situation, it seldom, however, destroys them entirely. Much oftener the bad influences are too strong for the affection, and destroy it. The highest order of durable and happy attachments would be a hundred times more frequent than they are, if the affection which the two sexes sought from one another were that genuine friendship, which only exists between equals in privileges as in faculties. But with regard to what is commonly called affection in married life—the habitual and almost mechanical feeling of kindliness, and pleasure in each other's society, which generally grows up between persons who constantly live together, unless there is actual dislike—there is nothing in this to contradict or qualify the mischievous influence of the unequal relation. Such feelings often exist between a sultan and his favourites, between a master and his servants; they are merely examples of the pliability of human nature, which accommodates itself in some degree even to the worst circumstances, and the commonest natures always the most easily.

With respect to the influence personally exercised by women over men, it, no doubt, renders them less harsh and brutal; in ruder times, it was often the only softening influence to which they were accessible. But the assertion, that the wife's influence renders the man less selfish, contains, as things now are, fully as much error as

truth. Selfishness towards the wife herself, and towards those in whom she is interested, the children, though favoured by [b]their[b] dependence, the wife's influence, no doubt, tends to counteract. But the general effect on him of her character, so long as her interests are concentrated in the family, tends but to substitute for individual selfishness a family selfishness, wearing an amiable guise, and putting on the mask of duty. How rarely is the wife's influence on the side of public virtue: how rarely does it do otherwise than discourage any effort of principle by which the private interests or worldly vanities of the family can be expected to [c]suffer.[c] Public spirit, sense of duty towards the public good, is of all virtues, as women are now educated and situated, the most rarely to be found among them; they have seldom even, what in men is often a partial substitute for public spirit, a sense of personal honour connected with any public duty. Many a man, whom no money or personal flattery would have bought, has bartered his political opinions against [d]a title[d] or invitations [e]for[e] his wife; and a still greater number are made mere hunters after the puerile vanities of society, because their wives value them. As for opinions; in Catholic countries, the wife's influence is another name for that of the priest: he gives her, in the hopes and emotions connected with a future life, a consolation for the sufferings and disappointments which are her ordinary lot in this. Elsewhere, her weight is thrown into the scale either of the most common-place, or of the most outwardly prosperous opinions: either those by which censure will be escaped, or by which worldly advancement is likeliest to be procured. In England, the wife's influence is usually on the illiberal and anti-popular side: this is generally the gaining side for personal interest and vanity; and what to her is the democracy or liberalism in which she has no part—which leaves her the Pariah it found her? The man himself, when he marries, usually declines into Conservatism; begins to sympathize with the holders of power, more than with its victims, and thinks it his part to be on the side of authority. As to mental progress, except those [f]vulgarer[f] attainments by which vanity or ambition are promoted, there is generally an end to it in a man who marries a woman mentally his inferior; unless, indeed, he is unhappy in marriage, or becomes indifferent. From a man of twenty-five or thirty, after he is married, an experienced observer seldom expects any further progress in mind or feelings. It is rare that the progress already made is maintained. Any spark of the *mens divinior*[*] which might otherwise have spread and become a flame, seldom survives for any length of time unextinguished. For a mind which learns to be satisfied with what it already is—which does not incessantly look forward to a degree of improvement not yet reached—becomes relaxed, self-indulgent, and loses the spring and the tension which maintain it even at the point already attained. And there is no fact

in human nature to which experience bears more invariable testimony than to this—that all social or sympathetic influences which do not raise up, pull down; if they do not tend to stimulate and exalt the mind, they tend to vulgarize it.

For the interest, therefore, not only of women but of men, and of human improvement in the widest sense, the emancipation of women, which the modern world often boasts of having effected, and for which credit is sometimes given to civilization, and sometimes to Christianity, cannot stop where it is. If it were either necessary or just that one portion of mankind should remain mentally and spiritually only half developed, the development of the other portion ought to have been made, as far as possible, independent of their influence. Instead of this, they have become the most intimate, and it may now be said, the only intimate associates of those to whom yet they are sedulously kept inferior; and have been raised just high enough to drag the others down to themselves.

We have left behind a host of vulgar objections, either as not worthy of an answer, or as answered by the general course of our remarks. A few words, however, must be said on one plea, which in England is made much use of for giving an unselfish air to the upholding of selfish privileges, and which, with unobserving, unreflecting people, passes for much more than it is worth. Women, it is said, do not desire—do not seek, what is called their emancipation. On the contrary, they generally disown such claims when made in their behalf, and fall with *acharnement* upon any one of themselves who identifies herself with their common cause.

Supposing the fact to be true in the fullest extent ever asserted, if it proves that European women ought to remain as they are, it proves exactly the same with respect to Asiatic women; for they too, instead of murmuring at their seclusion, and at the restraint imposed upon them, pride themselves on it, and are astonished at the effrontery of women who receive visits from male acquaintances, and are seen in the streets unveiled. Habits of submission make men as well as women servile-minded. The vast population of Asia do not desire or value, probably would not accept, political liberty, nor the savages of the forest, civilization; which does not prove that either of those things is undesirable for them, or that they will not, at some future time, enjoy it. Custom hardens human beings to any kind of degradation, by deadening the part of their nature which would resist it. And the case of women is, in this respect, even a peculiar one, for no other inferior caste that we have heard of, have been taught to regard their degradation as their honour. The argument, however, implies a secret consciousness that the alleged preference of women for

their dependent state is merely apparent, and arises from their being allowed no choice; for if the preference be natural, there can be no necessity for enforcing it by law. To make laws compelling people to follow their inclination, has not hitherto been thought necessary by any legislator. The plea that women do not desire any change, is the same that has been urged, times out of mind, against the proposal of abolishing any social evil—"there is no complaint;" which is generally not true, and when true, only so because there is not that hope of success, without which complaint seldom makes itself audible to unwilling ears. How does the objector know that women do not desire equality and freedom? He never knew a woman who did not, or would not, desire it for herself individually. It would be very simple to suppose, that if they do desire it they will say so. Their position is like that of the tenants or labourers who vote against their own political interests to please their landlords or employers; with the unique addition, that submission is inculcated on them from childhood, as the peculiar attraction and grace of their character. They are taught to think, that to repel actively even an admitted injustice done to themselves, is somewhat unfeminine, and had better be left to some male friend or protector. To be accused of rebelling against anything which admits of being called an ordinance of society, they are taught to regard as an imputation of a serious offence, to say the least, against the proprieties of their sex. It requires unusual moral courage as well as disinterestedness in a woman, to express opinions favourable to women's enfranchisement, until, at least, there is some prospect of obtaining it. The comfort of her individual life, and her social consideration, usually depend on the goodwill of those who hold the undue power; and to possessors of power any complaint, however bitter, of the misuse of it, is a less flagrant act of insubordination than to protest against the power itself. The professions of women in this matter remind us of the state offenders of old, who, on the point of execution, used to protest their love and devotion to the sovereign by whose unjust mandate they suffered. Griselda herself might be matched from the speeches put by Shakespeare into the mouths of male victims of kingly caprice and tryanny: the Duke of Buckingham, for example, in *Henry the Eighth,* and even Wolsey.[*] The literary class of women, especially in England, are ostentatious in disclaiming the desire for equality or citizenship, and proclaiming their complete satisfaction with the place which society assigns to them; exercising in this, as in many other respects, a most noxious influence over the feelings and opinions of men, who unsuspectingly accept the servilities of toadyism as concessions to the force of truth, not considering that it is the personal interest of these women to profess whatever opinions they expect will be agreeable to men. It is not among men of talent, sprung from the people, and patronized and flattered by the aristocracy, that we look for the leaders of a democratic

movement. Successful literary women are just as unlikely to prefer the cause of women to their own social consideration. They depend on men's opinion for their literary as well as for their feminine successes; and such is their bad opinion of men, that they believe there is not more than one in ten thousand who does not dislike and fear strength, sincerity, or high spirit in a woman. They are therefore anxious to earn pardon and toleration for whatever of these qualities their writings may exhibit on other subjects, by a studied display of submission on this: that they may give no occasion for vulgar men to say (what nothing will prevent vulgar men from saying), that learning makes women unfeminine, and that literary ladies are likely to be bad wives.

But enough of this; especially as the fact which affords the occasion for this [g]notice[g] , makes it impossible any longer to assert the universal acquiescence of women (saving individual exceptions) in their dependent condition. In the United States at least, there are women, seemingly numerous, and now organised for action on the public mind, who demand equality in the fullest acceptation of the word, and demand it by a straightforward appeal to men's sense of justice, not plead for it with a timid deprecation of their displeasure.

Like other popular movements, however, this may be seriously retarded by the blunders of its adherents. Tried by the ordinary standard of public meetings, the speeches at the Convention are remarkable for the preponderance of the rational over the declamatory element; but there are some exceptions; and things to which it is impossible to attach any rational meaning, have found their way into the resolutions. Thus, the resolution which sets forth the claims made in behalf of women, after claiming equality in education, in industrial pursuits, and in political rights, enumerates as a fourth head of demand something under the name of "social and spiritual union," and "a medium of expressing the highest moral and spiritual views of justice,"[*] with other similar verbiage, serving only to mar the simplicity and rationality of the other demands[h]: resembling those who would weakly attempt to combine nominal equality between men and women, with enforced distinctions in their privileges and functions[h] . What is wanted for women is equal rights, equal admission to all social privileges; not a position apart, a sort of sentimental priesthood. To this, the only just and rational principle, both the resolutions and the speeches, for the most part, adhere. They contain so little which is akin to the nonsensical paragraph in question, that we suspect it not to be the work of the same hands as most of the other resolutions. The strength of the cause lies in the support of those who are influenced by reason and principle; and to attempt to recommend it

by sentimentalities, absurd in reason, and inconsistent with the principle on which the movement is founded, is to place a good cause on a level with a bad one.

There are indications that the example of America will be followed on this side of the Atlantic; and the first step has been taken in that part of England where every serious movement in the direction of political progress has its commencement—the manufacturing districts of the North. On the 13th of February 1851, a petition of women, agreed to by a public meeting at Sheffield, and claiming the elective franchise, was presented to the House of Lords by the Earl of Carlisle.[†]