

Last night, at the Unitarian Church, Miss Scott, the honorary secretary of the Woman Suffrage League, delivered a lecture on the objects of the League. The lecture was under the auspices of the Unitarian Church Social Union. There was a fairly large attendance. The Rev. G. Walters presided.

Miss Scott, in the course of her address, said they must try to look at the question not only as it concerned their individual petty interests and prejudices but as it concerned their country and its people—our future nobility and greatness. Let there be no looking down upon women in anything. Could it be good for a boy of 21 years to feel that he had a voice in the government of his country and his mother had none, this mother whom as a rule he could not but feel was his superior in all else? Was it good for a boy to feel that because he was of the masculine sex therefore the Government gave him a voice in making those laws which his mother and all other women must obey? A woman's influence in a practical way was solely confined to home. Too soon a boy was taught by his country's laws and ways of other men to despise and look down upon the woman's teaching and influence in all business matters, and to think that his heart was meant only for the domestic circle, and that there it must be left while he went out to his business or his politics with a hard head and a stone for a heart called selfishness. When women were kept ignorant, not brought face to face with the cry of suffering humanity in the outer world. They confined their holy influence to home till even that holy influence became, in a measure, a narrow and selfish thing, for woman saw only her home, her husband, her children, and narrow circle of friends, acquaintances, and pensioners, and knew nothing practically of the selfish competition that even her loving husband or boys might carry on in the outer world. She was ignorant as she could be of the real needs of her country and the sufferings, wrongs, and ignorance of the great majority. Of what use was it for a woman to scrub the floor and whitewash the walls of her little home when upon every wave of air microbes of disease and death were floating in at her door from the gutters in the street? It was of little use for her to teach love and purity in her home when vice on the outside world was looked upon by men with a lenient eye, and her boys were taught by public opinion that it was manly to know life, to drink, to gamble, and to be immoral, encouraging immorality in others so long as they did not do so to any great extent. They would never find the roots of great and crying evils till men and women learnt to work together in all things. In 1869 Wyoming, an American territory, granted its women the right to the elective franchise. Women had manifested great public spirit and a conscientious interest in every department of government, especially in that of education. At the last census Wyoming was returned as having a smaller percentage of illiteracy than any State or territory in the Union. Again, she had no public debt, and on 10th January, 1890, after every obligation was paid, there was in her Treasury 230,000dol., due no doubt in some measure to woman's economy in many minor expenditures. In Wyoming now it could be truly said there was no caste or class, no bond or free, no Jew nor Gentile, no male or female, but all were one by the provision of the State Constitution. This was the first genuine Republic the world had ever seen—the first recognition by Government of the great principle of equal rights for all. No insane women were found in Wyoming in 1890, and the marriage and divorce statistics were in favour of Wyoming as compared with the whole of the United States. Women had also voted for 10 years in the Isle of Man. She did not suppose for a moment that the extension of the franchise to women would reform the world; it was only one step in the right direction. Could she force Parliament to-morrow to give women the suffrage she would not do it. The suffrage itself was not so great a thing as that the spirit of man should desire to place woman on a perfect legal equality with himself. She could imagine no more effectual way of raising the tone of public opinion, of purifying its moral sentiments, than to give women the vote. Again, they heard that polls were not decent places for women, but the very presence of women would do away with the objection. There was a chord in the heart of almost every man that responded to the gentleness and refinement of women. And then again it was said that women would bring such feminine notions to bear upon the laws, and it would be a very good thing. Why should masculine notions have a monopoly? There was one other objection, that politics were not a woman's sphere, but it appeared to her the most arrogant presumption for any set of individuals to dictate to others their sphere. The true and only way to solve the saddest of life's problems was to make all women self-respecting, and the surest way to do this was to make woman feel that she was man's equal in education and independence, and should ever be his inspiration and helpmeet in the gradual evolution from an animal existence to a purer and nobler life, a life whose ruling power was no longer the physical but the mental and spiritual. The influence of woman over man for good or evil was, and had ever been, the most powerful influence in the world. Was it not reasonable to suppose that the influence of women on political life would be that which Buckle showed they had already had upon the progress of knowledge and civilisation? 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At a meeting of the Women's Suffrage League, held last evening, Mrs. Hastie, in the course of an address, pointed out that one great reason why women would like to get the suffrage was because they would be able to alleviate the condition of women workers, and to give them a better chance in the battle of life than they had at present. Men were not so likely to move in this direction as women, partly because their sympathies were not so keen and partly because there were many who shared the spoils derived from underpaying their women workers. "It might be said," she remarked, "that men are underpaid as well as women, but in reply to that it could be truthfully said that whereas with men it is the exception with women it is the rule. It is known that there are great numbers of women and girls working in Sydney for mere pence—you cannot call them wages—and even some of the largest firms have no regard for making provision of the simplest kind for their comfort or convenience. The condi-

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tions under which they work, the low rates of wages and general surroundings cannot conduce either to health or morality. And yet this class of women is very valuable to the State, for it is the large one from which thousands of the wives and mothers of the people are drawn."

Scott Papers
ML MSS 88/37
item 2.