

WOMEN'S DISABILITIES REMOVAL BILL.

MR. SPEAKER,—I need hardly tell you that it is with extreme reluctance that I take part in this debate, but I am somewhat peculiarly circumstanced with regard to this question, and duty compels me to make some observations. In the year 1867, when Mr. Stuart Mill first made a proposition like that contained in this Bill to the House, I was one of those who went with him into the lobby. In his autobiography he refers to this fact, and he says that I was one of those who were opposed to the proposition being submitted to the House, but that the weight of argument in its favour was so great that I was obliged to go with him into the lobby. I can very honestly say that he was entirely mistaken in that statement. Though I did vote with him, I voted under extreme doubt, and far more from sympathy with him—for whom in many respects, and on many grounds, I had so great an admiration—than from sympathy with the proposition with which he was then identified, and at that time advocating. But if I had doubts then I may say that those doubts have been only confirmed by the further consideration I have been able to give to this question. The Bill seems to be based on a proposition which is untenable, and which I think is contradicted by universal experience. In fact it is a Bill based on an assumed hostility between the sexes. Now, I do not believe that any honourable member in this House who is going to support this Bill entertains that view; but if hon. members have been accustomed to read the speeches of the principal promoters of this Bill out of doors, and if they have had an opportunity, as I have had on many occasions of entering into friendly and familiar conversation on this question with those who support it, I think they will be forced to the admission that the Bill, as it is