

senting women's suffrage did not appear until 1847, and it was ten years later than this that the Sheffield Female Political Association was formed. Then in 1869 John Stuart Mill published his essay on "The Subjection of Women." He opens this with the flat statement: "That the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement, and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other." Thus we see that with him the question did not resolve itself into merely a matter of education or of voting, but that he seems to have demanded a change in the general status of women, all the specific privileges being included. He argues that the legal subordination of women was not first adopted because it was the best social arrangement. It was rather the result of the mere physical fact of men's superior strength, and was sanctioned by society, thus being converted into a legal right. But now, he goes on, the subjection of women is merely primitive slavery lasting on. A second point on which Mill insists is that no harm would be done if women were given free choice as to their vocations, for free competition would induce them to perform only those services for which they were most needed and most fitted. On the contrary, he says, "any limitation of the field of selection deprives society of some chances of being served by the competent, without ever saving it from the incompetent." Chapter II of this pamphlet deals with the injustice and evil effects of legal inequality in marriage. Mill sets forth clearly the condition of the married woman in the middle of the 19th century. She is, says he, "the actual bond-servant of her husband. . . . She can do no act whatever but by his permission, at least tacit. She can acquire no property but for him; the instant it becomes hers, even if by inheritance, it becomes, ipso facto, his." The father "alone has any legal rights over the children. . . . Even after he is dead she (the mother) is not their legal guardian unless he, by will, has made her so. He