

support both herself and her child comfortably, if she could command her own earnings, but she was told that this was impossible.

The argument commonly used in defence of this wrong is, that as a man is responsible for the debts of his wife, he should have the control of her wages. If this be a valid reason, then women not expecting to earn wages should be able to give breads to their husbands, at their marriage, that they will not become unreasonably burdensome to them. Let us see how much this argument is worth.

In the first place, the wives of men of property are not expected to labor. The common ordering of arrangements in their case is, that men shall accumulate property, and women shall take care of so much of it as is appropriated to current family expenses. Under such circumstances, if a woman, by writing a book, for instance, or in any other way, should make a sum of money, we see no reason why she should not control it, any more than why a man should not divert to what uses he pleases that portion of his property not needed for the support of his family.

In the case of the middling classes, whose means are moderate, the wife gives her time and strength for the well-being of her family, as assiduously as the husband; therefore, here, again, the principles of a partnership should be recognized as to the regular income of their united labor.

In regard to the laboring classes, technically so called, there can be no good reason why the earnings of both should not be a common fund, equally at the disposal of each. The whole is necessary for the support of the family, and we do not believe it will be questioned that the woman is as little likely as the man, to divert to improper uses the money needed for the comfort of her family. If the man is shiftless, idle, drunken, or bad, no one will trust him for his own debts, or those of his wife; therefore, in such a case, the only effect of the law is to condemn the wife to hopeless destitution and misery. Shame, shame upon it!

The question in regard to the right of property, however, sinks into insignificance, when compared with that of the right in children. The laws, as we have said before, do not recognize any natural right of a woman to her

children. She may bring them into the world with terrible suffering, she may watch over their infancy and youth with the most tender, faithful care, esteeming her own ease or individual gratification as nothing in comparison with their welfare; and yet, if her husband prove to be so bad a man that she cannot live with him, or that he chooses, by way of tormenting her, to separate her children from her, or order their lives in a manner that she conceives to be detrimental to them, she has no redress. Even if he is unfaithful to her, unless she can prove his infidelity (and if he have the address which commonly attends knavery and wickedness, he will be sure not to put any proof within her reach), the children belong to him as a matter of course, and the mother is for ever deprived of them.

The injustice is sufficiently flagrant which permits a man, whether single or married, to lead a licentious life without losing caste, while a poor girl, betrayed through her affections into guilt, almost inevitably becomes a cast-away through public scorn; which condemns a married woman who offends against the law of chastity to loss, as indeed she most surely ought to do, her place in the domestic circle and in society, while it secures a married man, who is an habitual offender against the same law, from forfeiting any right or privilege whatever, except through a legal process; but there is another form of it worse, even, than this—nay, absolutely monstrous—viz. that which, upon a separation ensuing even from the undoubted guilt of the husband, ascribes to him an exclusive right in the children, until the law interferes, upon proof of that, for which, under all circumstances, it is nearly impossible to obtain the legal proof required, and gives them to the wife.

We hardly know by what arguments this great iniquity is defended, and not knowing, it is difficult to suppose them. We recollect to have heard it said that if a woman could withdraw her children when she pleased, separations would be continually taking place. This argument would apply as well against the same license in the husband; but we never yet heard of a case where the mere possession of this right on his part, led to a separation. It is only in cases of actual guilt, personal abuse, or