

East India House. July 8. 1858

My dear Chapman

You are a much better correspondent than I am. I really do not know how many letters I have received from you since I wrote one. I am always busy, and have been particularly so of late; but your last letter especially (dated Feb. 14) contains so many points of interest, that I will not delay any longer replying to it.

The history it contains of the constitutional changes which have succeeded one another in your colony since what may be called its enfranchisement, has connected and made intelligible the scattered information I had picked up from the newspapers. You have certainly now obtained a very democratic constitution, and I am glad to see by the papers that you have yourself, since you wrote, had the forming of an administration to work it. No constitution, less democratic, would be either practicable, or probably desirable in the long run, in a society composed like that of the Australian colonies. The only thing which seems wanting to make the suffrage really universal, is to get rid of the Toryism of sex, by admitting women to vote; and it will be a great test how far the bulk of your population deserve to have the suffrage themselves, their being willing or not to extend it to women. I am sorry, by the way, that the vulgar and insulting expression "manhood suffrage" has found its way to Australia. Whether so intended or not, it asserts the exclusion of women as a doctrine, which is worse than

merely, ignoring them as was done by giving the name universal suffrage to a suffrage limited to men. The adoption of the ballot in Victoria has made some noise here, and has been a good deal opposed to by its advocates in parliament. You have heard, no doubt, of the dinner given to Nicholson. It will perhaps surprise you that I am not now a supporter of the ballot, though I am far from thinking that I was wrong in supporting it formerly. You remember, I dare say a passage, which always seemed to me highly philosophical, in my father's History of India, where he discriminates between the cases in which the ballot is in his estimation desirable and those in which it is undesirable: now I think that the election of members of parliament has passed, in the course of the last 25 years, out of the former class into the latter. In the early part of the century there was more probability of bad votes, from the coercion of others, than from the voter's own choice: but I hold that the case is now reversed, and that an elector gives a rascally vote inconsiderably oftener from his own personal or class interest, or from mean feeling of his own, the influence of which would be greater under secret suffrage, than from the prompting of some other person who has power over him. Coercive influences have vastly abated, and are abating every day: a landlord cannot now afford to part with a good tenant because he is not politically subservient: and even if there were universal suffrage, the idea of a manufacturer freeing his workpeople to vote against the general feeling of their class, is almost out of the question: in this as in so many other things, defendit numerus. If these things are true in England, they must be still more true in Australia, where I cannot imagine that any artificial security can be required to ensure

freedom of voting. But if there be even a doubt on the subject, the doubt ought surely to turn the scale in favour of publicity. Nothing less than the most positive and powerful reasons of expediency would justify putting in abeyance a principle so important in forming the moral character either of an individual or of a people, as the obligation on every one to be ready to avow and justify whatever he does, affecting the interests of others. I have long thought that in this lies the main advantage of the public opinion sanction, not in compelling or inducing people to act as public opinion dictates, but in making it necessary for them, if they do not, to have a firm ground in their own conviction to stand on, and to be capable of maintaining it against attacks. I shall probably at some time write and publish something about the ballot, which will show the grounds of my present opinion more fully, and perhaps more clearly, than I have now done. There is another constitutional point which I must touch upon, because you say you have quoted me on the subject, and my former opinion is, to say the least, very much shaken, the payment of members of parliament. There is, no doubt, something to be said for it, especially where, as you remark, there is no unoccupied class; but I am afraid of its raising up just such a class of men without any fixed occupation but that of being in parliament, for the sake of the certain payment as members and the possible one as placemen. Certainly, by all accounts, the American legislatures, both State and federal, are very much composed of a low class of adventurers whose principal object is money, and some Americans have a decided opinion that the payment of members is one great cause of this. By the way, as you have quoted Bailey and me on this subject, I wish you would quote us on the subject of women's suffrage also. - The representation of minorities seems to me not only a good but a highly democratic measure. The ideal of a democracy is not that a mere majority of the people should have all the representation, but that if possible every portion of the

constituency should possess an influence in the election proportional to its numbers. This cannot be realized literally, but it seems to me a good arrangement that any portion of the constituency amounting to a third should be able to obtain a third of the representation, by concerting to aim at no more. This should not be done by limiting each voter to fewer votes than there are members to be elected, which curtailing the power of the individual voter, must always be unpopular. The plan I like is the cumulative method, which I am glad to see has been carried. This plan has also the advantage that when a voter can give all his votes to one person, intensity of preference carries weight, as well as the mere fact of preference: an arrangement very favorable to candidates who stand on personal merit, as compared with those who are voted for only because they belong to a party. I see you think that this plan will increase the influence of the Irish Catholics: notwithstanding my good opinion of Duffy, I should be sorry for this result, but the objection is only temporary, and the advantage permanent. - About education, and the public lands, you seem to be in the right track, and with a good prospect of keeping in it.

There is probably little I could tell you about English politics that you do not already know. The East India Company has fought its last battle, and I have been in the thick of the fight. The Company is to be abolished, but we have succeeded in getting nearly all the principles which we contended for, adopted in constituting the new government, and our original assailants feel themselves much more beaten than we do. The change though not so bad as at first seemed probable, is still, in my opinion, much far worse. The difficulty of governing India in any tolerable manner, already so much increased by the mutiny and its consequences, will become an impossibility if a body so ignorant and incompetent as Indian (to say nothing of other) subjects as Parliament, comes to make a practice of interfering. In other respects, politics are more satisfactory than usual. The defeat of all the attempts to make England instrumental to keeping Louis Napoleon where he is, and the conversion of the Tory chiefs into temporary Radicals for the purpose of remaining in place, are the best things that have happened in Europe for a long time. The complete disconcerting of the old placemen, and the failure of all their attempts to form a party are very agreeable and amusing to all but themselves.

I am
yours very truly,
J. S. Mill.