

VOTES FOR WOMEN

EDITED BY FREDERICK AND EMMELINE PETHICK LAWRENCE.

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JOAN OF ARC.

(Statue by F. Dubois.)

CONTENTS.

Our Cartoon	PAGE	217	<i>De ut Des.</i> By Emmeline	PAGE	224
The Outlook	217	<i>Pethick Lawrence</i>	224	<i>Woman Suffrage in New Zealand.</i> By Lady Stout	225
Political Sentimentalists. By					
Laurence Housman	218	<i>The Reformer</i>	225	<i>Contributions to the £250,000 Fund</i>	225
In Memoriam	219	<i>Some Notes on the Political Situation</i>	226	<i>Press Views</i>	226
The Experience of Finland	219	<i>Release of Prisoners</i>	226	<i>At Bow Street.</i> By A. G.	226
An Interlude	220	<i>The Wind and the Post.</i> By	226	<i>Elizabeth Kirk</i>	227
As the New Year Dawns	220	<i>A Thousand New Readers</i>	227	<i>Wanted</i>	227
A Strong Suffragist	220	<i>Miss Asquith's Public Work</i>	227	<i>A Woman Judge</i>	227
That Heavy Money Bag	220	<i>Echoes of November 21</i>	227	<i>The Recovering Thought</i>	227
Joan of Arc	220	<i>Our Post Box</i>	228	<i>Women J.P.'s</i>	228
Thirty Shillings	220	<i>Women as Hall Porters</i>	228	<i>In British Columbia</i>	228
The Moral Aspect of Woman		<i>Campaign Throughout the</i>		<i>Country</i>	229
Suffrage. By Elizabeth Hol-					
form	221				
Prologue. By Israel Zangwill	221				
Mrs. Pankhurst's Tour	221				
Kansas	221				
"Until the Last"	221				
Women Would Not Use the					
Vote	221				
"The War Goll" and other					
Reviews	222				
The World we Live In	223				

To the brave women who to-day are fighting for freedom: to the noble women who all down the ages kept the flag flying and looked forward to this day without seeing it: to all women all over the world, of whatever race, or creed, or calling, whether they be with us or against us in this fight, we dedicate this paper.

THE OUTLOOK.

We wish our readers a very happy year in 1912! May it be a year not merely full of personal happiness but also fruitful for the cause we all have at heart! May the New Year bring Votes to Women, and may the old sex inequality be altogether swept away!

Mr. Lloyd George at Cardiff.

Suffragist members of the Cabinet, who had consented to the betrayal of the pledge in respect of the Conciliation Bill given by the Government as a whole,

found a convenient escape from responsibility in a promise to advocate woman suffrage from the public platform. Women suffragists, who have been taught practical politics by hard experience, were never greatly impressed by the value of such an offer. We are not surprised that Mr. Lloyd George, who opposed the Conciliation Bill with all his eloquence in 1910, and "torpedoed" it in 1911, should have apparently forgotten all about Votes for Women when speaking at Cardiff last Friday. The problems of poverty, wretchedness, and bad housing could only be dealt with by the community as a community, he reminded his audience; but he failed to point out that up to the present time one entire half of the community has been arbitrarily excluded from any power to deal with these evils by national endeavour.

"Put Not your Trust . . ."

He spoke of "cottages reeking with tuberculosis," of "damp, wretched, dark dismal" abodes; he spoke of "women condemned to death for the sole crime of sticking to their homes," and of "little children who have the germs of death sown into their system by abominable housing accommodation." But not one word did Mr. Lloyd George utter of the cruelty and crime of depriving women of the vote—that means of protecting themselves and their children—which he lauded to the skies when speaking to men a short while ago amid the blessings conferred upon them by the Liberal Government! There could have been no more fitting occasion for referring to this "non-party" question of Votes for Women or for expounding its ethical and moral significance. It is exceedingly fortunate for the Woman's Movement that it does not depend upon the advocacy of Cabinet Ministers. The country has been converted to Woman Suffrage already: all that is necessary for Suffragist members of the Liberal Government to do is to make an explicit declaration of the

policy that they intend to pursue in order that the principles of Liberalism and Democracy may be translated into the law of the land.

The Political Prospect.

Never was the political situation more complex than it is at the present moment, never were the prospects of a new session more uncertain. On the face of it there is a very serious divergence of opinion in the Cabinet on the subject of Votes for Women, which we are told is to be settled by an "open" vote in the House of Commons. "And as Woman Suffragists are in a majority in the House," we are further told "the vote is sure to be favourable to women and the hostile majority in the Cabinet will then fall into line." We have never disguised from our readers our entire incredulity in the prospect of this solution; and it is interesting to note that *The Nation* is evidently also uneasy with regard to it. It says:—

The trouble will come when the public realises, amid the dangerous strain of an overloaded programme, the division in the Cabinet on Woman Suffrage. . . . We confess that we see with some foreboding a Prime Minister pledged to an active prosecution of his views on the Suffrage and his two most powerful lieutenants committed to an equally active furtherance of their opposite opinion, the two forces meeting in full clash on the floor of the House of Commons and then turning to each other in dramatic reconciliation and self-surrender over the victorious cause.

And there are indications that other Liberal papers hold a similar view.

Four Possible Endings to the Session.

For our own part we frankly do not believe that any such solution is compatible with a logical sequence of political events. We see, instead, four possible alternative ways in which the present imbroglio may end. Firstly, the Anti-Suffrage element in the Cabinet may be brought into line with the Suffrage element. Or, secondly, the so-called dissensions in the Cabinet may be more apparent than real, and the whole Cabinet

may really be willing to acquiesce in a settlement from which women continue to be shut out.

Anti-Suffrage Ministers may Give Way.

The solution for which we are working is the capitulation of the Anti-Suffrage Ministers and the acceptance by the Cabinet as a whole of Woman Suffrage.

The Suffrage Ministers may Give Way.

The second solution would have been an easy matter if all Suffragists had accepted trustfully the offer made to them.

Woman Suffrage may Break up the Cabinet.

A third alternative is that the Cabinet may break up on this question. This is the view taken by some Conservative papers.

It seems quite possible that the "break up" of the Government which Sir Edward Grey admits was nearly reached recently will come about when the subject comes to be debated publicly.

A Dissolution May Take Place First.

The remaining alternative is that a dissolution may take place before the crisis on Woman Suffrage is reached.

The Government do not believe they will finish next session in power and with a working majority.

Be Ready!

We have no intention of prophesying as to which of these alternatives will happen.

No Remission for Suffrage Prisoners.

We understand that no instruction has up to the present been given by Mr. McKenna to allow the

Suffrage prisoners the usual remission of sentence granted to ordinary prisoners.

Our Weapon in 1912.

Among the contents of this issue we draw special attention to the leading article, based on a political

POLITICAL SENTIMENTALISTS.

By Laurence Housman.

(A Speech made at the John Hampden Dinner of the Tax-Resistance League.)

"Distance," we are told, "lends enchantment to the view"; more especially, perhaps, to the view of political sentimentalists.

There you get the characteristically narrow and one-sided view of the sentimentalist.

Now, how has this wide divergence in the attitude of our politicians towards the past and the present of a great moral principle come about?

These "village Hampdens" have the bad taste to cry aloud in the auction-room and the public street, instead of keeping to their proper place.

And yet the people who deprecate that spirit are turning their backs on English history and forgetting the rebellious quality of certain great deeds of the past which we praise to-day.

dictum of Bismarck. Peace with honour can only be attained in the way set forth in that article.

Contents of this Issue.

We begin this week a valuable series of articles on Votes for Women in New Zealand, by Lady Stout.

trying also to break the spirit of his people. The King at that time had the right to govern without Parliament; and he did so govern for twelve years almost as badly as the present Liberal Cabinet.

Now, tyrants always believe, or are inclined to believe, that they are actuated by the highest motives, and so are blind to the tyrannical nature of their claim.

Well, in Tax-Resistance you have, it seems to me, an object lesson which the mind of the average man can understand.

What are you going to do with them? Are you going to bruise, and break, and imprison them because of their likeness in spirit and in act to those (John Hampden and others) to whom you have to-day for similar acts of law-breaking set up statues in Parliament?

During the past year many women have resisted unrepresentative taxation; and three, all honour to them, have gone to prison like Hampden in defence of that principle.

IN MEMORIAM.

Another name has been added to the roll of those who have given their lives for the cause of women's emancipation.

THE EXPERIENCE OF FINLAND.

In a letter to the Times (December 28) the following interesting views with regard to the position of women in Finland are given by J. N. Reuter:—

"Finland gave the vote to women for the asking. . . . Though I have no figures at hand, I think I am not far from the truth in saying that the electorate in Finland male and female constitutes some 45 per cent. of the whole population, with some preponderance of female electors.

As for women's eligibility as representatives, I think it may be taken for granted that those women actually returned were supported very largely by female votes.

I will try to do formulate opinions, not merely mine, but such as very largely prevail in Finland.

"How far the experience in Finland, which for that country, decidedly tells in favour of woman suffrage, can be adduced in support of its introduction into other countries, with more complex problems and vaster responsibilities, I am not competent to judge, nor feel I am called upon to do so."

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