

Men's League for Women's Suffrage

No. 31. Office: 159, ST. STEPHEN'S HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER, S.W.
Telephone: 4276 VICTORIA.
Hon. Sec.: Dr. C. V. DRYSDALE.

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President: THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF LYTTON.
Chairman: HERBERT JACOBS.
Hon. Treas.: REGD. H. POTT. April, 1912
Hon. Political Sec.: J. M. MITCHELL.

ANNUAL MEETING, ANDERTON'S HOTEL, — APRIL 26TH, 8 P.M. —

ALL ARE ASKED TO BE PRESENT (see page 125).

THE SITUATION.

For the first time in twenty years a Woman Suffrage Bill has been defeated on second reading. That would be at any time a serious event, but with this defeat is wiped out the promise of facilities which was the crown of years of work. There lies the real gravity of what has happened, and it would be folly to close our eyes to it. The immediate task for Suffragists is to face the causes which have contributed to this disaster, and to adjust tactics to the new conditions. There is little difficulty in reading the meaning of the vote from the division lists. Of the three causes of loss of support one was purely accidental. The miners' representatives had almost to a man returned to their constituencies in connection with the strike. Had we polled their votes we should just have covered the minority of fourteen. Neither of the other two causes would singly have been fatal, but together they have destroyed the Bill. The Irish Party yielded us last year thirty-one votes for and only nine against. This year it cast thirty-four against and none for. The deserters, who alleged their reprobation of militant methods as a reason for voting against a Bill which the militants have disowned, numbered fifteen Liberals and ten Unionists, counting fifty on a division. The same cause drove neutrals into active opposition, and accounted for most of the abstentions among our friends. It was a heavy vote, and I question whether half a dozen of the absentees, with the exception of the miners, were unpaired through inadvertence.

In spite of a disingenuous communication to the Press on the eve of the debate, it can no longer be maintained that the action of the Irish Nationalists was unofficial. At a party meeting Mr. Redmond gave an imperative order that none of his followers should support Woman Suffrage this year, and the prohibition applies as directly to the Reform Bill as to the Conciliation Bill. That such a manœuvre was probable was known to some of us as far back as last summer, but for my part I had reckoned on some effort from our friends in the Cabinet to counteract it. How severe the pressure was may be deduced

from the fact that ten members of the party are also members of the Conciliation Committee, and one of them "backed" the Bill. Not one of them ventured to vote for it. The reasons given may be classed roughly as false and true. We are told that the recent militant action at Belfast and a circular letter of last week from an Irish lady annoyed the party. But Mr. Redmond's decision was really taken last year. The reason for it is simply and solely that the party looks askance at any subject which introduces dissension into the Cabinet and forms a competing interest to Home Rule. They would gladly have shelved other Bills, but dared not take this action in the case of any Government measure.

The Irish Party, in plain words, has put its veto on Woman Suffrage. It remains to be seen whether it has acted wisely in its own interests. It has set in motion a resentment which will not tend to popularise Home Rule during the two years of its precarious passage into law. It is natural that Suffragists should dally with thoughts of retaliation. But to assail Home Rule would be to lower ourselves to Mr. Redmond's level. It would also be to defeat our own eventual success. We cannot wish to retain at Westminster a party which has shown itself to be a conscienceless machine one day longer than we can help. But a form of retaliation does present itself which is entirely relevant and legitimate. Suffragists may properly concentrate their attention on the enfranchisement of Irish women by means of a clause in the Home Rule Bill. Mr. Birrell's Devolution Bill did enfranchise them, and Lord Haldane, in a public speech last autumn, encouraged the hope that the Government would follow its own precedent. Even Anti-Suffragists have told us that local government is part of a woman's proper sphere. Suffragists might have been content to neglect this opportunity if the question had been settled by a general Bill. But the Irish have killed that Bill. They must prepare to take the consequences. An assurance that the party will support a women's clause in the Reform Bill as solidly as it opposed the Conciliation Bill might possibly affect the case for dealing separately with the interests of Irish women under the Home Rule Bill.

It is a nice question in political psychology what part the recent militancy really played in the defection of the persons who broke their pledges in company with Mr. Sydney Buxton, Mr. Masterman, and Mr. Crawshay-Williams. I question myself whether they really are so unreasonable as they would have us believe. If the W.S.P.U. had resorted to tactics of intimidation in order to secure the passage of the Conciliation Bill members would have had a case for refusing to yield to violence. But as its motive and its demand was something totally different, no clear-headed member need have hesitated to support a Bill which the W.S.P.U. frankly dislikes. The real motives of the deserters and the abstainers were, I think,

ANTI-SUFFRAGE CRITICISM.

Those who have read Dr. Almroth Wright's curious ebullition in the "Times" will be prepared for equally quaint comments in the "Anti-Suffrage Review" for April. As Anti-Suffragists are the self-appointed champions of chivalry, we are constrained to quote the following comments upon some of our speakers:—

* * * * *

Mr. Agg-Gardner's "speech was difficult to hear because of its method of delivery."

"Sir Alfred Mond's 'matter' was even worse than his manner, which is saying much."

(In reference to Mr. Snowden.) "The Socialist leader's thin and querulous tones were eminently in keeping with the exiguous substance of his speech."

"The feeble and indeed most disingenuous utterances of Lord Robert Cecil and Mr. Snowden."

* * * * *

The first reference to Mr. Snowden may be moderately described as being in bad taste. As a parallel, we would quote the Anti-Suffrage announcement that Mr. Arnold Ward "hit hard, but with perfect fairness"!

MEETINGS ADDRESSED BY MEMBERS OF THE MEN'S LEAGUE.

March 1	Oxford Somerville College	R. F. Cholmeley
" 1	Tunbridge Wells N.U.W.S.S.	Sir John Cockburn
" 1	Swindon N.U.W.S.S.	Rev. J. Ivory Cripps
" 1	Queen's Hall M.P.U.	H. W. Nevinson
" 1	"	C. Mansell Moullin
" 3	Hyde Park M.P.U.	Joseph Clayton
" 4	Crowthorne N.U.W.S.S.	J. Malcolm Mitchell
" 5	Finsbury Y.M.C.A.	Rev. F. M. Green
" 5	Middlesborough N.U.W.S.S.	Dr. Saleeby
" 6	Wimbledon W.S.P.U.	Rev. Hugh Chapman
" 6	New Mills N.U.W.S.S.	F. Stanton Barnes
" 6	Bath W.T.R.L.	J. W. Joudwine
" 7	Southampton N.U.W.S.S.	D. L. Lipson
" 7	Kensington N.C.S.W.S.	Rev. Hugh Chapman
" 8	Criterion A.F.L.W.S.	Lord Lytton
" 8	Kensington C.U.W.F.A.	Sir Edward Busk
" 8	Byfleet N.U.W.S.S.	H. Baillie Weaver
" 11	Marple N.U.W.S.S.	F. Stanton Barnes
" 12	Portsmouth N.U.W.S.S.	D. L. Lipson
" 12	Reading N.U.W.S.S.	J. Malcolm Mitchell
" 12	Kensington W.S.P.U.	Joseph Clayton
" 13	Oxford M.L.W.S.	Dr. J. Estlin Carpenter
" 13	"	E. Lipson
" 13	Hoxton Hall M.L.W.S.	Joseph Clayton
" 13	International Franchise Club.	Philip Snowden, M.P.
" 13	"	H. G. Chancellor, M.P.
" 13	Kilburn W.S.P.U.	H. Baillie Weaver
" 14	Windsor N.U.W.S.S.	R. F. Cholmeley
" 14	Great Missenden N.U.W.S.S.	C. V. Drysdale
" 14	Steinway Hall W.S.P.U.	Joseph Clayton
" 14	Bury	H. Stanton Barnes
" 15	London Opera House	Sir Alfred Mond, M.P.
" 17	Finsbury I.L.P.	J. Y. Kennedy
" 17	Cheltenham Ethical Society	C. V. Drysdale
" 18	Hayes Literary Society	Goldfinch Bate
" 18	London Pavilion W.S.P.U.	H. W. Nevinson
" 18	Bedford College M.L.W.S.	R. F. Cholmeley
" 18	Burnley N.U.W.S.S.	H. Stanton Barnes
" 19	Hampstead M.S.W.R.	Joseph Clayton
" 21	Chelmsford N.U.W.S.S.	Sir John Cockburn
" 21	Hove W.F.L.	C. V. Drysdale
" 22	Ipswich W.F.L.	Philip Snowden, M.P.
" 22	Limpsfield N.U.W.S.S.	Walter Hogg
" 22	Upper Norwood N.C.S.W.S.	Rev. Hugh Chapman
" 23	Wimbledon W.S.P.U.	J. Malcolm Mitchell
" 23	"	Theodor Gugenheim
" 25	Croydon W.L.A.	J. E. Raphael
" 27	Bideford N.U.W.S.S.	Rev. Geoffrey Startup
" 27	Ashford N.C.S.W.S.	Joseph Clayton
" 27	International Franchise Club	R. F. Cholmeley
" 27	Hampstead M.L.W.S.	Lord Lytton
" 29	Essex Hall W.F.L.	Dr. G. B. Clark
" 29	Purley N.U.W.S.S.	R. F. Cholmeley
" 31	Hyde Park M.P.U.	Victor Prout

OXFORD UNIVERSITY BRANCH.

The first general meeting of the Oxford University Branch of the Men's League was held on Wednesday, March 13, at Manchester College. The chair was to have been taken by the President, Professor Gilbert Murray, but he was prevented from being present by an important professional engagement, and, in his absence, Professor Margoliouth, one of the vice-presidents of the branch, presided. Among those present were Dr. Carpenter, Principal of Manchester College; Professor Herbertson, and Mr. Carlyle, the Junior Proctor. There were letters of regret for absence expressing cordial agreement and sympathy with the movement from Professor Gilbert Murray, Mr. Grant Robertson, Mr. Dundas, and others.

The Chairman opened the meeting by explaining that it had been summoned for the purpose of inviting those who favoured the proposed extension of the franchise to women to join the Oxford University Branch of the Men's League. Mr. E. Lipson, the honorary secretary of the branch, then gave an account of the aims of the League and the character and scope of its organisation. He said that the League was non-party in character, and men of all parties were welcome. It was refreshing to have one platform, at least, on which all men could meet, however divergent their political views. The object of the League was to promote the political enfranchisement of women. It was an organisation of men to assist women in winning their emancipation. Women needed the vote to protect their economic interests and to improve their status generally. For those who held this conviction it was a moral duty not to stand aloof. He emphasised the fact that the Oxford Society entirely dissociated itself from militancy. They passed no opinion as to the legitimacy or advisability of militant tactics, but as an official body their methods would be orderly and constitutional. Nor could they deny the immense importance of the work which such a league could do by educating public opinion through public meetings. The soil must be prepared before they could hope to reap the harvest of Woman Suffrage. There could be no revolution without a Renaissance, without an intellectual awakening to its necessity and justification. This was the sphere of action which the Oxford Branch had marked out for itself.

Dr. Carpenter proposed a resolution that an Oxford Branch of the Men's League should be founded. His speech admirably summed up the work which the Men's League could do for the movement. He observed that it was a prevalent opinion that the supporters of Woman Suffrage were in reality only few in numbers. This was not the case, for there were in the country a large number of men who were convinced of the justice of women's claims. The League served the purpose of organising these supporters of Woman Suffrage, and of enabling them to give voice to their opinions. The resolution was carried unanimously.

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