

House to allow us to state our case at the Bar for the extension of the existing Parliamentary suffrage to our own sex.

"Parliament, as the fountain of law, is doubtless desirous to mete out justice to all, and we submit that no class of His Majesty's subjects in the United Kingdom stand more in need of justice than the unrepresented women."

The Prime Minister, replying through his secretary, Mr. Arthur Ponsonby, to the signatories, says that he fears there is "a serious preliminary difficulty in the way of carrying out their suggestion." He states that "The only cases in which petitions are formally presented at the Bar are those in which the Lord Mayor or Sheriffs of the City of London, or the Lord Mayor of the City of Dublin attend for the purpose. It would also seem that there is no precedent for women appearing in support of a petition, and no recent precedent for men so appearing. Whilst he fully appreciates the force of the arguments which the petitioners employ in support of the case for the enfranchisement of women, the Prime Minister fails to see how, under these circumstances he can render them the assistance which they desire."

The precedents on which the writers of the letter relied were—(1) the case of Ann Fitzharris, whose husband was executed for treason in 1681. She personally appeared at the Bar of the House to plead extenuating circumstances for her husband, and that she and her three children should be mercifully dealt with. (2) In 1809 Mrs. Clarke, mistress of the Duke of York, was summoned to the Bar of the House, and required to give evidence in connection with the charges brought against the Duke regarding the corrupt sale of Commissions in the Army.

The terms of the Women's Enfranchisement Bill, introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Dickinson, are as follows:

1.—(1) In all Acts relating to the qualifications and registration of voters or persons entitled or claiming to be registered and to vote in the election of Members of Parliament, wherever words occur which import the masculine gender the same shall be held to include women for all purposes connected with and having reference to the right to be registered as voters and to vote in such election.

(2) A woman shall not be disqualified by reason of marriage from being so registered and voting notwithstanding the provisions of any law or custom to the contrary.

The Householders' League for the Restoration and Preservation of Ancient National Rights is arranging a great Service of Prayer for the success of the Women's Parliamentary Franchise, to be held on Sunday, March 3rd, in Hyde Park, and other places throughout the country. The President of the League, Mrs. Crawford, writes that it is already evident that the proposal appeals to a large number of educated and enlightened persons, among whom are many pastors of churches.

Book of the Week.

A BLIND BIRD'S NEST.*

Miss Findlater is an author who never disappoints us. We never feel, in taking up her work, that it has been written in fulfilment of a contract with her publishers, but always that she wrote it because she had to.

There is a reality, subtle and persuasive, about her style; you see the things that happen, you know the people to whom they happen; and this is story-telling in its true sense.

It was a little alarming, on taking up the book, to find it adorned—like an Eden Philpotts—with photographs of the scenery, in Devonshire, where the story is laid. But there is nothing photographic in the story. It is true art, of the most artless kind.

"God builds the nest of the blind bird" is the old proverb on which the story hangs. And surely if ever there was a blind bird, it is Agnes Sorel—who is a very different kind of Agnes from the historic lady whose name Miss Findlater has borrowed.

The Sorels were wild; and it was much regretted by all her prudent, nicely brought-up relatives, when Agnes Lascelles married wild Austin Sorel. Less than a year after the marriage, he became involved in a quarrel with a man who had compromised his sister. Meeting this man, when out shooting, Austin shot him. He was tried for murder but not hanged—sentenced to a long term of imprisonment—presumably because the case was really one of manslaughter. His young wife, stricken to the earth by such disgrace, died in giving birth to Agnes. When first Mark Bassett saw the child, he said, "Who is that dreadful-looking child? She seems to have seen the Gorgon's head!"

Agnes lives with her grandmother, whose life has been wrecked by the above-mentioned troubles. When Agnes is grown up, her father's sentence is just about to come to an end. The old mother makes no plan concerning his future, all feeling apparently, has died away in her. Agnes has not been taught to write to her father, nor to have any affection for him. He has been left by his kith and kin to wither slowly in his prison, until it is hardly a human being at all, who returns to the light of day and the freedom of the world.

The return is too much for the old grandmother. She dies suddenly, and Agnes is left to the world. Her only aunt, Clare, the woman for whom Austin has undergone his terrible chastisement, is one of the most odious persons we have ever come across, even in fiction. Old Mr. and Mrs. Lascelles, Agnes's great uncle and aunt, are her only other relatives. She has two suitors—Mark Bassett, a man twice her age, the father of her friend, and Terence Woods, a young American, whose mother, though liking Agnes much, is horrified at the notion of such a family connection for her boy.

* By Mary Findlater. (Methuen.)

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