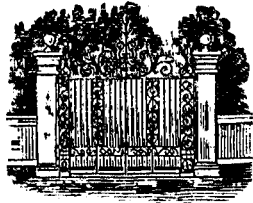


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



The beautiful presence of Queen Alexandra was greatly missed at the opening of Parliament, but the King did his part with much stately affability, and not for many years has there been so much excitement and go at Westminster as characterised Monday's magnificent spectacle, when His Majesty read his Speech.

It was a hopeful Speech on the whole. The male portion of the population at home, and affairs in the uttermost parts of the earth, to say nothing of the doings in little Crete, seem to be matters for the paternal consideration of a Liberal Government, but it is useless to deny the fact that the omission of Women's Suffrage from the plan of campaign aroused a just sense of disappointment and resentment in the thoughts of all reasoning women.

Somehow Suffrage has been in the air during the past fortnight, there has been a most influential meeting of Members of Parliament, who are supporters of the movement in the Committee Rooms in the House of Commons, at which Mr. Corrie Grant presided, to meet members of the Central Society for Women's Suffrage. At this meeting Mrs. Fawcett said that never before had there been such a hopeful opening of Parliament. Over half of the members were in favour of Women's Suffrage, and the earnest desire of women all over the country to be enfranchised was more pronounced than ever. The labouring women of Lancashire had made it a test question; the women graduates of Scotland, 900 in number, had made it a legal question. Asked what the Women's Suffrage societies would propose, Mrs. Fawcett suggested three courses:—(1) That as many members as possible should ballot for a Bill, (2) That every other Bill should be watched for purposes of amendments or resolutions, and (3) That the Prime Minister should be approached to see if he would not make it a Government measure.

To this the Members present agreed, only discussing dates, ways and means. Finally the members present resolved themselves into a committee for promoting Women's Suffrage, with Sir Charles Maclaren as chairman. Mr. Geoffrey Howard (a son of Lady Carlisle), Mr. Cameron Corbett, and Mr. Philip Snowden were appointed hon. secs. of the committee.

Then, at the Conference of Delegates of the new Labour Party, which ended on Saturday, a resolution was passed in favour of adult suffrage (a counsel of perfection) for women and men.

Last, but not least, must be noted the proceedings at a meeting organised by the Women's Social and Political Union, held whilst the King's Speech was being made in the House of Lords, at the

Caxton Hall, Westminster, and which was the most "live" suffrage meeting we have ever attended. The hall was crammed with working women, many bringing babes in arms, and over these bloodless and weary beings the grim Shadow of Death loomed large. These working women and their children stand upon the *starvation line*, and they told one quite simply: "We want the vote to better our condition, to compel the sweater to pay us a living wage;" "What'cher think of a penny-fathing a hour for them there slop overcoats as the Press gentlemen is wearing?" And "How'd yer like to make a coat and skirt fit for a lidy ter wear fer one and five pence?" "'Unger, 'unger, why was we mide wid stummicks, that's what I want ter know?" Yet all the babies looked as snug and clean as could be, however poorly clad the white-faced mothers.

Mrs. Pankhurst, widow of the famous Dr. Pankhurst and a grand-daughter of one of the Chartist women who demonstrated at Peterloo, was in the chair, supported by Miss Annie Kenney, the Lancashire factory girl who recently suffered three days' imprisonment for asking a political question at a political meeting in the Manchester Free Trade Hall; Mrs. Martel, an enfranchised woman from New South Wales; Mrs. Dora Montefiore, who has just submitted to the selling up of her goods rather than contribute to the taxes without being given in return representation in Parliament; and several Labour M.P.'s.

For fifty years, said Mrs. Pankhurst, women had worked in an organised manner to secure enfranchisement. At the end of that time they found themselves as far off the realisation of their wishes as at the beginning. "We women," proceeded Mrs. Pankhurst, "have now realised that if women are to get political reforms they must adopt the methods of the men. We are adopting the methods of the Chartists of old. We are ready to face contumely, opprobrium, and even death itself, in order to secure our enfranchisement."

A resolution emphatically condemning the omission from the King's Speech of all reference to the enfranchisement of women, and demanding that the Government shall immediately introduce a measure giving the Parliamentary vote to women on the same terms as to men, was moved by Mrs. Martel, of Sydney, and seconded by Dr. Drysdale.

Miss Annie Kenney, a slip of a girl, spoke with tremendous force, red blood bubbling in every vein, and Mrs. Philip Snowden, the wife of the Labour Member for Blackburn, a most beautiful girl, used language in supporting the resolution which we have only heard equalled by Lady Henry Somerset at her best. This lady has indeed a wonderful gift of oratory, and is a tremendous asset to any cause which can gain her support. Mr. Parker, M.P., Halifax, and Mr. Roberts, M.P., Norwich, evidently men who have fought and won, promised whole-hearted support to Women's Suffrage in the House. Several of the delegates went straight from the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)