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EDITORIAL.

THE KING'S ASSENT.

I have been pleased to give My consent to your proposals for the better Representation of the People.

The King's Speech.

As was fitting in an Act of primary importance the first paragraph in the King's Speech at the Prorogation of Parliament, in reference to new legislation, dealt with the Representation of the People Act, 1918—the Act which has removed the disability to exercise the Parliamentary Franchise placed upon women, and so has expunged the blot which has disgraced the English Constitution.

While legislation is under the consideration of Parliament the King, as a constitutional monarch, refrains from any strong expression of opinion for or against a proposed measure. It seems therefore that His Majesty has taken the earliest possible opportunity of expressing his pleasure that at last a proportion of his women subjects are to have political freedom, and the women before whose initiative and long-sustained effort the barriers of sex prejudice have at length fallen, are free to devote their strong sense of duty, intellect, energy, and undaunted spirit, imperturbable even behind prison bars—to the better government of the Empire.

The reference to the Representation of the People Act in the King's speech is as follows:—

“MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

I have been pleased to give My consent to your proposals for the better Representation of the People. I trust that this measure will ensure to a much larger number of My subjects in the United Kingdom an effective voice in the government of the country, and will enable the National Unity,

which has been so marked a characteristic of the War, to continue in the not less arduous work of reconstruction in times of peace.”

It is indeed a good omen for the preservation of National Unity that women will have an important share in reconstruction after the war. Questions of health, of housing, and other matters of social reform must inevitably occupy the attention of the members of the first House of Commons to be elected on the new basis of representation, and we are sure that they will endeavour to return to Parliament candidates who will take a patriotic and elevated view of their obligations towards social legislation.

To members of the nursing profession the prospect of political freedom for six millions of women brings the hope that the end of their struggle for the effective organization of their profession will speedily receive statutory authority. In the past they have endeavoured to secure such legislation without the lever of political power necessary to effect it, with the result that those who desire to keep them disorganized, and to control their economic condition, have been able to delay it. The effective pressure which a proportion of their number will now be able to exercise should materially hasten the day when a just Nurses' Registration Act will be placed upon the Statute Book.

In spite of his colossal labours during the Great War, Mr. Lloyd George will be acclaimed in centuries to come as the great Prime Minister during whose tenure of office the sex disability of women was removed in the United Kingdom, and we have no doubt he will soon add to his laurels by providing for the professional enfranchisement on “self-determination” lines, of trained nurses, a status their work for the community has earned, and the public interest demands.

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