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EDITORIAL.

WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT.

"I hope and believe that Lady Astor is the first of a noble band of women, representing every grade and class, who will adorn the House with their presence, and their service to the State with the great qualities of sympathy and enthusiasm."—*The Prime Minister.*

The new era inaugurated in the House of Commons by the election of a woman Member of Parliament received recognition in the King's Speech by the substitution of the word "Members" for "Gentlemen" in the time-honoured formula, "My Lords, and Gentlemen of the House of Commons." Now that this momentous change has at length been accomplished, Members of Parliament are discovering that it is quite extraordinary in how many ways they have been handicapped because the brains of women as well as of men have not been available in the counsels of the Nation.

The point was emphasised by Members of Parliament (including Viscountess Astor, M.P.) who spoke at the Meeting held at the Queen's Hall on the 12th inst. to urge the need of women in Parliament, when Lady Astor was careful to say that she was not at Westminster as the representative of sex interests, but as the elected candidate of both the men and women of Plymouth.

To mention some of the legislation indicated in the King's Speech in which the counsel of women could be helpful. (1) Reconstruction, for the reconstruction of imperial affairs is only an enlargement of the problem of the rebuilding of the home; (2) the Government of Ireland. It is conceivable that the wit and sympathy of women might assist the Government to find a satisfactory solution to a problem over which men alone have blundered for generations, and which has baffled those of all parties. (3) Legislation for the development of a suitable system

for the peace-time regulation of the sale and supply of alcoholic liquor, which has the warm support of the one woman M.P. (4) Legislation to stimulate and develop the production of essential foodstuffs within the United Kingdom. We have only to look across the Channel to see how powerful a factor women may be in this connection.

Amongst private Members' Bills introduced into the House of Commons this Session is the Women's Pensions Bill "To provide Pensions for Women with Children." A Bill "To amend the Representation of the People Act, 1918," the intention of which is to grant the franchise to women on the same terms as to men. The "Shops (Early Closing) Bill." The Bill "To provide for the technical education, employment, and maintenance of the Blind." The Bill "To amend the Bastardy Laws and to make further and better provision with regard to bastard children, and for other purposes connected therewith." The Bill "To provide for the extension of the suffrage to women."

Then the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, and the raising of the Age of Consent to 18, in which the Bishop of London is interested, and which he will introduce into the House of Lords this Session, is one which should receive the support of all women. The Bishop recently told Convocation that he believed if the Bill was carried through Parliament it would have a greater effect in stopping the spread of venereal disease than any of the other efforts that had been made. The Bill proposed to make the law of seduction as severe as the law of abduction. No doubt they would have a great deal of opposition to the Bill, but the greatest difficulty to overcome was determined indifference to the whole question. Anything more scandalous than the light penalties now imposed for keeping disorderly houses he could not conceive. Nurses will agree.

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