

# Mrs. Pankhurst's Address

Concluded from January 3rd issue

But in the meantime women had been securing an entrance into politics. The Conservatives saw that woman was a useful factor in politics and founded the Primrose league. They recognized that though without the vote woman was more competent to teach men how to vote than the voters themselves. As a result of the start of the influence of women in politics the liberal party was an outcast for 20 years. It was some time later that the Liberal party woke up and organizing women's associations, won their way back to power.

## Deputation in Lobby

It was on the eve of the general election of 1905 that the band of women who were in favor of the suffrage felt that then was the time to act, and they began to consider the situation. A measure was before the House, but like so many other good measures, it was talked out. A deputation of 400 women attended in the lobby when the final defeat came. An indignation meeting was held on the forbidden ground in front of St. Stephens', and while the police took down the names of the offenders, no legal proceedings were ever taken. The only member of the House who was present at the meeting was heard to say: "You have today kindled a light in England which will never go out, till women get the vote."

The Liberal party was then returned to power, and has since held the reins of government. The question was often asked why the women attacked the Liberal party. The reason was that the women had expected the vote from the progressive party, and when they did not get it they determined to oppose every government till the vote was secured, leaving all questions of policy in abeyance.

## Militant Campaign

Mrs. Pankhurst then went on to describe the suffragist movement. "Our first demonstration of a militant campaign was in front of St. Stephens in 1905. Then we felt that the situation was hopeless. We had no support from the press. We were unknown practically to the public, and we felt that our patience was at length exhausted. We determined to resort to the only methods possible to secure the vote. If anyone present here can tell me of a better way we might have taken I should like to hear of it. We have never had any suggested so far.

"Well, thirteen of us formed the first militant association and we set out in the campaign to defeat the strongest government of modern England. What have we done in the six years? We are now the largest political aggregation in the United Kingdom. We raise more money and spend more in the year than any other political organization. The great government has, since we started to work, lost its huge majority, and is now at the mercy of the two smaller parties, on which it depends for support. We set out to make woman suffrage a part of practical politics."

The methods which the women employed were then described by Mrs. Pankhurst. First of all they tried deputations, but were informed by the prime minister that he had no time to hear the women as he was occupied with the voters. The next means was that of questioning the members of the government, and the first to be questioned was Sir Edward Grey, who won his spurs on the political platform by a speech in favor of woman suffrage. It was at a meeting of his in Manchester that a daughter of Mrs. Pankhurst along with a working girl of the city, determined to ask the question. They had with them banners which they displayed at the close of the minister's speech when they asked the question merely to show clearly what they wanted.

The question was "Will the Liberal government give women the vote?"

The question was unanswered and before it could be, both girls were torn from their seats, dragged from the hall with their clothes torn and their hands bleeding from the rough treatment they received. They were flung into the street and there they held a meeting of protest and were immediately arrested by the police on the charge of obstructing the street.

## Sacrifice Liberty for Cause

At the court next day the two women were fined, but refusing to pay the fine went to prison, one for seven days and the other for three days. Mrs. Pankhurst then went to her daughter and wished to pay the fine, thinking they had gone far enough. But the answer of Miss Christobel was "If you pay the fine I shall never come home."

"Then," continued Mrs. Pankhurst, "the ice was broken. People saw there was some reality in the claim when women were willing to give up their liberty for it. Since that date hundreds of women have been thrown out of meetings with their questions unanswered and fearing the question, ministers of the crown have escaped hurriedly and in disguise at the close of the meeting, saying they had a train to catch."

"At all these meetings the women never once interrupted foolishly and senselessly as do the students at women's and other meetings. They spoke only when they had pertinent interjections to make. They were thrown out for thus interjecting, with much violence, and as a result they were soon forbidden to attend meetings and only a few privileged were allowed to attend after vouching that they would not open their mouths. But they had a remedy and they could hide under platforms, in organ pipes and on the roof of the hall. Women had been known to remain on a roof for thirty-six hours without food waiting for the opportunity to interrupt a speaker. They could also hold outside meetings, and as women have penetrating voices they could easily be heard inside. When it was summer they could force the meeting inside to close the window and the men preferred to perspire copiously than to hear what the women would say. Then barricades were erected in the street to keep the women away. It was then that we felt that the stone is a time-honored political weapon and wrapping our questions round the stone we hurled it through the windows, as near as we could to the feet of the speaker that he might at least receive our message."

## Laughter a Weapon

"In all this campaign the women never took a single step forward without being pushed back first of all by their opponents. We did not mind being laughed at as long as by laughter we could get our way to the vote. But the laughter was also turned against the statesman who refused to answer us. The statesmen is a sort of serious individual not to be mocked or jeered at, but it was somewhat undignified for the first minister of the crown to make his way out by the rear entrance with a horse cloth over his head or to pass by an underground passage to the post office and then be shot down the parcel tube. People began to take us seriously then. A leading paper, when Mr. Asquith went to Birmingham, sent a wire to its local correspondent, 'Never mind the prime minister. What are the suffragettes doing?'"

"Our next move was the canvass, and with a distinct woman's platform we took the field. We said, 'Vote against the government till it gives women the vote.' Candidates then began to complain that we took their audiences from them, but our reply was that the country was free, and if they wished to have a bigger house they should give better speeches."

"Particularly in the working class districts we gained ground and we found that as we went into the social problems that were within the province of women we found the support of men who were not skilled in party lore, but had human hearts. We then became a real power in the election and government candidates where we worked against them were often defeated."

"We have also now thirty branches of a tax resistance league, and many women who have taxes to pay refuse to contribute to the government in which they have no voice."

## Social Legislation

"But the cause we have at heart is deeper by far than the mere securing

of the vote. We wish to have a share in the great social legislation which is needed in modern society. There is the appalling waste of human life where the pressure of population is felt most. England is now embarked on a campaign for more social legislation modelled though imperfectly on what is going on in Australia and New Zealand. The confession of those who are in authority in those colonies is that the measures have been introduced since the franchise was extended to women. If this beneficial legislation can be carried out in a country which is so sparsely populated, why do we have to wait for it in England?"

"This last week has given us at home a new handle which we can use to advantage against the government. The insurance bill of David Lloyd George is in a terrible mess, and it has been passed, and brings a new grievance for women. The bill proposes insurance against unemployment and sickness. There are a few women who are included under the higher scale, but the bulk are on the lower. A domestic servant has to contribute 3d. a week, and the mistress a similar amount, and the government gives a little more. This goes to form a fund which gives a man 10s. a week when sick, but the woman only 7s. 6d. Yet the women contribute the same sum as the men. Further, if the woman marries, she falls out of the benefit and loses every penny subscribed, and so also does the mistress. She can only re-enter if she becomes a widow and is at the same time a wage-earner. If not a wage-earner, she cannot participate. The bill takes no account of women and children. Only when the man is sick is any grant made. This bill, I may state, has converted many an anti-suffragist into a suffragist, and spread the general feeling that it is impossible to do the women justice under the government of man. Many amendments were proposed to rectify the conditions, but they were closed and the bill went through without any improvement being made as far as women are concerned. In the face of such an injustice, the differences of class have been forgotten, and Albert hall was last week the scene of an unusual function, when mistress and maid met together to denounce the proposals of Lloyd George."

## English Divorce Law

"All these facts only serve to provide fuel for the flame of the woman suffrage movement. There has been a great deal of talk lately of new legislation for those who are about to enter into marriage. Woman should have a say as one of the contracting parties. There are the questions of divorce and of the training of children. Who knows better of these matters than do women? There are also the trades and professions which are at the present time open to women. It is only right that we should have some say in the legislation concerning us. We have heard much of the English divorce law. It is a disgrace to any civilized country. The only redeeming feature of the matter is that the bulk of men are better than the law allows. But there is the minority, and the law should be severe for them. They are as bad as the law allows them to be. If woman only had weight in politics this would be rectified soon. She will serve to call more attention to such questions of national welfare. If we are to have any divorce law at all, and that is a much-debated question, it should be a law that is equal both for man and woman. Unless women get the vote we have no guarantee that it will be so. There is again the legal status of married persons. Nature has given the child two parents, the law gives but one, and it is the father when the child is born in wedlock, but if the child is born out of wedlock, it is the mother. Men have made these laws, but what we want is to have Nature's law as man's law."

## Emigration Problem

"There is also the problem of emigration. Women are told are required in Canada and elsewhere to populate the empire. But can you get the better class of women to come out here unless it can be shown that there are conditions in

Canada which would induce them to come? Compare Canada with Australia and you can easily figure out where the best of the women from the home country who find no room for them there, are going. In Australia and in some of the Western states they can have all the privileges and the status of citizenship, and as there are few women there they will be treated with all the chivalry and courtesy they might get elsewhere. There is nothing open to the man which is not open to the woman also. But here in Canada what do you give? A woman cannot homestead unless she is a widow with a young family. What you must do in Canada is to make the status of woman as dignified as that of man, and at the same time to give her more right of self-protection than she has today."

## The White Slave Trade

"And there is that greatest of all questions, the white slave trade. Young women go astray from poverty, helplessness, and ignorance of life. The cause, as is well known, is in the main economic, and for this evil men are responsible in a terrible way to women. We want laws for the elevating of the working class girl, and who will give them so readily as women, who understand every condition? We want to give our girls a good education and instruction in a trade and the white slave traffic will cease, for their will be no girls to buy."

"If we look around in the world, where do we see women happy, well treated and satisfied unless where the world has been made what women wish it to be? Men are responsible if they allow the present condition of things to continue. Women have the power to work out their own salvation. But as it is, if a woman is ruined, if a child is injured, man is responsible for it all. It is a responsibility I would not care to have, and, as things are, I would not be a man for all the world. If women fail as men have failed, then they will bear the burden with them. But since men cannot protect and shield us, let us share the duty with them, let us use our power so that woman may be a participant not to tyrannise over man, but to take a share in the responsibilities of ruling without which there is no real representative government. What we really are interested in in this fight is the uplifting of the sex and better conditions of humanity than men can secure. In the legal home there is but the man. What we want is the combined intelligence of man and woman working for the salvation of the children of the race. This will make for the world a better time than ever before in its history. It will raise mankind to heights of which now it has little conception. We must only make this last fight for human freedom that as the class distinction disappeared so that sex distinction may pass, and then you will get better things than men can by themselves secure."

## Mrs. Pankhurst was Cheered

There were loud and prolonged cheers as Mrs. Pankhurst took her seat after speaking for a full two hours. Before she could be thanked she had to leave to catch the night train for the West, where she will lecture next at Victoria. She will return through the States lecturing at various points on the women's question.

Before she left Mrs. Pankhurst said that she was much impressed with the women of Western Canada, their independence and self-reliance, but thought that they had yet to be awakened to their duties as members of the community. She had met with but few women in Canada who took as active a part in public affairs as did the women of the Old Country. Such a condition of affairs would have to be changed before they could induce the better class of young Englishwomen who had gone through some branch of higher education, to settle here. The disposition to let things be would never gain anything for the women of Canada, and she regretted that politics here were such that women could not find an entrance even to work on such public boards as the school board.

Continued on Page 18