

women, Suffragists, Co-operators, Temperance Workers, Conservatives, Liberals, Socialists, Trade Unionists, assembled in Downing Street to plead for their vote, Emmeline Pankhurst uttered an unusual note of tragedy:

"We feel this question so keenly that we are prepared to sacrifice for it life itself, or what is perhaps even harder, the means by which we live!"

There was the sharpness of actuality in her words; her business, now almost disregarded, was drifting to its end; her frequent absences from the registrarship were the subject of official rebuke; she might easily lose the position. Her daughters were not yet launched; her delicate son of fifteen was as yet by no means equipped to earn a living. Her old friend Noémie had written a harsh rebuke, telling her to leave politics alone and give her attention to placing her daughters in professions; but she could not settle down to that; she was driven by a desperate heart-hunger for the ideal. Still struggling, still unsatisfied, seeking a goal of beauty for her hard pilgrimage, she had seized on this quest of the vote as the fulfilment of her destiny, ready to die for it as the tigress for her young. At her note of passion, despite its dignity, carefully reared, conventional non-militants tightened their lips in disapproval; this surely was bad form!

Campbell-Bannerman expressed his personal belief in the justice of the cause, but excused himself from action: some of his Cabinet were opposed to it; he could "only preach the virtue of patience." "Patience," replied Keir Hardie, "can be carried to

excess! With agreement between the leaders of the two historic Parties,<sup>1</sup> it surely does not pass the wit of statesmen to find ways and means to enfranchise the women of England before this Parliament comes to a close." Alas! the bald head of the Prime Minister shook gloomily in token of dissent.

Asquith, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was named as the chief obstacle to Government action. He was to speak at Northampton. Mrs. Pankhurst went before him to address a great meeting there. The President of the local Women's Liberal Federation assured her the disgraceful violence done to women in other towns would not occur in that enlightened city. She was accorded a front seat among the prominent Liberal ladies. Her plea that her question related to education secured her a momentary hearing, but she was violently ejected as soon as she mentioned the vote. The President of the Women's Liberal Federation and several of her colleagues resigned forthwith and joined the W.S.P.U. A little later, when Asquith spoke in Aberdeen, Mrs. Pankhurst was implored to hold off her stalwarts, on a pledge that he would answer the all-important questions quietly put to him by one woman: Mrs. Black, the President of the local Women's Liberal Federation. When she rose, as had been agreed, she was hustled and howled down, whilst the Chairman, who was privy to the arrangement, declared her out of order. Mrs. Pankhurst, rising to explain the situation, was violently ejected. Such scenes were typical.

<sup>1</sup> Balfour, the Conservative ex-Premier, had also long declared himself in favour.