

Actually it invited attack. Asquith, in promising a free vote on the Amendment to the Reform Bill, had expressly stipulated that it must be drafted on democratic lines. This was ignored; the Liberal and Labour members of the Conciliation Committee, with the best of intentions, had given way to the Conservatives on every point. Nevertheless, Asquith granted July 11th and 12th for the Second Reading; but when the Bill came on, Lloyd George attacked the poor little measure on the ground that it would not enfranchise the working-man's wife, and could not be amended to bring her in. Despite his onslaught, it was carried by the big majority of 299 votes to 189, only to be blocked by Asquith who refused to give further time for it, on the very ground that it was not capable of Amendment. The Conciliation Committee were woefully obliged to recast their measure. They hoped for another chance for it in the autumn session, but members of the Government definitely declared there would be no facilities for any Suffrage Bill that year.

On hearing that, the W.S.P.U. immediately summoned another Caxton Hall "Parliament." Mrs. Pankhurst announced her intention to carry a petition to the Government. Whilst she was mustering her militants in the Caxton Hall, Asquith was announcing the breakdown of the House of Lords Conference; in ten days Parliament would be dissolved. Keir Hardie demanded two hours for a Resolution that the Government must allow time for the Conciliation Bill before the session closed. Asquith promised to reply to him in a few moments,

but left the House without doing so. Mrs. Pankhurst was already at the doors with a distinguished company: Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, pioneer woman doctor, first of the women mayors, Hertha Ayrton, the scientist, Annie Cobden-Sanderson, the Princess Dhuleep Singh, and three old stalwarts up in their seventies. Members of Parliament flocked out to her, escorted her into the House, even to the Prime Minister's room. Unable to discover him, she returned to the Strangers' Entrance and there held audience of the Members. "Is there not a man in the House of Commons who will stand up for us?" she demanded passionately. Stirred by her challenge, Lord Castlereagh moved an Amendment demanding time for the Conciliation Bill, whereon Asquith promised to state next day what his Government would do.

Little detachments of women, with bannerettes: "Asquith has vetoed our Bill," were struggling towards the House through enormous crowds. The police, uniformed and political, tore their flags to shreds, knocked them down, even kicked them as they lay, pinched their breasts, squeezed their ribs, twisted their arms, using them more atrociously than ever. Some were dragged down dark streets and indecently assaulted; two died of their injuries. The day was named "Black Friday."¹ One hundred and fifteen

¹ The Conciliation Committee called for a Parliamentary inquiry into the conduct of the police on that day, and Churchill's instructions to them. When this was refused, the Committee organized an inquiry of its own, and having examined 135 witnesses, addressed a strong protest to the Government, declaring that the police had tortured women by violence and indecency, not even ceasing when they had their victims under arrest.