

THE ADVANCE OF WOMAN SUFFRAGE

How the Movement Has Invaded the Ranks of the Four Hundred in the United States and Become a Riot in London.

Methods of the American and English Suffragettes Contrasted — Prominent Women Who Are Interested in "the Cause."

By JAMES A. EDGERTON.



REV. ANNA HOWARD SHAW.

The woman suffrage movement has been made fashionable. It has meetings in Newport and national headquarters in Fifth avenue. It has invaded the ranks of the Four Hundred, where it divides honors with bridge whist and monkey dinners. Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont has opened her exclusive Marble House as a lecture hall for its devotees. As an added inducement she allows the public to have a peep at her celebrated art collection and her palatial Newport rooms. True, this new gospel is not "without money and without price," but costs \$5 a throw, the funds going into the treasury of the cause. A large array of people were not only eager to pay the price to see the Belmont art treasures, but were even willing to remain to the suffragist lectures as an added price or added inducement, according to the point of view. This method of propaganda is somewhat different from that of the English suffragettes who go to jail for their principles, but why break into jail when one can break into society?

These Newport meetings, which were

the challenge, "I think I am just as good as a man," when the speaker in her heart of hearts probably thinks she is much better than a man—and probably is. If this were a question of goodness it is man that would be disfranchised. It is really surprising that women should actually want to vote, however, when a large section of the men do not want to and will not unless they are paid for it.

Where Suffrage Has Been Granted.

Women can now vote in New Zealand, Australia, Finland and Norway. They have suffrage rights in Great Britain in all except parliamentary elections. They can cast a ballot in school elections in most of the states of this country and have full suffrage in Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho and Utah. In the state of Washington a constitutional amendment is now pending before the people which, if adopted, will add a fifth suffrage state. Wherever the experiment has been made the result has been neither a retrogression to barbarism nor a flying leap into the millennium. On the contrary, little or no change has been observed in political conditions. The women have voted, in a very few cases have been elected to office, and that is all. The great machine of popular government has ground on very much as it did before. Those who had been wildly shouting either for or against the proposition saw that there was lit-

tionably increased the nervous prostration of England. They have also made a laughingstock of the government and the police. That is the surprising part of their performance and reveals true generalship. It would naturally be supposed that these outlandish stunts would have brought ridicule upon their perpetrators, but they were so engineered by the resourceful suffragettes that the ridicule was turned against their opponents. They showed that, whether or not women know enough to vote, they are sufficiently wise to outmaneuver men. This was not a new realization, however. We knew it before.

Compared to their British sisters our American suffragists have been quite mild and circumspect. In other words, they have been perfect ladies. No screaming, howling and dervish dancing for them. In the United States "the cause" is in the pink tea stage. A number of ladies gather in some other lady's parlor and talk it over, or if they grow exceptionally radical and militant they hire a hall, make speeches and adopt resolutions. They also send out tracts. All this is quite harmless and unexciting. It does not attract the spot light or the police. There is no chance for an American suffragist to become a martyr. The worst she can do is to go to meetings and leave her tyrant husband to nurse the baby and wash the dishes. It is one thing to be dragged off to a dungeon by a ham handed policeman and quite another to go up to Mrs. Astor-bill's and hear somebody orate in a contralto voice. You will never get the American sister to go to a damp and stuffy jail. If it comes to that, she will simply take her hubby by the ear and tell him that she wants a new ballot box and will be about it when he goes downtown? He will. The American man is well trained. He is in a proper state of subjection, and when wifey gets good and ready to vote there will be nothing else to it. Moreover, the American brother is foxy. He will never give his woman-kind a chance to play to the grand stand in the martyrdom role. When she wants to present her petition to the legislature he invites her right into the main hall, smiles, listens and then forgets it. John Bull is different. He imagines that if he ever lets Mrs. Bull have a say and help run things his dignity will get mussed up, so he will not even listen to her. This gives Mrs. B. a chance to scream and gain the sympathy of the neighbors. Now, if the British government had been wise there would have been none of this hullabaloo, but Mrs. Pankhurst, Miss Pankhurst and all the other Pankhursts would have been allowed to present their petition and speak their little piece and that would have been the end of it.

Less Nerve Racking Methods.

It is a far cry from an English jail to Mrs. Belmont's Marble House at Newport. And even at that the English jail may live longer in history. Who knows? For my single self, however, I must say that I like the American way better. It is more comfortable even though it may not sound so heroic and thrilling in the school histories of the future. And in the long run it will probably prove just as effective. The women of Finland got the ballot without making any noise about it. Australasian ladies did not go up in balloons and muss up their hair, yet they have the ballot box now as an ornament on the center table. The wives and mothers of Colorado did not chain themselves to the railings in the statehouse, and still they proudly march to the polls and spoil as many ballots as the men. Norway had no Pankhurst family, but the Norse husband has had to divide the suffrage watermelon with his better half. Throwing bricks, marching in the middle of the street and screeching on cart tails may be necessary in England, but here it would simply be laughed off the map, and the women would do most of the laughing.

We have no Pankhursts in America, but we have Mrs. Howe and Miss Shaw, and we have the memory of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Frances E. Willard. Miss Shaw, who is both an ordained minister and a doctor of medicine, was herself born in England, but escaped at a very early age before she felt the bad effects. She was reared on a Michigan farm and had scarcely more educational advantages than Abraham Lincoln, yet she was so assiduous in gaining every possible scrap of knowledge that at fifteen she was a school-teacher and shortly after was preaching in a little church. The girl preacher was eloquent, and the congregation sent her to a theological college in Boston. Her church, the Methodist Episcopal, refused regularly to ordain her because she was a woman. Then she went to the Methodist Protestant and received her ordination papers. For years she occupied a Massachusetts pulpit, being one of the first women preachers in America. She also worked in the slums of Boston and, in order that she might be of more service to the poor, studied and took the degree of M. D., never charging a penny, however, for her medical services. She became widely known as a pulpit orator even before she became prominently identified with the suffrage movement. Now she is regarded as one of the most effective speakers on the platform. Perhaps her greatest power lies in her deep religious sentiment, but she is also a wit and can tell stories. Her voice is rich and musical, and her white hair and rosy face add to her charm. More than all else, she believes in her message. With such a leader and with such financial and social backing as that furnished by Mrs. Belmont, Mrs. Mackay and others, the American suffragist movement may be heard from during the next few years.

Increased Nervous Prostration.

In England the suffragettes, under the lead of Mrs. Pankhurst and her daughter, have gone up in balloons, started riots, mobbed the home of the prime minister, made several vain attempts to break into the house of commons, held outdoor meetings, raised disturbances at Liberal rallies so that the speakers could not proceed, gone to prison, had themselves sent through the mails as living letters and done every other odd and striking thing that their fertile imaginations could suggest, all for the good of the cause. Whether or not they have added to the suffrage sentiment, they have unques-



AMERICAN SOCIETY WOMEN INTERESTED IN THE SUFFRAGIST MOVEMENT AND ARREST OF AN ENGLISH SUFFRAGETTE.

but recently held, were addressed by Rev. Anna Howard Shaw, president of the National Suffrage society, and by Professor Zueblin of Chicago. Over one meeting the mayor of Newport presided and over the other the governor of Rhode Island. Mrs. Belmont, who, by the way, was formerly Mrs. Vanderbilt, spoke briefly. Mrs. Julia Ward Howe was present and was accorded an ovation. It should be said in the interest of accuracy that, in addition to the five dollar tickets, which admitted to the house, there were also one dollar tickets, which admitted only to the lawn, where the meetings were held. Even at these prices there was a large attendance, which shows devotion to the movement.

A Social Fad.

Nor is Mrs. Belmont the only woman of the Four Hundred who wants to vote. Mrs. Clarence H. Mackay, Mrs. Phillip Lydig, Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jr., Mrs. George Gould, Mrs. Richard Stevens, Miss Caroline Duer and others whose names are sufficient to make flunkies of two hemispheres kotow are also enlisted. If this keeps on the thing will become as fashionable as the peach basket hat. Then there will be no stopping it. Every woman in the land will be talking for it, and mere man will be compelled to grant her request if only to stop the din. A certain section of the unmarried suffragettes have even gone to the length of resolving that they will not wed any man unless he is in sympathy with the cause. This ought to make some converts, also a lot of masculine hypocrites. When a man really wants to get married he is as clay in the hands of the potter—he will promise anything.

There is no question that the suffrage cause is advancing. In New York it has become a fad and in London a riot. It is even crowding millinery as a topic of feminine conversation. On every hand one can now hear

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