

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MEETING IN ABERDEEN.

MRS PANKHURST DEFENDS SUFFRAGISTS' POLICY.

INTERRUPTIONS BY YOUNG MEN.

Mrs Pankhurst, the president of the Women's Social and Political Union, addressed a meeting in favour of votes for women in the Y.M.C.A. Hall, Aberdeen, last night. There were about 150 persons present, mostly ladies, and the back gallery was occupied by between 30 and 40 young men—apparently students—who kept up a running fire of interruptions during the progress of Mrs Pankhurst's address. Lady Ramsay occupied the chair, and introduced the speaker, and there were also on the platform Miss Phillips, the hon. secretary, and Mrs Innes, the hon. treasurer of the local branch of the union.

MRS PANKHURST'S SPEECH.

Mrs Pankhurst, who had a very cordial reception, in the opening part of her address, was several times interrupted by the tramping of the feet of a number of young men entering and leaving the meeting, and it was apparent by the gathering of young men in the back gallery that the speaker was confronted with something like an organised opposition. Mrs Pankhurst explained the aim of the organisation as working for votes for women on the same terms as they were, or might be, granted to men. Their immediate duty as women was to remove the disqualification which attached to their sex alone, in order that they might voice their opinions through the ballot box as men did. They would not be content with less; that was their minimum demand. (Applause.) The greater part of Mrs Pankhurst's address was devoted to telling how some of the women who were leading what was known as the militant movement for women's suffrage had felt that they were forced to take up the attitude they had adopted in order to get votes, and at times she was somewhat rudely interrupted by a section of the young men in the gallery, who scraped their feet, groaned, and made cock-crowing noises. Some of them who had taken the trouble to learn what practical politics meant realised that they were not likely to get reform out of any Government, unless the members of that Government, and the supporters of that Government, made some reference to it in their public speeches. They could not get women's suffrage or any other reform without some kind of preparation for it. All over the country Liberal speakers, while dealing with necessary political reforms, always treated women's suffrage as a question too sacred ever to be mentioned on a public platform. (Applause.) They—the leaders of the women's suffrage movement—realised that that sort of thing had to come to an end, and that if they were ever to get votes for women they would have to force the question upon the attention of practical politicians—that they would, in fact, have to bring it into the sphere of practical politics. (Applause and hisses.) Mrs Pankhurst, addressing the young men in the gallery, said she could dispense with their applause. (Renewed applause.) In trying to treat politics in a practical way—and they knew it was rather new for women to consider practical politics—(laughter and applause)—it was helpful if one could go on thinking without indiscriminate applause. (Renewed loud applause.)

THE SPHERE OF PRACTICAL POLITICS.

Mrs Pankhurst then went on to show how the agitation had brought the question within the sphere of practical politics. In an interview they had, before the general election, with Mr Balfour—who was the leader of the power that was going out, and so, she supposed, had a little more time than the successful people who were coming in—Mr Balfour—(shuffling of feet, applause, and hisses)—did them the honour of taking them seriously—(cries of "Oh!")—and said that all his political life he had seen the justice of the claim for the enfranchisement of women, but that he had not been able to do much with the question because it had not come into the region of practical politics. (Applause.) It was quite true, it hadn't. Women had been thinking that they could get votes for women in some special womanly and lady-like way; that they could get votes for women without going into the rough-and-tumble of politics and adopting the ways men had taken in order to get reforms. They left Mr Balfour, not in the least vexed with him, but determined that they would do their share to bring votes for women into the sphere of practical politics. (Applause.) People could say what they liked of the methods they had adopted—(loud applause from the gallery)—but nobody could deny that "votes for women" was now in the forefront of politics. (Cries of "Oh!" and "Rats!") When they got Cabinet Ministers—(noise)—as carefully guarded by the police as the Czar of Russia—(laughter)—when they got leading Liberal politicians afraid to venture even from a motor-car to a public hall without a posse of police—(renewed laughter and noise)—they must realise that there was something going on that had to be taken notice of. (Applause.) Yet, what had women done? (A voice—"Nothing"; laughter and cries of "Oh!"). Women had done nothing except to try to put to Cabinet Ministers, at public meetings, questions that men had always been allowed to put. (Interruption.) They had done nothing more than that, but for doing that; for doing what she had seen men do thousands of times uninterfered with, women had been brutally assaulted and flung out. (Cries of "Oh!" noise, and applause.) Now, did her young friends in the gallery know what women had done? (More noise.) They had read picturesque accounts in the newspapers. (A Voice—"Yes; the gladiators"—loud laughter and noise.) If women had done a tenth part of what her young friends in the gallery had done that night, they would have been put outside. (Laughter and applause.) She had always thought that Britons boasted that they were prepared to see at least fairplay to people who had no power to protect themselves. The women had not had fairplay in Liberal meetings, or even in meetings of their own. (Cries of "Oh!" and laughter.) Mrs Pankhurst then proceeded, amid occasional interruptions, to outline the policy pursued by the women in their agitation for votes, stating that they merely asked to be allowed to put civil questions, for doing which they were put out of meetings, while they were also treated in this fashion for making natural interjections, which, when they came from men, were unnoticed. The speaker also dealt in detail with an interview that the women had had with Mr Harcourt before the election, when he was in his own constituency, and also referred to their attendance at one of his meetings, when they asked if Mr Harcourt would answer questions after his speech. (A Voice—"What a cheek!"—laughter and noise.) Yes; she sometimes thought it was presumptuous for women to dare to live at all. (A Voice—"Certainly!"—laughter and noise.) Mr Harcourt, Mrs Pankhurst remarked, when a deputation of women waited on him was very smiling and urbane, as he always was. (A Voice—"Naughty boy!" and laughter.) Continuing, she said women were there; and being there through no fault of their own, they meant to get as fair a share of things as they could get by their own exertions. (Applause and noise.) She claimed that in the South Aberdeen bye-election they had materially assisted in reducing the Liberal's large majority—(Cries of "No!")—and since then their policy had been better understood. They had been teaching men practical politics. ("Oh, oh!") She appealed to women Liberals to help them by saying that if the men of their party would not put the women in the position to vote for them as well as work for them, they (the women) would refuse to work for them. (Applause.)

At the conclusion of Mrs Pankhurst's address, questions were invited, and several were put by young men in the back gallery.

One questioner asked what men fed, clothed, and kept women for, and Mrs Pankhurst replied that she was sorry to destroy the young man's illusion, because it was not true. (Applause.) There were a great many men in this country who were supported and kept by women, and she believed even in Aberdeen there were some students who would not get the education they were so proud of if it were not for the self-sacrifice of some mothers and sisters. (Applause.)

Lady Ramsay, in proposing a vote of thanks to Mrs Pankhurst, said she thought Mrs Pankhurst had made an excellent defence of the methods and tactics that the women suffragist were using. (Applause.) Mr Asquith was to be in Aberdeen on Thursday. (Loud applause.) She had no doubt that some of the young men in the gallery would go and hear him, and she hoped that some of them would be kind enough to the women to put a nice little question to him—(A Voice—"Same old story; man again!")—(laughter)—and ask him if he would do his best in the Cabinet to give the women the vote. (Applause.)