

# ABERDEEN WOMEN SUFFRAGISTS

## AN INTERESTING MEETING.

### MR BRYCE'S POSITION.

In connection with the Women's Suffrage movement, an interesting and influential meeting of ladies took place yesterday afternoon at Westbourne House, Ferryhill, by the courtesy and invitation of Mrs Bruce. The principal object of the meeting was to hear an address on the subject by Miss Helen Fraser, who is organiser for the Scottish Branch of the Women's Social and Political Society. There was a large gathering, including Lady Ramsay—who presided—Mrs Fyvie Mayo, Mrs Black, Miss Rennet, Mrs Traill, Mrs Glegg, Miss M'Condach, Mrs John Leith, Mrs A. Webster, Miss Dixon, Mrs Anderson, Mrs Allan, Mrs M'Hardy, Miss Henderson, etc.

Lady Ramsay, in introducing Miss Fraser, said matters had now reached a very acute stage on the question of female enfranchisement, and it behoved all women to show a united front, and take every advantage of their present opportunity.

Miss Helen Fraser gave an interesting address, in which she briefly traced the political position of women up till the time they lost their rights in 1832, with scarcely any protest on their part. This loss of political power had been the cause of the miserable industrial condition under which women now laboured. During the last 30 years no fewer than seventeen bills which had been before the House of Commons in the interests of women were either talked out or blocked out. Women, during all these years, had worked for the cause on constitutional lines. Miss Fraser then proceeded to give a minute account of the aggressive tactics which originated in October, 1905. These tactics, she said, were forced upon the women, and were a necessary phase of the movement. She described fully the incidents of the famous Manchester meeting, when Miss Kenney and Miss Pankhurst were arrested; of the deputation to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman; and of Mr Asquith's bell-ringing episode. Talking of Mr Bryce's position, Miss Fraser said he had sent for one of the ladies who was imprisoned, and had asked her to state what the demands of the women were based upon. Mr Bryce, she contended, was no longer a source of danger, as he was now out of the Cabinet. Concerning the alleged disturbance, Miss Fraser said that only one journalist—who was inside the House at the time—told the truth about the women, and he was arrested by the police for attempting to help them. The older women who had worked for them, such as Mrs Fawcett, Lady Frances Balfour, Mrs Ayrton, Elizabeth Robins, and Beatrice Harraden, were showing their sympathy with this new phase of action. The Liberal party professed to believe in justice and equality, but they had only shown stupid objections and prejudice, and had lost an irretrievable and excellent chance of conceding gracefully. The fight on the part of the women for enfranchisement was world-wide—in Persia and Turkey, as well as in France and Germany, there was a general and universal uprising. Miss Fraser urged the women to forget for the while what political party they favoured, and to make a united front, as women only, against the Government that denied them equal rights as voters. There was no woman, however sheltered, that did not feel that her position was not everything she would wish it to be, and at the best, without political rights, they were only slaves. They ought to fight for freedom on the ground of womanhood alone, because only when women were free could men be free also. (Applause.)

Some discussion followed, in which Mrs Allan and Mrs Black took part. Both ladies criticised the policy of opposing a Liberal member on the grounds mentioned above, and both considered such a proceeding would be difficult and delicate in the case of an otherwise popular member.

Miss Fraser said it was not the man but the Government behind the man they should attack. There were 420 Liberals in Parliament, so there was no danger of progressive measures being in jeopardy. By losing bye-elections on this question, the Government would be forced to wake up and change their tactics.

Lady Ramsey, in moving a vote of thanks to Miss Fraser, said she was shocked at first at the sensational newspaper reports of the alleged suffragist disturbances, but she had since met Miss Billington and some of the other ladies who had gone to prison, and she could assure the audience that there was not a trace of ferocity or unwomanliness about them.

Hearty votes of thanks were given to Lady Ramsay for presiding, and to Mrs Bruce for her kindness in arranging the meeting.