

VOTES FOR WOMEN

EDITED BY FREDERICK AND EMMELINE PETHICK LAWRENCE.

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Master W—nst—n: I don't want to be washed!

[With apologies to Pears' Soap.]

"That copious fountain of mendacity, the Women's Social and Political Union."—(MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL.)

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To the brave women who to-day are fighting for freedom: to the noble women who all down the ages kept the flag flying and looked forward to this day without seeing it: to all women all over the world, of whatever race, or creed, or calling, whether they be with us or against us in this fight, we dedicate this paper.

THE OUTLOOK.

We have now Mr. Winston Churchill's latest edition of his defence, and it is indeed amazing. When he became Home Secretary, we are told, he carefully weighed up the various possible methods with which a deputation of determined women could be dealt with. He considered the possibility of a police charge with batons, and dismissed that as improper. He considered the possibility of a prolonged conflict in the streets with delayed arrests, and decided that that was undesirable. He considered the possibility of arresting the women promptly as soon as there should be lawful occasion, and determined that this was the sound course to pursue. Then when occasion arose he gave no

intelligible instructions to secure that his own method should be followed, but allowed the police to act under an old regulation to the precisely opposite effect.

Official Subtleties.

We say "gave no intelligible instructions" advisedly, for we confess to being completely mystified as to whether he gave any instructions at all or not. At the commencement of his reply he says, "No fresh instructions, verbal or written, were issued to the police on or before November 18," but later he says, "The directions which I gave were not fully understood or carried out on November 18." This reminds us of the old lady who produced two excellent defences against the charge of injuring a loaned dress—firstly, that she never borrowed a dress at all; and secondly, that the dress she borrowed was soiled when she had it. The only reconciliation which we can see of the two phrases is that Mr. Churchill repeated the old orders, but this is apparently ruled out by the general intention of the statement. However, the subtleties of the official mind are so nice that no-doubt a satisfactory explanation of the discrepancy exists if we could only detect it.

Self Convicted.

Mr. Churchill's statement amounts, then, to this, that a responsible Minister of the Crown faced with a situation admittedly serious, having formed in his mind, presumably with full knowledge of the orders previously given, a definite view of the right course to be adopted (and not being troubled, as the sequel showed, with any scruples against interference with the police), chose either to give no instructions at all, or to give instruc-

tions so ambiguous that the exact opposite of their purport was carried out. Accepting the literal accuracy of every word of Mr. Churchill's own defence, was there ever a more damaging proof of muddle and incompetency?

How Men would have been Treated.

But surely there was a fourth and better method than any of the three adumbrated by Mr. Churchill for dealing with a deputation including such women as the leader of a great political association, an ex-mayor, a leading scientist, the widow of a great colonial statesman, the daughter of a Liberal pioneer, and many other women of distinction. That method was for him to have secured for them an interview with the Prime Minister and a promise that their grievances should be attended to. Mr. Churchill suggests if this deputation had consisted of men he would have instructed the police to charge them with drawn batons. This suggestion is palpably untrue. No one can doubt for a single moment that a deputation of men of the same eminence as the women who took part on November 18 would have been courteously received, as deputations of working men have been received over and over again, because the Government feared to antagonise their votes at a subsequent election.

Illegal Procedure.

Another interesting point in Mr. Churchill's reply is the completed outline of the method which, if the police correctly interpret his instructions, will, we understand, be adopted in the event of a similar situation in the future. Arrests are to be made promptly, and charges, presumably of "obstruction,"

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