

WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE JOURNAL.

EDITED BY LYDIA E. BECKER.

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THE new year dawns with an encouraging prospect for the friends of our cause. We have to congratulate ourselves on growing strength, on a widening organisation, and on increased manifestations of public sympathy and assent to the justice of our claim. In 1871 there were 125 constituencies clearly ranged, by the votes of their members, in favour of the Bill. In 1872 the number was raised to 141. In 1871 there were 75 petitions from public meetings and corporate bodies in favour of the measure, and in 1872 there were 176. In 1871 six Town Councils petitioned for the Bill; last year 27 petitions were sent from Town Councils in its favour. The total number of signatures was, in 1871, 186,976, and last year the number was 355,806, and the number of public meetings recorded in the volume of this journal for 1871 was 126, while the volume just concluded contains the record of 172. Although our notices of these meetings are, from the limits of our space, necessarily scanty in the extreme, yet in most cases ample and excellent reports have appeared in the local newspapers, and a large number of persons been thereby instructed as to the merits of our cause.

One of the most remarkable changes in the tone of public sentiment in regard to the electoral disabilities of women has been manifested in the reception given to the announcement, made, apparently with some authority, by the *John Bull*, that the Tory party would cordially support the claims of women, themselves householders and possessors of property, to the electoral franchise. The rumour is intrinsically probable, seeing that Mr. DISRAELI and five members of the late Conservative Cabinet have already voted for the measure, and the report derives additional likelihood from the circumstance that the *Standard* and the *Globe* have lately contained articles in favour of the claim. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, commenting on the announcement, says—"A Conservative newspaper is not likely to be taken in by a fiction of this sort; and it is still less likely, if it were, that another Conservative newspaper, writing two days later, would express its

readiness to reconsider the subject, and stating various reasons for changing its mind upon it. Under these circumstances we cannot fairly be accused of haste if we accept the statement of the *John Bull* as substantially correct."

Without attempting to forecast the future, or allowing our imagination to dwell unduly on the prospect of a substantial accession to our numbers from the left of the Speaker's chair in the next division, we may yet be permitted to regard the fact that the announcement has been made, and not contradicted, and been generally accepted as correct by opponents as well as friends, as marking a distinct advance of public opinion in our direction, and as a real and present gain. Whether the gain shall be turned to future advantage or not depends mainly on the exertions of the friends of the Bill. Whatever may be the desire of the leaders of the Conservative party to do justice to women householders, it will not be in their power materially to influence their followers, unless evidence of a growing and popular demand for the measure shall find its way to the House of Commons. Let the workers, then, redouble their exertions, and increase their numbers; let them promote public meetings, and memorials, and deputations to members of Parliament and other influential persons; and, above all, let them assiduously and continuously petition the House of Commons in favour of Mr. JACOB BRIGHT'S Bill. If our friends do this, and if, as we trust, the demonstrations of public opinion and desire for the measure shall exceed those of last year, we shall have the satisfaction of feeling that we have done what we could to deserve and to profit by any disposition to support our claim that may be manifested by the leaders on either side of the House of Commons.

For it is surely not to the leaders of the Conservative party exclusively that women should be taught to look for a measure of political justice. It is from the Liberal ranks that the great majority of the supporters of the Bill have come, although the Liberal leaders have lagged