

VOTES FOR WOMEN

EDITED BY FREDERICK AND EMMELINE PETHICK LAWRENCE.

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SIR EDWARD GREY DOES NOT KNOW.



SIR EDWARD GREY:—"I do not know what the scope of the Reform Bill will be.
 "I do not know what the Government's attitude will be to the Referendum.
 "I do not know at what period of the Session the Bill will be introduced."

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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.

The present policy of the Government with regard to the franchise is to enwrap the whole question in a cloud of uncertainty. While women are groping about in the half light the Government hopes to gain time; so that its own schemes may be pushed forward, and so that when the time for enlightenment comes the

women suffragists may find that it is already too late and that they have been once more cheated of success.

Evasive Answers of Sir Edward Grey.

This policy has been very clearly illustrated during the past week by the evasive and unsatisfactory answers given by Sir Edward Grey to the questions put to him at his meeting in Manchester. Sir Edward Grey was asked for an assurance that the Government would introduce no measure dealing with the franchise other than the Reform Bill, open to an amendment by which women should be included. He answered that he could not give such an assurance, and added that no one could give it without consulting his colleagues. We reply that this is just one of those points on which the Cabinet ought to have a definite policy, and we have a right to know what that policy is.

Why is the Reform Bill for Men only?

Secondly, he was asked why the Reform Bill was to be introduced for men only. To this he replied firstly that the Government was divided on the subject. Secondly, that as he had not seen the Bill he did not know what its provisions would be. Thirdly, that the Reform Bill could not be said to be for men only, because it would be open to amendment so as to include women. This reply is a pure evasion of the question, for the Bill, as introduced by the Government, is to be a bill for men only. The fact that the House of Commons may theoretically transform it into a Bill of altogether different character does not relieve the Government from its responsibility, any more than the fact that the House of Commons may profoundly alter the Home Rule Bill would excuse the Government for serious defects in that Bill as originally introduced.

The Government and the Referendum.

Thirdly, Sir Edward Grey was asked what was to be

the Government's attitude towards the proposal to submit Woman Suffrage to a Referendum. Sir Edward Grey replied that he did not know what the attitude of the Government as a Government would be, though he, personally, would give his vote against the proposal. This will not do. We are not interested in Sir Edward Grey's personal views on this question. Cabinet Ministers, when the time comes, have always to subordinate their personal views to the views of the Cabinet as a whole. The Cabinet as a whole would resist any attempt to impose a referendum on the question of Home Rule. Unless they are prepared to take the same stand on Woman Suffrage it is perfectly clear that some hokey pokey is intended.

When will the Reform Bill be introduced?

The fourth question related to the suggestion that the Reform Bill might be relegated to the end of the session and be "massacred with the other innocents." Sir Edward Grey replied that that was certainly "not the intention of the Government"; he thought it would be quite unfair; in any case, there was the promise for the Conciliation Bill. Taking these three answers together it will be seen that Sir Edward Grey gives nothing amounting to an assurance. We all know to what an undesirable abode the road paved with "good intentions" leads; and Government intentions have so frequently failed to be converted into actions in the case of women that they are worth very little reliance. Neither, we are afraid, is much confidence to be placed on Sir Edward Grey's personal opinion that it would be unfair; we have not forgotten his advice to women in 1910 that they should "concentrate on 1911," and his acquiescence in the following year in the decision to postpone once more the question. Finally his reference to the Conciliation

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