

THE LEGISLATURE.

THE WOMAN SUFFRAGE BILL DISCUSSED ALL DAY.

It is Lost by an Overwhelming Majority, Twice as Large as that of Last Session—Admirable Speeches by Messrs. Waters, Dryden and Hardy.

FEBRUARY 27, 1889.

As soon as the House was opened to-day a lively scene occurred in the galleries, the corridors from 2 o'clock having been crowded with ladies and others interested in Mr. Waters' bill giving the Parliamentary franchise to widows and spinsters. All the members were in their seats and so far as a crowded House was concerned the Assembly presented in the galleries and otherwise the most animated phases of the session. The ladies listened with rapt attention to the introductory part of the afternoon's work; but at the same time they eagerly scanned the faces of members believed to be opposed to the granting of the suffrage to the women of Ontario. They all looked with more than usual interest to Mr. Waters when he rose to move the second reading of the bill.

The following were noticed in the Speaker's gallery:—Mrs. Dr. Parker, Mrs. Curzon, Mrs. Spencer, Mrs. Watkins, Mrs. W. B. Hamilton, Mrs. J. Scholes, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Dr. Clark, Mrs. and Miss Watts, Mrs. St. Croix, Dr. Stowe-Gullen, Mrs. Cross, Mrs. Colin Skinner, Miss Rose, Miss Teskey, Miss Sanderson, Mrs. Moore, Mrs. Flynn, Mrs. Parlow, Miss Beaty, Mrs. Thos. Cook, Miss Lucy Sanderson, Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Murray, Mrs. Lynn, Mrs. Hirschberg, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Dance, Mrs. J. Cowan, Mrs. Lucas, Mrs. Jarman, Mrs. D. V. Lucas, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Dr. Shaw, Mrs. Powell, Mrs. Silas James, Mrs. Mills, Mrs. Dr. Emory, Mrs. Dr. Seigley, Miss McMaster, Miss Sparrow, Miss Macdonnell, Mrs. J. Spence.

Before the bill was taken up the following routine matters were disposed of:—

FIRST READINGS.

The following bills were read a first time:—

- To amend the Ontario Election Act—Mr. Connee.
- To amend the Division Courts Act—Mr. Connee.
- To amend the Municipal Act—Mr. Garson.
- To amend the Division Courts Act—Mr. Gibson (Hamilton).
- To amend the Municipal Act—Mr. Clancy.

UNITED STATES PRISON LABOR.

Mr. Balfour moved for an order of the House for a return of a copy of any report made to the Government by the Prison Inspector and the warden of the Central Prison of the result of their inquiries during the past year relating to prison labor in the United States. The motion carried without discussion.

WOMAN SUFFRAGE.

A LIVELY DEBATE OVER MR. WATERS' WELL-KNOWN BILL.

Then came Mr. Waters' bill. He rose amid a hearty burst of applause, for the member for North Middlesex is well liked in the House, and his earnestness and sincerity in any cause go without saying. The hon. gentleman first pointed out that the present bill and that of last year differed in regard to the qualifications required for voters. Last year the qualifications required in the bill were the same as those required of male voters. This year the bill suggested that the qualifications required from widows and unmarried women to enable them to vote for representatives in the Local House should be the same as those required from them in voting at municipal elections. Mr. Waters pointed out that the question of woman suffrage was not a new one even in this House, also that it had made immense strides during recent years. He referred particularly to the Mother Country and argued from the fact that the second reading of the bill allowing woman suffrage was defeated in 1884 in the British Parliament only by a majority of 16, and that it passed safely through the same stage in 1885, that it will in a very few years become law in the British Isles. The Isle of Man was quoted as a place where woman suffrage to the full extent worked satisfactorily. Numerous facts were given to show that similar progress had been made in the

neighboring Republic, and that in those States in which woman suffrage partly prevailed, Maine and Wyoming for instance, it was very popular, and supported very thoroughly by public opinion. The speaker traced the history of the cause in the Local Legislature, enumerating the various bills that had been introduced in favor of it, and claiming that here, too, it had made substantial progress. There had been numerous petitions in favor of it, and, so far as he was aware, not a single one against it. There had been many evidences of public sympathy with it, and none, he claimed, against it. It had been kept continually before the House. Almost the only arguments used against it were that public sentiment was as yet hardly educated up to the requisite standard. Why, only the other day, when the large deputation that waited on the Government in regard to this question had given their arguments in favor of it, the Attorney-General himself had to confess that he was utterly unable to answer them. There was something in this, he insisted, amid the applause and laughter of the House. Mr. Waters was proceeding to show the prominent position occupied by women in the religious and educational system of the country, when he received an interruption of a nature no less pleasant than strange. A page stepped up to him just as he was asking, "What do we do with women in our churches?" and presented the speaker with a very charming bouquet. To say that the hon. gentleman was "taken by surprise" is to use a hackneyed phrase to convey a tremendous fact. He was struck dumb, and when speech came to him after the cheers of the entire House had subsided his voice was weak with emotion but his face radiant with happiness as he murmured, amid renewed applause and laughter, "That beautiful bouquet." He turned then to the Attorney-General and professed his willingness to surrender to him this same charming bouquet if he would only rise in his place and promise to vote for woman suffrage. But the Attorney-General sat still and silent, and Mr. Fraser said reproachfully, "That is not gallant." So Mr. Waters kept his bouquet and continued his speech a few minutes longer, principally by expanding the points given above.

AGAINST THE BILL.

MR. DRYDEN OPPOSES THE BILL FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END.

Mr. Dryden, in a quiet but well-argued and very thoughtful speech, expressed his regret that the question was again and again pressed on the attention of the House by the member for North Middlesex, and, especially so, that the bill was changing its form. He took exception to singling out two classes of women for the franchise, and for that, among other reasons, he would oppose the bill before the House. The women of the country do not demand the Parliamentary franchise, he contended. The speaker would go farther in saying that the vast majority of the women of the Province are opposed to the bill of the member for North Middlesex. Except on rare occasions it would be difficult to induce women to go to the polls to exercise the franchise. Women do not as a rule pay much attention to politics, and no law placed on the statute book would have any effect unless backed up by public sentiment. Even if Prohibition were carried by the vote of women it would be a dead letter on the statute book if not supported by the men voters of the country.

How could a minority of men support women compel a majority of men to keep given law? The hon. gentleman brought numerous passages of Scripture to his aid to show that God did not intend women to rule over men. He dwelt on the virtues of women, claimed that they could be exercised with great benefit upon men, perhaps even more so than at present. These virtues would be detracted from by the intervention of women in all the affairs of men. Women would become "more manly," not at all an end to be desired. He insisted also that the innate modesty of the majority of the best class of women would not allow them to take advantage of woman suffrage, but that it would make more prominent the worse rather than the better class of women. Amid a succession of "Hear, hear's" from the leader of the Opposition, and a ripple of applause here and there, Mr. Dryden argued further that the passage of the bill would have the effect of advancing still a step further the present tendency to lessen the comfort and happiness of home life, and concluded by reading an article strongly opposing woman suffrage, written by Mrs. Lynn Linton and appearing in the St. James' Budget not long ago. As he sat

down, he renounced all expectation of bouquets from the ladies in the House. He received, however, a tremendous round of applause.

THE LEGISLATIVE HUMORIST.

THE MEMBER FOR KINGSTON STRONGLY SUPPORTS THE BILL.

Mr. Metcalfe made one of his characteristic speeches, and the sides of the gravest member of the House, whoever that may be, must have ached from laughter as the hon. gentleman talked. It can hardly be said that he presented any very strong arguments one way or the other, or that his arguments succeeded each other very logically. But that they were put comically there can be no doubt. For instance, he believes in suffrage for widows and spinsters but not for married women, because his wife would probably vote against him, and he would not like that. But he would like to give his widow a respectable position in society, and give her a vote just as he would invest in an insurance policy. The possession of a vote, too, might enable his widow more easily to get another good man for a husband. Incidentally, then, the member for Kingston wandered off into a criticism of the Attorney-General's patriotic speech at the recent Board of Trade banquet. He complimented him on the same, and told him that those were his sentiments also, and so long as the Attorney-General continued to hold them it would be very hard to "knock him out." This sentiment the House seemed heartily to endorse. Mr. Metcalfe recurred then again to "the woman question," as he put it, and referring to the Scriptural quotations of Mr. Dryden, said he knew very well the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and there wasn't a word in them against woman suffrage. Eventually the hon. gentleman dropped into poetry, and quoted some verses written by his friend Charlie Green, which he said were worth all the articles Mrs. Lynn Linton ever wrote. The verses brought down the House, the climax being reached when the hon. gentleman recited the following verse:—

If you want a real good time with your wives and bonny daughters,
With Mrs. Rockwell pull an oar in the boat
That's steered by Waters;
And when you meet with Mr. Waters give his hand a shake
And ask him how he's getting on, and what he's going to take.

Mr. Metcalfe concluded his speech by pointing to Queen Victoria as an example of the ability of women to take an active part in the affairs of nations.

Mr. Graham said that so long as he was in the House the bill would receive his support, believing that women were entitled to the franchise, and that they would exercise it in the interests of the country.

Mr. Lees opposed the measure because women do not want the franchise. The Queen, to be sure, was at the head of the Imperial Government, but it ought to be remembered that her policy was dictated by males.

Mr. Armstrong argued that nothing was advanced by the opponents of the bill to convince him that woman suffrage, as proposed, should not become law.

Dr. Gilmour did not think that the interests of the Province would be consulted by allowing the bill to pass.

Hon. A. M. Ross explained the reasons why he would oppose the bill, although he voted for the bill introduced by the member for North Middlesex last session. He thought it was inconsistent with the non-property qualification proposed under the Manhood Suffrage Act, although otherwise he felt quite in sympathy with the idea of extending the rights of women in the direction proposed by the bill.

Mr. G. B. Smith favored the principle of womanhood suffrage, but did not approve of married women being discriminated against. They had as good a right as widows and spinsters to vote. He was therefore bound to vote against the bill in its present shape.

It being six o'clock the Speaker left the chair.

EVENING SESSION.

A SMALL AMOUNT OF ROUTINE BUSINESS DISPOSED OF.

At the opening of the evening sitting there were comparatively few members back from dinner, so the House went into committee, and advanced a stage a number of private bills. The following bills were also read a second time:—

- To incorporate the Toronto Belt Line Railway Company—Mr. Gilmour.
- To incorporate the Amherstburg, Lake Shore & Blenheim Railway Company—Mr. Balfour.
- To enable the Presbytery of Guelph to set apart for burial purposes and to sell certain glebe lands in the Township of Puslineh—Mr. Guthrie.
- Respecting certain property of the Pres-