

## WOMEN.

The Queen of Portugal is the first royal lady to take a degree in medicine, to which she has devoted several years, and is now entitled to subscribe herself Marie Amelie, M.D. It is said that her attention was first drawn to the field of medicine by the ravages of diphtheria in the kingdom. Owing to the indifference of many of the people to soap and water and the ordinary principles of sanitation, the dread disease is more of a scourge in Portugal than in any other European country.

The Queen also became alarmed for the health of her husband, Dom Carlos, and decided to become a physician, so that she could care for him intelligently. She accordingly began studying with the zeal of an enthusiast, and recently passed a difficult examination with comparative ease.

Sir Matthew White Ridley has shown admirable judgment in the appointment of Miss May Abraham, now senior woman Factory Inspector, to the rank of Superintendent Inspector. Miss Abraham has shown brilliant capacity for the work of her department and no better administrator could have been added to the public service. It must not be forgotten that it was Mr. Asquith who suggested the addition of women to the service of the department of Public Health.

It would appear as if the minor appointments in the Church are to be open to women. At Ramsey, near Harwich, at the vestry meeting, the vicar, the Rev. W. Hurst, nominated Mrs. Isabella Saxby, wife of a farm labourer, as his churchwarden.

It will be very interesting to note with what success Mrs. Saxby carries out her new functions, and whether any feminine innovations will be the outcome of Mr. Hurst's original appointment. There is one reform which it is to be hoped will result from woman churchwardens, and that is that poor people should be made more welcome than is at present the case. In so many of our city and town churches the poor have a feeling that they attend more on sufferance than by right. And it is time that all distinctions of class should be lost sight of in places of religious observance.

We cannot congratulate Mr. Littler, Q.C., on his latest utterance from the magisterial bench. In a case before him at the Middlesex Sessions a husband and wife were charged with neglect of their child. Mr. Littler sentenced the husband to six months' and his wife to twelve months' hard labour, remarking that the husband would have been within his rights had he given his wife a good thrashing. It was not often he suggested such a proceeding, but at least it would have called the attention of the police to her conduct.

It will not be surprising if such a brutal precept is followed out by some men who will be glad to take advantage of this recommendation from the bench of wife-beating. Mr. Littler perhaps will not be pleased to find his advice pleaded in police courts as an extenuating circumstance in the committal of assaults on wives. But no doubt many of the roughs of London will be glad to have the countenance of this statement of so great a lawyer that "A man is within his rights in thrashing his wife."

## A Book of the Week.

## "MODERN WOMEN."\*

Laura Hansson is the wife of the Swedish author, "Ola Hansson." Before her marriage she was well known in Germany, and much appreciated for the acuteness of her literary criticisms and the beauty of her style. "Das Buch der Frauen" has been much talked about, and I confess to reading this English rendering with much curiosity. I expected to dislike Laura Hansson's views upon women, and certainly they are, to say the least of it, peculiar and original. But the book has this peculiar merit: it is strangely suggestive, and it is impossible to read it without thinking about it afterwards, even if it is only to disagree with its conclusions robustly and vigorously. In these days, when we read, review, and forget so many books on every kind of subject, it is a great testimony to the cleverness of a short volume of essays like this to acknowledge that it will not let itself be forgotten, and that phrases and opinions that are scattered about in its pages dwell in the mind, and have to be freshly disagreed with every day, only to crop up again on the next occasion to be re-disagreed with again and again.

In the preface to the book, Mrs. Laura Hansson informs her readers that it is not her purpose "to contribute to the study of women's intellectual life, or to discuss her capacity for artistic production." She dwells upon the life history of six typical women of this generation, namely, "Sonia Kovalevsky, George Egerton, Eleonora Duse, Amalie Skram, Marie Bashkirtseff, and Fru Edgren Leffler." There is one point common to all these six representative women which Laura Hansson wishes to emphasise, and that is the manifestation of their womanly feelings; and she tries to show how "in spite of the theories on which they built up their lives—in spite of the opinions of which they were the teachers, and in spite of the success which crowned their efforts . . . they were out of harmony with themselves, suffering from a conflict which made its first appearance in the world when the 'woman question' came to the fore, causing an unnatural breach between the needs of the intellect and the requirements of their womanly nature. Most of them succumbed in the struggle."

Unfortunately, I have not space to dwell in detail on Mrs. Hansson's interesting presentment of these six remarkable women. Most modern women who are earning their own living (more especially Nurses) will disagree with her views and opinions, and yet the book should be read by all modern women workers, for this reason—that it contains a point of view of the woman question which is not often brought before the public notice, though constantly ventilated in domestic homes by certain old-fashioned parents, whose counsels are apt to be regarded by the rising generation as obsolete and antediluvian. It is very educational to keep the mind open to every point of view, and it is as instructive to read the views of those with whom we disagree, as to peruse the writings of those with whom we are already in sympathy and ac-

\* "Modern Women." An English Rendering of Laura Hansson's "Das Buch der Frauen," by Hermione Ramsden. 3s. 6d. (John Lane, 1896.)

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