

needs of the labouring class, makes absolutely no provision for the old age of women beyond the term of their husband's lives. The benefits in every case are calculated for one life only, and that the man's. The woman, if she survives, is left with no other resource than the Poor Law now provides. The injustice of such an arrangement needs no remark. In a working-class household, where a family has been born, brought up, and launched upon the world, the wife's share of the hardships and toils of life has been to the full as great as that of the man. The pinching and self-denial needed to save the weekly premium out of the narrow wage have fallen as heavily on her as on him. Her life has been as valuable to the State as his, and her old age ought to have the same security against want. I venture to urge that no State-aided scheme of old age pensions can claim consideration which does not regard every pension so aided, when taken out by a man, as a joint annuity, and makes its calculation of cost on the basis of continuance to the wife if she survives."

How true it is that the "laborious days" of the cottage wife have never received due consideration. Early and late the "home maker" drudges, planning, cooking, cleaning, washing, mending, and how much more laborious, monotonous, and exhausting is her part in life than the male method of "bread winning." Often from morning till night confined in a stuffy cottage, the woman works, whilst the man is out in the sweet fresh air, tending the flocks or following the plough, and when the day's work is done, there is baccy, pipe and paper, the interest of the club room, or the excitement of the bar for the man. The song of the shirt, and click of the needle is the woman's only "recreation."

A building devoted to an exhibition of Women's Work—a veritable art palace—has been planned in connection with the Paris Exhibition of 1900, following in the steps, no doubt, of the Woman's Building at the Chicago World's Fair.

We wonder if it is generally known in this country that in Germany "associations founded for political objects may not have women, scholars, or apprentices as members; nor may women, scholars, or apprentices be present at any meetings of such associations."

Although no doubt it is pleasanter to be classed with "scholars and apprentices" than "criminals, lunatics, and paupers," still our German cousins need all the help and sympathy which the International Council of Women can afford them. The National Congress has adopted a civil code which takes the retrograde step of placing the married woman, her children, and her property under the absolute control of the husband. This iniquitous code does not come into force for a few years, so that if our International Congress of Women, to be held in London in 1898 is to be effective, this question of the enslavement of German women should be dealt with.

There is little doubt that the narrow and suicidal policy of the German Emperor is greatly to blame for this new code, and it seems the irony of fate that such action should be taken by a son of one of the ablest and most advanced women of her time, the Empress Frederick.

## A Book of the Week.

"ON THE FACE OF THE WATERS."\*

A NEW book by the author of the "Potter's Thumb" is a thing to be eagerly looked forward to and leisurely enjoyed. Perhaps the first feeling which one experiences on laying it down is one of sheer astonishment that a woman could possibly have possessed herself of the knowledge required to write such a book—a book confessedly written to show some of the causes that went to produce the Indian Mutiny.

In the barracks—native or English—in the royal palace at Delhi, among Hindus or Mahommedans, in the haunts of the loose women of the bazaar, or in the dream-like garden of the *Sri Anunda*, Mrs. Steel seems equally at home. The difficulty comes in when the attempt is made to weave a romance in among these close observations of fact. Mrs. Steel confesses, in her unaffected preface, that she felt this; and in truth the knowledge has spoilt the book, considered from the standpoint of romance. Here and there occur pages of pure history, such as the outbreak of the revolt at Meerut, and the taking of Delhi by John Nicholson; and when the interest is suddenly recalled from these thrilling realities to the fortunes of Kate Erlton, there is a kind of revolt in the mind. In fact, I do not consider Kate Erlton a success. To me she is not interesting. She lingers in the mind as a person who would do right if she could—at all events, would refrain from doing wrong—but she lacks vitality. One wonders how Jem Douglas could ever have supported so much of her society, in that wonderful, secluded, fairy-tale life upon the roof in Delhi. Alice Gissing, the woman devoid of heart and of principle—who drives over a black baby without compunction and dies in the effort to save a white one, is, like the bad woman of so many writers, thoroughly interesting, and one understands her charm; but one feels that the after-life of Kate and Jem must have been somewhat tepid, and Mrs. Steel certainly takes a very easy way of cutting the knot of the conjugal difficulties of Mr. and Mrs. Erlton.

Even so much criticism of so wonderfully able a work seems ungracious. The talent is great; the infinite number of little touches by means of which insight is given to the state of feeling of the people, of the Sepoys, of the English—the sketches of the Court intrigues, the characters of the twin Rajpootni, Soma and Tara, the incidents connected with the cockatoo—are all wonderful; so is the poor old ayah, who brings back Sonny. *Apropos*,—Mrs. Steel's children are always charming, though Sonny hardly comes up to the unutterable Blasius in "Red Rowans."

One of the best touches is that which tells of the disgust of the wounded Sepoys in Delhi, when they found that, now the masters were gone, they would have no doctor. An old *Hakeem* offers to treat wounds with paper pills, inscribed with the name of Providence! This to men accustomed to the best military hospital nursing! It reminds one of the inimitable Ortheris's withering taunt to the newly joined recruit:—

"D'yer think yer come into the harmy to drink Heno?"

\* "On the Face of the Waters," by F. A. Steel. (Heinemann & Co.)

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