

**The Women's Parliament.**

As we go to press the Annual Conference convened by the National Union of Women Workers is in session at Croydon, and an extremely successful gathering is being held. Next week we hope to give a full account of the Conference, and to be able to make the important announcement that the National Union of Women will extend its influence by acting as the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland, in affiliation to the International Council, of which the Countess of Aberdeen is president. As one of the two delegates deputed at the last meeting of the International Council in Chicago to help to form a National Council for Great Britain, we shall feel that we have indeed been fortunate, if, after four years' work and consideration, the important responsibility of becoming the National Council for the United Kingdom is accepted by the most representative and justly respected body of women in the country.

The resignation of Mrs. Creighton of the presidency of the National Union of Women Workers will be most sincerely regretted by every member of the Union. It is probable that Mrs. Booth, of Liverpool, one of the Vice-Presidents, will be unanimously elected President; she is an American by birth, and, in the expressive nomenclature of her delightful countrywomen, all that we know of her is "quite lovely."

**A Book of the Week.****"IN KEDAR'S TENTS."\***

To the delight of everyone who likes a good story, and a good style, the author of "The Sowers" has given us another book.

Like all Mr. Merriman's works, this new book is well thought out, well constructed, well balanced. It is not too much to say that it is a model of narrative. As in the works of that great genius, Nathaniel Hawthorne, there is no deviation from the intention before the writer: every sentence, every phrase, almost, has its object in the development of plot or the illustration of character.

I have heard it said that Mr. Merriman, when he wrote "The Sowers," had never been in Russia, and I am inclined to believe that this may have been so. The descriptions of Russia in that book are not necessarily the descriptions of an eye-witness. But it would surprise me greatly to learn, after reading "The Tents of Kedar," that the author had never been in Spain, where the scene of the novel is laid.

If one may be allowed to be so ungracious as to pick holes in a book which has given so much pleasure, I would say that the local atmosphere is a little overdone. It is the result, apparently, of having been recently in Spain, having been much struck with the history, as well as the scenery, of that remarkable country, and being anxious to utilize the material so carefully acquired. But the story is so brilliant, and so full of spontaneity, that one only occasionally feels

that the background is a little—ever so little—aggressive.

The story is laid in the year 1838, the year of the Carlist wars in Spain, and of the Chartist riots in England. Conyngham, the hero, takes upon his own shoulders the burden of another man's crime, and, in his character of a man flying from justice, goes to Spain to take service in the Royalist army.

His adventures, when he arrives there, are of a most thrilling description; the great charm about everything that happens to him being that it is so entirely unexpected. The father of the young fellow whose death Conyngham is supposed to have caused, arrives in Spain in pursuit, but none of the things which might conventionally be supposed to ensue, do, as a matter of fact, happen. The story takes the most original and surprising turns, and keeps one, through the greater part of the book, in a state of delicious expectancy. One of the finest scenes in the book is that in which Sir John Pleydell calls upon General Vincente and tells his story, namely, that he has come to him for assistance to find the miscreant, Conyngham, who caused his son's death, and who is believed to have enlisted in the Spanish army. Conyngham, who is the General's *aide-de-camp*, is in the room; so is Estella, the daughter of the General, whom Conyngham loves.

"I propose," says Sir John, "to get my man home to England, and there let him stand his trial. . . . Once in England, I shall make it my business to see that he gets twenty years' penal servitude."

"And how do you propose to get him to England?" asked Conyngham.

"Oh! that is simple enough. Only a matter of paying a couple of such scoundrels as, I understand, abound in Spain at this moment, a little bribing of officials, a heavy fee to some English ship captain. I propose, in short, to kidnap Frederick Conyngham; but I do not ask you to help me in that. I only ask you to put me on his track—to help me to find him, in fact. Will you do it?"

"Certainly," said Conyngham, coming forward with a card in his hand. "You could not have come to a better man."

Sir John Pleydell read the card, and had himself so well in hand that his face hardly changed. His teeth closed over his lower lip for a second; then he rose. The perspiration stood out on his face, the grey of his eyes seemed to have faded to the colour of ashes. He looked hard at Conyngham, and then, taking up his hat, went to the door with curious, uneven steps. On the threshold he turned.

"Your insolence," he said, breathlessly, "is only exceeded by your daring."

As the door closed behind him, there came, from that part of the room where General Vincente sat, a muffled click of steel, as if a sword, half out of its scabbard, had been sent softly home again.

This is the finest sort of sensational writing.

And now we women want from Mr. Merriman a book which shall contain the study of a woman. Estella we never become acquainted with. She moves through the story merely as the object of Conyngham's devotion. She is as remote, as little known to us, as was the Maggie of "The Sowers." Etta Bamborough was real enough. Surely Mr. Merriman does not belong to the good old class of male writers, who divided all femininity into two classes—bad women and rag dolls? The faint glimpses we have caught of Maggie, and of Estella, have been such as to lead us to form a far more favourable judgment of his powers. But we want more of them.

G. M. R.

\* "In Kedar's Tents." By Henry Seton Merriman. (Smith Elder.)

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