

WOMEN.

The Women's Local Government Society is doing good service in connection with the forthcoming London Borough Councils Elections by issuing the following question to candidates: "Will you, if elected, vote in favour of a motion in the _____ Borough Council *That the Council do petition Parliament to remove the disabilities imposed on Women by the London Government Act, 1899, and to restore to the Electors the right (taken from them by that Act) of choosing as their representatives Women as well as men?*" The indignity to which women were subjected by the members of the House of Lords, who refused their consent to the Bill which granted representation on Borough Councils to women, passed by the representatives of the nation in the House of Commons, is still fresh in their memory. So notorious was the manipulation of this matter in the upper chamber, the supporters of the opposition being largely recruited from the sporting sprigs of the nobility who frequent the Turf Club, and whose interest as a rule does not extend to Parliamentary affairs, that their very personality was unknown in the House and the door-keeper was compelled to ask their names. Surely it is time that hereditary legislators should no longer be permitted to reverse decisions of the *vox populi*, and that this effete Chamber should be thoroughly reformed. It is further deeply to be deplored that the Queen, subsequently, in her address to the House of Commons, mentioned the satisfaction which it had given her to sign the London Government Bill. Her Majesty can scarcely have gauged the deep feeling of her women subjects on this question, or have estimated the necessity for, and value of, their services on public bodies.

The following note on this question has been issued from the Office of the Women's Local Government Society:—

"At the present time, besides one woman Member of a Minor Vestry, twelve women are serving on the Greater Vestries, and diligently take their share of the work of Committees and Sub-Committees. It may be thought that this is not a large number, but some very able women ready to undertake the work have been rejected at the poll. Such rejection is not surprising, for prejudice has yet to be overcome; moreover, in most districts political party feeling enters into local elections, and in some is even the determining element; and in some districts 'interests' are very strong. In this connection, there are two facts that are worth noting; one is, that the movement for women on Vestries has advanced more rapidly than did the movement for women as Guardians in its earliest days; the other is, that in face of the good work done by our Vestry women, prejudice is dying fast, and women standing for re-election are warmly supported.

The co-operation of women is especially necessary on the Public Health Committee and its Sub-Committees; it is not possible for men to do as well and as suitably all the work that women are doing in respect to the sanitary conditions of tenement houses, common lodging-houses, baths for women and children, public wash-houses, public lavatories for women, the disinfection of families and like matters. Moreover, women Sanitary Inspectors can work to greater advantage where there are women members of the governing body."

Mrs. Stanbury, the Secretary of the Society, will be

very glad to hear from any sympathisers, in any part of London, who, in view of the forthcoming elections may be willing to help at this important moment in its work with regard to Borough Councils and the eligibility of women, and will endeavour to put them in touch with friends in their own locality. The offices of the Society are at 17, Tothill Street, Westminster.

A Book of the Week.

THE HEART'S HIGHWAY.*

The hand which has limned for us so truly and so unerringly the pathos and the dignity of the New Englander; and which has supplied so rich a play of humour as in the "Jamesons," has now adventured upon a historical romance; and has chosen not those Puritanical New Englanders, whose greatnesses and whose limitations she equally knows, but the pleasure-loving, slave-owning, English-feeling Virginians, in the reign of King Charles the Second. May we be forgiven if we hazard the opinion that the work in question is less well fitted to the dainty treatment of this author, than the village ups and downs, and the characteristics of the obscure but interesting rustic?

It is of a grim time that Miss Wilkins writes, for it was just about now that the loyal Virginians first began to see what indeed they could hardly avoid seeing, that they were being over-taxed, in order to replenish wasted home exchequers, and that more than they could bear was being laid upon them.

The hero of the story is an English gentleman, who by a curious miscarriage of justice is a convict. And here is the inherent weakness of the plot.

At an English ball, Sir John Ealing, a guest in the house, loses a valuable ring. The guests, apprised of his loss, search the house. Harry Wingfield, the hero, finds the ring in the bedroom of a girl for whom he cares nothing whatever, though he loves her sister. How he came to search her chamber we are not told. Instantly jumping to the conviction that Catherine Cavendish had stolen the ring, to shield her he hides it on his own person, where it is found. He will not say how he came by it, and is transported on a charge of theft.

Now, granting that all these people, who are personal friends and have known him from childhood, could for a moment think it likely that he was the thief, is it conceivable that Sir John Ealing, who was enjoying the hospitality of the Cavendishes, should—the ring being found and restored to him—have prosecuted Harry Wingfield? I do not know how it may strike others; to me the thing is inconceivable, a string of improbabilities.

But, if once you grant that this is possible, there is much, very much, to charm in the book. The arrival of the Golden Horn, the way found out of that difficulty, the cutting of the tobacco fields, the defence of the house by Humphrey Hyde and Harry Wingfield; and the great final scene in the stocks, are wonderfully vivid pictures. It would make it easier for the reader, had Miss Wilkins finally made up her mind whether Mary's estate was called Locust Creek or Laurel Creek, and she falls into one or two comical mistakes, through being American.

* By Mary E. Wilkins. (John Murray.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)