scheme for throwing open all offices under the State to women. In Denmark the cause is making gradual but distinct progress. The female teachers in the public schools of Copenhagen have already the right to qualify for any offices in connection with the schools, and even for the chief position on the School Board.

Replying to a deputation of ladies desirous of securing the prohibition of the importation of opium into Australia, Sir William Lyne said that in his opinion opium smoking was one of the most degrading vices in Australia or any other part of the world. The Federal Government had tried to raise the tone of the people. They had tried to keep the race pure by action in regard to the black races, and he did not think they should allow the degradation of the opium vice if it was possible to avoid it.

A Domestic Helps' Union has been formed in Canterbury, New Zealand, so that its members may take advantage of the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. The promoters of the Union, which admits to its membership cooks, parlourmaids, housemaids, nursemaids, and general servants, state that it has not been formed in antagonism to employers. The Union has, however, drawn up a "log," which is an extraordinary document even for New Zealand. The pay of general servants and nursemaids is fixed at 15s. a week, cooks are to receive from 15s. to £1, and housemaids and parlourmaids from 14s. to 17s. 6d. The hours of work are not to exceed sixty-three a week, and each servant is to have a half-holiday weekly and a fortnight's holiday every year.

Dr. Amelia Wilkes Lines, who celebrated her eightieth birthday at New York last Saturday, is the oldest practising physician in the world. She was the first woman to receive a diploma in New York State, and has been practising in the city since 1854. She is a daughter of the late Sir William Wilkes, and was born in the Isle of Wight.

A Book of the Week.

THE BERYL STONES.*

This book perhaps shows, more clearly than any other by the same author, the excellences and limitations of Mrs. Sidgwick as a novelist. Let it be at once said that the excellences by far outweigh the defects, and that it is, as a whole, a most fascinating, as well as a most amusing, book.

The charm of it lies in Mrs. Sidgwick's quite wonderful knack of setting people before your very eyes. The Frenches, the Hardwicks, Crampton Lowe, the Portinscales, and Miss Watkins, later on Mrs. Tibbets, are all quite enchanting in their power to lure one away from the actual, and make one live, for a time, in the society to be found between the covers of a book. Take the first introduction of the odious Mrs. Hardwick.

> "Mrs. Hardwick was a large, stout person, who wore ugly dresses made of rich materials. She never took any exercise, and she suffered for the want of it in body and brain. But if her limbs and her ideas were flabby, her opinions were rigid. . . . She had neither imagination nor sympathy, and she had found life a bed of roses. She had never known what it is to want anything she could not get, or to lose what she valued, or to repent what she had done. . . .
>
> "'I suppose we may as well tell Ursula our news,' said Grace.
>
> "'She has probably heard it,' said Mrs. Hardwick; 'I find it has reached the servants' hall.'
>
> "'I didn't come by way of the servants' hall,' said Ursula.
>
> "Her aunt looked rather offended. Mrs. Hardwick always took offence when her rude remarks were noticed or resented."

Or another little saying of the delightful, though vulgar, Mrs. Portinscale—

> "I'm glad when Imogen is out of the way. When we're together, I feel as if I was a barrel-organ and she was a fugue by Bach, and it's not comfy."

Such-like delightful little hits abound; the author wastes no words; she gets her effect out of little touches. But the fabric of the story is by no means equal to its characterisation. The main idea is a quite credible one. Ursula, her dying father, and her lame brother, are starving. They find it—or she finds it—quite impossible to make her selfish, cruel aunt understand that they are actually at the end of their resources. In desperation, and at a crisis which is elaborated with considerable skill, she steals a necklace, and sells it to buy bread and necessaries. By so doing she gives a hold over her to an unscrupulous wretch called Crampton Lowe, who has his eye on her. Then there comes success to the girl, and the love of a good man; and it is here that the probabilities are so violated as to make the reader at one time hardly believe that it is worth while to finish the story.

After refusing Sir Henry Jocelyn several times, Ursula yields, upon hearing that he has volunteered for the war in Africa. Taking advantage of her melting mood, Harry persuades her to consent to be quietly married to him before his departure. This is done, he sails, and Ursula is left behind. Meanwhile, the odious Crampton, who has been thought dead, turns up, and threatens to put on the screw, his chief weapon being a scrap of paper signed by Ursula which he has in his pocket. This is all of it possible. But when Ursula's husband returns her behaviour becomes that of a raving lunatic. A girl so cruelly placed might have tried to commit suicide to save the man she loved from the shame of exposure; she might even have fled and hidden herself; but nothing on earth could have induced her to consider for a moment the possibility of going off in company with the blackguard whose moral vileness, drunken habits, and complete worthlessness she knew. And, when Harry has forced confession from her, his own course seems incredibly silly. Any average Englishman, under such circumstances, would have knocked down the little cad, taken the paper from him, burnt it, and kicked him downstairs, and left him to sue, with no evidence, and the certainty of being convicted for attempt to blackmail. The book is so real in most respects that the folly of making people behave so senselessly perhaps strikes one more forcibly than it would in a book of less power and charm.

G. M. R.

* By Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick. (Arnold.)

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