

carried on without the agency of women was only half carried on.

Miss Higgs (Oldham), in seconding, said that in Poor Law matters the country was suffering from the consequences of having for far too long left men to "manage the household."

Owing to lack of time for a full discussion of the subject, further consideration of it was adjourned to the next annual conference.

Next Year's Conference at Birmingham.

Mrs. George Cadbury, on behalf of the Birmingham Branch, extended to the meeting a cordial invitation to hold the Conference at Birmingham next year.

The meeting unanimously accepted the invitation.

Referring to the many signs that a General Election is not far off, the *Women's Suffrage Record* points out the necessity for convincing candidates that we are in earnest on the Suffrage Question. Our contemporary says:—No political party or association has held out a helping hand to women as in the case of men. With very few exceptions, the Press has given no assistance. The economic condition of women is not one of independence, and there has been but little money at their command. The only way in which women could show their desire for the franchise has been by means of petitions and meetings. Meetings have been ignored by the Press. Petitions from those who have no votes can be safely ignored. It is constantly said that women can influence men, and by argument persuade them of the justice of their cause. The men who are convinced of the justice of their cause, however, find that there are other things far more important when a general election comes. "Women's Suffrage is, certainly just and right, but we cannot put it first."

Is there, then, no way left open to women by which they can convince men of their earnestness and determination? There is one way, through still further sacrifice, for a time only—the sacrifice of all other questions they may be interested in, and by combining to put their enfranchisement first. A woman may say: "My party principles are the most important questions for me." If that be so, obtain first the most effective way of carrying those principles into effect—namely, the franchise. Another woman may say: "I am keenly desirous of seeing women made eligible to serve on various local bodies." The same answer applies here: obtain the franchise first. What purpose is there in striving for privileges which you may lose at any time, as long as you are unenfranchised? Candidates may say to women, "Do you intend to abandon your party principles for a selfish desire for the franchise?" The reply is: "No; I want to obtain the most effective weapon for supporting my party principles, and if you value those principles yourself you will help to place that weapon in my hands."

As long as women are content to snatch a temporary success here and there, and do not realise that the franchise is the basis of all reform and all permanent progress, so long will Women's Suffrage remain outside the domain of practical politics. We hope that at the coming Convention an appeal will be made to women not to dissipate their forces, but to concentrate all their time, energy, and money in obtaining this keystone of their liberty, the franchise, and no longer be content to play the part of Sisyphus in the various fields of work in which they are engaged, whether industrial, political, philanthropic, religious, or social.

A Book of the Week.

WHOSOEVER SHALL OFFEND.*

Mr. Crawford is a wonder. He continues to write books which are all diverse, which are all careful, which are all sound art and real literature. One knows, in taking up a book with his name, that, though it will very likely be quite unlike his others, it will be, without fail, delightful reading. There is, perhaps, no living writer who can write so directly, so truly, so entirely without squeamishness, and, at the same time, without offence. He is absolutely without that taint of vulgarity which mars so much modern fiction. His standpoint is sane, frank, steadfast, even noble. He knows evil, but believes in good. And it is difficult to overestimate the power for good that belongs to such a writer.

He has laid his new story in that Italy, modern Italy, which has taken so strong a hold upon his imagination and his love. He deals with the Roman society of to-day. Signora Consalvi, a beautiful and rich widow, aged five and thirty, with one child, marries Folco Corbario, aged twenty-six.

Naturally, everyone says that she has been married for her money, more particularly as Corbario is of doubtful antecedents. He is a handsome and attractive young man, and the boy, Marcello, who is not very strong, is devoted to him. The gossip of all the critics is disappointed, for Corbario's wife remains quite happy with him, trusting and loving him completely. It is here that the weak point of the story may by some be thought to lie. Is it possible that such a rascal as Corbario—such a cut-throat, adventurer, swindler—could have masked his true nature successfully for years? Could he have forsaken his old life of vice and lived tranquilly the country life, or the society life at his wife's side? Could he have been constantly with the growing boy without attracting suspicion, even among the servants? Would he not have been living a double life all the time? Would not some kind of self-betrayal have been inevitable sooner or later?

This point is one which every reader will decide for herself. Mr. Crawford makes Corbario's behaviour so circumspect, so unexceptionable, that only one person, the Contessa del' Armi, distrusts him, and she can give no valid reason why she does so.

Marcello grows up with the idea that his stepfather is his best friend. He is reared somewhat solitary, since in childhood he was delicate. He knows nothing of the evil of life, and has an innocence of expression like that of a Fra Angelico.

Corbario waits until he is just grown up before carrying out the designs with which he married the rich widow. A small chance helps him to put his plans into practice. But by a stroke of poetic justice, Professor Kalmon, the man who unwittingly makes things easy for the murderer, is also the one to bring him to punishment.

The central idea of the book is Corbario's fiendish plan, having failed to get rid altogether of Marcello, of compassing his ruin, soul and body. The subtle means by which he lures him to vice and encourages him in it, is a theme to make angels weep.

But Corbario is foiled by the very woman through whom he hoped to accomplish his purpose. The figure

* By Marion Crawford. (Macmillan.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)