The Annual Conference of the National Union of Women Workers was opened on Tuesday at Manchester. The *Daily News* paid a high tribute to the "power and judgment shown by the organisers of the Conference, and was full of enthusiasm for the way in which the speakers used their voices, and of admiration for the fact that "the Chair was admirably stern and instantly obeyed."

Miss Mackarness, in an excellent paper, dealt with the difficult problem of the employment of destitute gentlewomen, and made some rather severe strictures on the shocking rates of pay afforded to women in the majority of trades and callings. She spoke of the difficulties encountered by governesses past the age of 35 in obtaining employment. Little sympathy was felt with the Hon. Mrs. Maclagan, who expressed herself sharply on the "huffiness of the young governess and the dreaminess of the old ones." She said "young governesses spent too much upon dress." Considering that a large percentage of young governesses receive about £20 a year—out of which they have to pay for their holidays, their clothes, and other necessaries of existence—there is not much scope left for a very wildly extravagant outlay on finery.

That admirable book by Mr. Arthur Cleveland, entitled "Women under the English Law, from the Landing of the Saxons to the Present Time," forms one of the best histories of the evolution of woman from the most savage condition up to the present time. Part I. treats of women in Saxon times, from A.D. 450 to the Norman Conquest; Part II., from 1066 to the Reformation; Part III., from 1534 to the accession of Victoria; and Part IV., from 1837 to 1895.

Before the introduction of Christianity, marriage, for instance, was simply a commercial transaction, to be dissolved by return of presents. The bride was taken from her father's house, and so many head of cattle were left in her place, very much the same as is the case among South African tribes in the present day. Later on the Church introduced arrangements of betrothal and matrimony.

A husband might kill his wife and get off pretty easily; not so, however, a woman who murdered her husband; in most cases she expiated her crime at the stake. "Every lord had in his manor a gallows, tumbrel, pillory, whipping-post, and drowning pit, which received as many female victims as male, the drowning pit being especially kept for women who had committed theft." For centuries, whipping was a legal punishment for women. Prostitutes, vagrants, and other disorderly women were stripped naked to the waist, tied to a cart's tail, and flogged through the streets. It was only in 1674, that the Courts decided that a husband had no right to chastise his wife with personal correction.

Mr. Cleveland is hopeful as to the Parliamentary franchise being shortly extended to women, and he says: "From the eleventh century to the present day the nation has been steadily progressing in civilisation, and throughout the same period the position of woman has steadily improved; not because women themselves have helped in the making of the laws, but because all men and women have become more enlightened, more refined, and have had their ideas broadened by education, travel, and the arts of peace."

A Book of the Week.

"SIR GEORGE TRESSADY."*

There is much pleasure, as well as profit, to be gained from reading a novel that is full of thought. "Marcella," Mrs. Humphry Ward's previous novel, dealt more with political problems than with religious questions, such as were so freely discussed in "Robert Elsmere" and "David Grieve."

"Sir George Tressady" is a kind of sequel to "Marcella," and many of the same characters appear in its pages. Marcella herself has developed into a great political lady, with powerful influence among the members of the same convictions as herself in Parliament. Sir George Tressady belongs to the party in opposition to her husband, and the greater part of this story is taken up with recording the subtle influence that Marcella brought, almost unconsciously, to bear upon the rising young politician.

Sir George Tressady himself is excellently conceived; his early convictions, and subsequent vacillations are admirably depicted. From first to last, he is that *rara avis* in modern literature, a perfectly consistent character, who acts, talks, and thinks just as naturally and as inevitably as such a being would have done in the flesh. Unfortunately, Marcella, the Egeria of his political life, is too perfect a being for credence. Mrs. Humphry Ward is so much in love with her own heroine that she never neglects an opportunity of capitulating all her virtues and beauties. Now, when an author tells his readers in every chapter that his heroine is beautiful, pure, noble, and perfect, the reader, with that spirit of contradiction that is inherent in all Britishers, begins to argue that, after all, this lady either is not, or could not, have been such a paragon as her creator would have us believe. Mrs. Ward tries to adjust the balance by describing Marcella's impetuosity and the trouble that her enthusiasms entail, both upon herself and her husband; but somehow, in spite of the great literary skill employed in the task, the Marcella of "Sir George Tressady" is not convincing like the Marcella of the previous novel that bears her name.

Sir George Tresady's wife, Letty, on the other hand, is a distinct achievement, and never has Mrs. Ward proved herself a greater artist than in this portrait of a self-centred, vain, and somewhat under-bred little woman. Mrs. Ward has drawn her with a merciless pen; it is doubtful if a man writer could have conceived such a character. Letty is depicted as her nature was seen from a noble and spiritual woman's point of view, and no man would, I think, have seen the evil she wrought her husband in just that same focus, the focus that brings every detail of her hollowness and shallowness into distinct view, and yet somewhat blurs the surrounding halo of beauty and attraction. There is real craft in Letty's portraiture, for in spite of her many foibles, Mrs. Ward has contrived to make her by no means an unlikeable little person. Lord Fontenoy and various of the other political personages that flit through the novel will readily be recognised as portraits of some of the best known political personages of the present day.

Space fails to discuss the grave problems connected

* "Sir George Tressady," by Mrs. Humphry Ward. 6s. (Smith, Elder & Co., 1896).

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