

(b) The administration of "Tenement bye-laws," a powerful means of affecting the death rate, and especially the infant death rate;

(c) The segregation and disinfection of infected families;

(d) The supervision of baths, washhouses, also of open spaces;

That in all these directions Women have already done good work on the London Vestries, and that Women standing for re-election have been returned by increased majorities;

That the London Borough Councils will have the duty of struggling to provide decent housing for the working classes and that for this task the assistance of Women is as necessary as for the administration of Poor Law;

That if Parliament should remove the disability imposed on Women by the Local Government Act, 1899, the electors will have a larger field of selection of the most competent individuals and will yet be under no obligation to return a Woman;

That it is in the poorer parts of London that the electors have most strongly testified to their desire to have Women representatives, and in rich quarters alone that there is any opposition to the eligibility of Women;

Wherefore your Memorialists pray that you will support the London Borough Councils (Qualification of Women) Bill at its second reading on May 23rd.

(Signed)

MARY KATHLEEN LYTTTELTON,
President N.U.W.W.,
etc.

A Book of the Week.

"VOICES IN THE NIGHT."*

By far the most interesting, most able and most striking book which has appeared this season, Mrs. Steel's is a volume not merely to read through, but to possess.

In the judgment of one reviewer, it is the best throughout which she has yet given us. I have noticed that some critics have called it tedious. This is a criticism which seems to me wholly uncalled for. There is not a superfluous line in the whole, as far as I am concerned.

A double thread runs through the story; the English and the native. Lesley Drummond, modern to her finger-tips, governess to Lady Arbuthnot's little boy, on the terms of to-day—called by her Christian name by her employers, and taking part in all social functions—Lesley, with her well-informed mind and undeveloped heart, unsatisfactory in coquetry, but good comrade in difficulty and danger; and with a heart which, when once awakened, is well worth the winning—Lesley is a heroine to delight the modern woman. But the love affair between her and Raymond is by no means the paramount interest of the tale.

That centres, to my thinking, round the harem of Jehan Aziz, the nominal ruler of the Province over which Sir George Arbuthnot presides; or around the personality of Khrishn Davenund, the young Hindu who has been to England for education, and married the pretty common daughter of a Hammersmith boarding-house keeper.

* By Flora A. Steel. (Heinemann.)

This woman is innately vulgar, heartless—altogether worthless. She calls herself "Mrs. Chris Davenant," and tries to be noticed by the European society, but finds that she has no position among her own people, just as poor Chris, who is of high Brahmin caste, finds that he is cast out by his. The revulsion of feeling in the poor fellow, realising that he has cast away the love and absolute devotion of the Hindu wife who might have been his, in order to supply the coarse-minded girl he has married with funds to dress and flirt and soil his name, and pledge his credit—certainly the man does not gain in this particular variety of Western marriage!

This forms the tragedy of the book. Chris, son of a man high in position under government, saturated with Western learning, overlaying the strong hereditary cravings which argument can only drug, not kill—he is a typical figure of young India: not strong, infinitely pathetic.

But to me the essence of the book is "Auntie Khojee."

It is possible, Mrs. Steel shows us, for the Western woman to be as odious, as worthless as Mrs. Chris Davenant, and for the Hindu, cramped in body and soul, ignorant, superstitious, restricted,—to live a life of single-minded devotion to duty, and unwearied self-denial for the sake of those she loves. They almost starve in the harem of Jehan Aziz. There is no money to get servants, or even food, beyond the barest necessities, and Sa'adut, the pathetic little heir of Nothingness, the one child of the Royal House, is dying for lack of proper nourishment. The two old sisters, Khadjee and Khojee, are aunts of Jehan Aziz, both unmarried. Khojee is deformed, and has never had a suitor; but her withered old heart overflows with love and maternal warmth, and in spite of her infirmities it is she who does all that can be done by poverty and ignorance towards mitigating misfortune.

The leading motive of the book is the strange upheaval of native prejudice and antagonism, in the face of a threatened outbreak of the cholera. With rare literary skill, Mrs. Steel does not think it necessary to pile up horrors, nor to give us corpses festering in the sun. She is content to point out the possibilities of tragedy lying in the dread of exposure felt by all high born Hindu women, in the pitiful story of Auntie Khojee and the green silk trousers. The dear old lady to relieve the pressing necessities of the household, has been forced to pawn Auntie Khadjee's state green satin trousers. Going to redeem them she finds to her horror that they have been sold. Now it is essential that Khadjee should not know of her loss, and as she is about to receive friends, what is to be done? Going into another shop for some other purchase, she is offered a lovely pair, far finer than the lost ones, at a suspiciously low price. Poor old Khadjee wears them in high glee, and promptly sickens and dies of the cholera.

Now at all costs, this death must be kept from the ears of the brutal government, and the old woman with her own hands, digs a grave for her sister in the courtyard, that the daughter of Kings may remain in death as in life, inviolate. The experience of Auntie Khojee subsequently in the dreaded segregation camp, which turns out to be all her heart could desire, and her peaceful old age, in receipt of a Government pension, are the greatest relief

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