

and daughters are expected to fetch and carry, remain standing in the presence of their men, and dine together on the fragments that remain after dinner. It is easy to imagine the horror likely to be aroused among men brought up in such an atmosphere when they heard that their King actually consulted his consort on affairs of State, had even been known to take her advice. The shock to the nation would be infinitely greater than if all the slanders of disappointed damsels had been proved in open court."

The Society of Women Journalists held their Ninth Council Meeting at the Essex Hall on Tuesday last, and presented a most flourishing report. The popular President, Mrs. Arthur Stannard, and the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Greenwood, resigned office to make room, as they said for "fresh blood," and Lady Sarah Wilson and Mrs. H. T. Bulstrode were elected to these positions.

A charming party followed the business meeting, at which music of a very high order delighted the guests, and we own ourselves entranced with the voice of that wonderful mezzo-soprano Mr. Sopra. Never have we heard anything quite so exquisitely melodious as his singing. Imagine if you can, afar off, somewhere quite near Heaven, all the larks and all the flutes piping in unison and you will realise the unique *timbre* of this wonderful voice. Mr. Sopra is a young French Canadian, and the fame of him is bound to go far. Every lover of harmony should hear him.

## A Book of the Week.

### STAY-AT-HOMES.\*

Mrs. Walford is an author who belongs, properly speaking, to an elder day. "Mr. Smith" and "Cousins" came out at an epoch when young people were able to divert themselves with the author of "Molly Bawn." The autobiographical heroine who wrote in the present tense flourished in those days, and quite sensible women regaled themselves with such stuff as: "I turn to my mirror to see what it will show me. Can it indeed be that I am a beauty? Can men see something to admire in these ripe-red lips, these loose wavy locks, these big wondering eyes, &c.?" The present reviewer is old enough to remember accurately the deep, the immense impression made upon herself by a first perusal of "Mr. Smith." In her firm refusal to meddle with anything but just the ordinary every-day life of the better classes, the life she knows, has studied, understands, Mrs. Walford may claim to have come nearer to Jane Austen than any other writer but Mrs. Gaskell.

The pity of it is that she is so unequal. If, like the wondrous Jane, she had been content never to give forth anything sketchy, never to part with her "two-inch-square ivory" until it was wrought to the highest point of perfection, her place would be far higher in contemporary literature than it stands to-day. Some of her later work—notably, "One of Ourselves"—can only be described as twaddle, and tedious twaddle at that.

But in "Stay-at-Homes" she seems to have drawn back far nearer to the level of "The Baby's Grand-

mother." She shows much of the old merit—we were going to add, all the old faults—the same incapacity to handle a plot, the same masterly dealing with a situation.

But the great claim to merit of the present work rests in its clever presentation of the character of Lady Laura Maynard.

Lady Laura is a fair sample of a class which still exists in its thousands in rural England. She is a lady of unexceptionable antecedents, who has never done or felt anything all her life except just what was the proper thing for one of her class to do and feel. She has, of course, married; equally, of course, she has not been in love. What would she and those like her think of a woman who loved and did not marry—really far the more natural contravention of law of the two? She is the mother of three well-brought-up daughters, who, as soon as they are grown up, being the product of a later generation, begin, in a very mild fashion, to kick over the traces. The mother, who had no girlhood, who has no experiences, who never felt deeply, nor strongly desired anything, because she has lived in that dull, material prosperity which, more than anything else, blunts intellectual and spiritual cravings—this woman is foolishly, pettishly jealous of her own daughters. If they are asked out without her, she is resentful. If they wish to do anything without her, she is offended. She is hurt that she has not their confidence, though she has never either encouraged nor deserved it, and if it were offered would merely snub and put down the speaker.

To be neglected by the county is the only thing she fears. Not that her position as leader in her own neighbourhood is ever questioned; but she demands a constant deference to her opinion which shall enable her to go on feeling herself a person of importance. She is desirous that her daughters shall marry well, while she never gives them any chance to marry at all. Selfishly content with her own vegetable existence, she exalts her "stay-at-home" condition to the rank of a virtue—a positive virtue!

How little does the modern London woman know what girls all over England at this moment are suffering from such mothers! If some of the girls in question could take their trial like Miss Walford's noble Beatrice Maynard, so much the better for them.

The character of Daisy Curle just misses fire; it is such a little way short of carrying conviction that one feels the least bit more boldness on the part of the writer would have scored a real success.

G. M. R.

## What to Read.

"Life and Labour of the People in London. Final Volume: Notes on Social Influences and Conclusion." By Charles Booth, assisted by others.

"The Chronicle of Jocelin de Brakelond: A Picture of Monastic Life in the Days of Abbot Samson." Newly edited by Sir Ernest Clarke, F.S.A.

"Mrs. Pendleton's Four-in-Hand." By Gertrude Atherton.

"Before the Dawn: A Story of the Fall of Richmond." By Joseph A. Altsheler.

"The Joy of Living." By Hermann Sudermann. Translated by Edith Wharton.

\* By Mrs. L. B. Walford. Longmans and Co.

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