

## Outside the Gates.

### WOMEN.

The Bishop of Birmingham has contributed a short article to the January number of the *Woman Worker*, in which he asks whether women can be organised in Trades Unions like the men. He chose, he says, the motto for the Women's Trades Union League from Ecclesiastes: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth and hath not another to lift him up. . . . And if a man prevail against him that is alone two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken." The moral of these proverbs is that those who are weak alone will be strong if they can but learn to hold together. All women, Dr. Gore continues, who are working outside the home ought to combine, as men have done, in Trades Unions. "No doubt the labour of women is hard to organise, and we shall want the help of legislation. We must make our voices as loud and as united as possible in claiming Wages Boards, established with statutable powers, to fix the minimum wage. In my judgment this step is actually the most important step at present in social reform. I would give it the very first place. But the prospect of such a measure does not render the task of voluntary organisation less necessary. The institution of Wages Boards would give great encouragement and legal sanction to the organisation of labour in every trade; but the organisation will still largely depend on voluntary effort and on the power among the workers of holding together and working together, so that they may have a common interest and may know how to make their claims justly and effectively. Only trades where there is already some organisation among the workers will be ready to use the Wages Boards even when we get them. Therefore I would say to all women workers: Organise, organise; stand together, stand together!"

The new Married Women's Property Act enables a married woman to perform active duties as a trustee, as if she were a single woman.

The newly-formed Ladies' Alpine Club has found a home in London under the hospitable roof of the Lyceum Club, and has inaugurated its foundation by a dinner there at which Mrs. Aubrey Le Blond presided. Through Miss Adeline Edwards, Queen Margherita of Italy has sent good wishes for success of lady climbers, she said "that the greatest joy of the members would be to search out ways untrodden by man or beast, and to flee to the beloved mountains as the source of health and strength and truest inspiration."

The Scottish women graduates who claim the right to exercise the Parliamentary franchise, and whose claim has been repelled both in the Outer and Inner Houses of the Court of Session at Edinburgh, have now decided to appeal to the House of Lords in the hope of getting these judgments reversed, and are raising funds for this purpose.

## Book of the Week.

### VALERIE UPTON.\*

Mrs. Sedgwick's latest book is an exceedingly clever bit of work. As a psychological study it could hardly be surpassed. The story deals entirely with the commonplace, but that in no way detracts from the interest; rather it goes to prove the skill of the writer that she can present us with the most every-day events and environments and hold us keenly intent upon their development from beginning to end.

The theme upon which the story may be said to be based is the contrast between conscious virtue and unconscious charm, artificial perfection, and the endeavour to do right, self-absorption, and disciplined selflessness. The subtlety of the thing lies in the fact that so many people mistake the one for the other at the outset, especially the best and nicest. It is more difficult to deceive the more worldly—for instance, a girl like Rose Packer, pleasure-loving, pleasure-seeking, who owns to something "petty" in her nature, but is firm in her disapprobation of the adored and beautiful Imogen Upton. "A saint in velvet," Rose calls her, to the vexation of sweet Mary Colton and the annoyance of Jack Pennington, Imogen's lover. It never occurs to these devoted souls that it is not they who have put Imogen on to a pedestal for worship, but that she has most laboriously climbed upon it herself, and is perpetually calling attention to the fact that she is there for all the world to admire—the pose perfectly sustained, so consistently kept up that almost everyone who comes into contact with Imogen is caught by its outer aspect and held spellbound.

Imogen follows in the footsteps of her father—a man who is described by Mary Colton as having worked himself to death for civic reform, "a good man—a wonderful man." And naughty Rose calls him "a bombastic prig."

Not because he was a bad man, or because she was a heartless woman, did Valerie Upton leave her husband for the best part of every year and bury herself in her beloved Surrey cottage. The fact was that a life with him became utterly unbearable because they were so hopelessly unsuited to each other, so entirely out of sympathy. When both their children went to school, Mrs. Upton, with the alternative of flight or an unbroken tête-à-tête with her husband before her, chose the former. She returned always for the children's holidays. It was a curious arrangement, and one which may be as strenuously condemned by the reader as it was by Imogen, Valerie's daughter, who, when she reached years of discretion, became Everard Upton's devoted follower and admirer. He moulded her, influenced her, educated her entirely upon his own lines—the girl had no need of her mother, no feeling for Valerie but a sort of contemptuous pity.

The chronicles of Valerie Upton's life are taken up at the point where she receives the news of her husband's death and a letter of inimitable loving

\* By A. D. Sedgwick. (Constable.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)