

Outside the Gates.

Book of the Week.

SEX EQUALITY IN DIVORCE.

The Royal Commission on the Laws of Divorce and its administration appointed to take evidence on this question of vital importance to the community, has held sittings at Winchester House, St. James's Square, during the past week, and the two ladies—Lady Frances Balfour and Mrs. H. J. Tennant—who, with ten men, form the Commission, must have been somewhat amazed by the evidence of Mr. Justice Bigham, the President of the Divorce Court.

Dealing with the subject of sex equality, Sir John said: "I do not think the act of adultery on the part of a man has anything like the same significance that an act of adultery has on the part of a woman. Most men, I think all men, know it perfectly well. An act of adultery on the part of a man may be more or less accidental. It is not inconsistent with his continued esteem and love of his wife (some people, of course, will think differently), whereas an act of adultery on the part of a woman, in my opinion, is quite inconsistent with the continued love and esteem of her husband."

We ask women what is the position of their sex who have to sue for justice in a Court where the Judge holds these opinions. Equality of the moral law between the sexes is imperative in any Court of Law if justice is to be maintained, and our present divorce laws are grossly unjust to women, and an incentive to immorality to men.

Married men do not usually commit adultery with clean women. That is the fact wives must realise. Faithlessness upon the part of a husband does not end with the moral outrage to a woman's inner consciousness; she also runs the risk of loathsome physical infection, which may not only ruin her own health, but that of the innocent fruit of her body—a heart-breaking result to a mother.

We are not surprised to find that Lady Frances Balfour addressed some pertinent questions to Sir John Bigham on his two standard moral code for the sexes. "I suppose the wife's pride would indeed be above rubies, who closed her eyes to 'accidental' adultery?" questioned her ladyship.

Sir George Lewis, the eminent solicitor, in his evidence, said his experience covered thousands of cases in the Divorce Court. For the last 30 years he had advocated a number of amendments of the law of divorce in the direction of securing sex equality, and making relief possible to the poor. He would make the grounds of divorce the same for man as for woman, namely, adultery; cruelty, desertion, lunacy, and imprisonment for five years. If the adultery of his wife entitled a man to divorce, the adultery of her husband should entitle a woman to divorce. This is sound common sense.

ANNE OF AVONLEA.*

We closed "Anne of Green Gables" with regret—regret that we had turned the last page of so charming a book—regret that we had parted with Anne just as she was budding into womanhood, for we felt sure that so delightful and original a child must have an interesting future. So "Anne of Avonlea" (Prince Edward Island) is welcome, and though her predecessor must remain first favourite yet this is a book to be read and enjoyed. We are introduced to her when she is "a tall slim girl 'half-past sixteen' with serious gray eyes, and hair which her friends called auburn," just as she is entering upon the charge of the Avonlea school. Is it usual to put girls of sixteen in full charge of schools in Canada? It seems so from this story, for Anne's contemporaries were appointed to similar posts, and we find three of them seriously discussing the question of corporal punishment. Anne's strong conviction that it is "a cruel and barbarous thing to whip a child—any child" fails when put to too severe a test, and though she bitterly reproaches herself—and so she should for she certainly lost her temper—she found that if she had not won the delinquent's liking she had won his respect, and Mrs. Rachel Lynde tells her that Anthony now believes she is some good after all, though she is a girl; "that whipping you gave him was just as good as a man's."

But Anne is mournful feeling her ideals have played her false somehow. "It doesn't seem right. I'm sure my theory of kindness can't be wrong." Nor is it, but there are exceptions to every rule.

It is not to be supposed that Anne's genius for getting into trouble forsakes her. The episode of her sale of the wrong cow is amusing reading. Nor was the Avonlea Village Improvement Society, launched by the energetic young people to beautify their village, without its disasters. But they are gaining experience all the time, and especially from the great teacher, Nature, for which Anne has lost none of her passionate love.

"I wonder what a soul. . . a person's soul . . . would look like," said Priscilla dreamily.

"Like that, I should think," answered Anne, pointing to a radiance of sifted sunlight streaming through a birch tree, "only with shape and features of course. I like to fancy souls as being made of light. And some are all shot through with rosy stains and quivers . . . and some have a soft glitter like moonlight on the sea . . . and some are pale and transparent like mist at dawn."

"I read somewhere once that souls were like flowers," said Priscilla.

"Then your soul is a golden narcissus," said Anne, "and Diana's is like a red, red rose. Jane's is an apple blossom, pink and wholesome and sweet."

"And your own is a white violet with purple streaks in its heart," finished Priscilla.

* By L. M. Montgomery. (Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., 1 Amen Corner, E.C.)

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