

phonograph to wind out audibly the whispers, pleadings, and demands of the sisterhood.

Here we will give publicity to women's wrongs, will fight their battles, assist to repair what evils we can, and give advice to the best of our ability.

Half of Australian women's lives are unhappy, but there are paths out of most labyrinths, and we will set up finger-posts. For those who are happy—God bless them! have we not laid on the Storyteller, the Poet, the Humourist, and the Fashion-monger?

We wear no ready-made suit of opinions, nor stand on any platform of woman's rights which we have as yet seen erected. Dress we shall not neglect, for no slattern ever yet won the respect of any man worth loving. If you want "rings on your fingers and bells on your toes" we will tell you where they can best be bought, as well as sundry other articles of woman's garniture.

We shall welcome contributions and correspondence from women, for nothing concerning woman's life and interest lies outside our scope.

It is not a new thing to say that there is no power in the world like that of women, for in their hands lie the plastic unformed characters of the coming generation to be moulded beyond alteration into what form they will. This most potent constituency we seek to represent, and for their suffrages we we.

### The Divorce Extension Bill.

THERE are few questions so important for the consideration of women as those of the laws of marriage and divorce, since full half the sorrows of women rise from marriages foolishly made, or from nuptial ties which being made cry out for severance. Thank Heaven! there are many happy marriages—many men and many women who have found a matrimonial partnership double their stock of content, and whose ties of association are made up of so many mutual memories, so many joys shared and sorrows divided, that no legal vinculum could bind them closer. But you men and women who have not—and we pray never may have—cause to name the hideous word "separation," are those who should take up the first weapon and fight in the front ranks for the liberation of unhappy spirits tied upon connubial racks. That man who being content, and finding life and his

home a blessing and a day-to-day comfort, cares nothing for surrounding sorrows, nor longs to see the whole world happy, as he, is one of those who must thank their fortune, not their deserts, for the pleasures they enjoy.

If there is one thing most calculated to make the blood of honest and manly hearts boil over, it is to see a woman bound by ill made laws, and by the cruel pruderies of public opinion to a life of hourly sorrow and perennial torture.

Have we not all seen women striving to do patiently and well their ordinary tasks, smiling on their friends and visitors; laboring with a noble persistence along the road they have thoughtlessly or blindly entered, while their hearts secretly bleed from the hidden stabs of continual marital unkindness.

Freedom through divorce is a method of escape scarce thought of by women. There is every guarantee that on their side at least every case where divorce is sued for is a genuine one. Publicity they hate and fear with a shuddering inconceivable to men; the dread of comments of acquaintances and the unkindly criticism of outsiders, as well as the well-grounded fear that the world has no sustenance to lend them, prove such barriers to women, that most will rather bear on and die than fly to such a remedy.

For these reasons the fact that Sir Alfred Stephen's just and admirable Divorce Extension Bill has been again postponed occasions both sorrow and indignation. Her Majesty's Ministers have not seen fit to recommend Her Majesty to grant her assent to the measure. The Bill must, therefore, be again sent home for approval, and at the next general election the readiness to support this measure, must be made one of the test questions. Then will fall the opportunity for women to work, and write, and use their influence in its favour. For the act, though not solely designed for the benefit of woman, will in effect be for her good almost exclusively, for of its provisions men rarely need to make use.

The provisions of the Act are briefly that any person resident in this colony for two years and upwards may present a petition for divorce.

- I. On the ground of desertion without just cause or excuse for three years.
- II. On the ground that the respondent has by continued habits of drunkenness during two years left his wife without the means of support, or being petitioner's

wife has rendered herself unfit for her domestic duties.

III. On the ground that at the time of presentation of the petition the respondent has been 12 months in gaol, and is still confined under sentence for a capital crime, or under sentence for seven years or upwards for some other crime, or that being a husband has by frequent convictions left his wife for two years without the means of support.

IV. On the ground that within the previous six months the respondent has been convicted of an attempt to murder the petitioner, or has been repeatedly guilty of assaulting and cruelly beating the petitioner, or that the respondent has during a period of two years been repeatedly guilty of cruelty.

If the petitioner's own habits or conduct contributed to the wrong complained of, the petition for divorce may be dismissed nor does the act allow the respondent in the suit to re-marry for a period of two years.

These are just reasons, and some day they certainly will be embodied in our Statute Book. Women have power; they must use it to make this time come quickly. There is not one pure-minded woman but has longed at some time to be of more use in the world, and to benefit the universe by some noble act. Well, here is one chance. Spread justice, widen the boundaries of happiness, help your sorrow-laden sisters. Men are more rarely the victims of connubial ties than women, and except in the case of drunkenness it is improbable that any man ever feels the need of more aids to freedom. But the anomalies of the law as it stands, and the cruelties inflicted on women under its protection, are horrible.

The woman whom a brutal husband has attempted to murder finds herself doomed to support herself as best she may during the long period of years during which her husband pays the penalty of his crime in gaol, and finds moreover when the brute is released that she is still the felon's legal helpmeet and companion. Legally, and in the eyes of Society, bound to again entrust her life to him—to run the gauntlet of his blows and offer him another opportunity for a more surely delivered thrust. So, too, a deserted woman is called upon to live alone, constant to the blackguard who has left her, though he, curbed by no restraints, roams what part

case of desertion the wife is left practically with no means of support, and she has then to toil in that most difficult of paths—the single woman's way to monetary competence. Should she be desperately poor, and should there happily be some good fellow of a worthier sort ready to marry her it avails nothing. The choice lies between immorality on the one side and on the other continued poverty and allegiance to a deserter.

On the horrors of a drunken housemate (surely wife and husband are not fit terms to use here) we will not descant. There are few who have not at some time or place seen the trace of this domestic serpent. Its deadly track is artfully concealed—with loving patience its insidious attack is combated—strength, health, hope, gladness, wealth are all devoured in time.

Is it asserted that these cases are rare? What then? The hideous injustice of them is such that did they occur, but once in a hundred there would be reason enough for the preparation of a legislative thunderbolt fit to exterminate on the instant the intolerable wrong.

The sacredness and strength of marriage ties can never be weakened by the severance of bonds which women's tears have already rotted, nor can any sanctity remain in marriage bonds which only bind to torments.

#### YOUNG PEOPLE'S SYDNEY PROGRESSIVE LYCEUM.

A grand social was given to the members of the Lyceum on Saturday, March 31, by Professor West. After refreshments, the children rendered songs, recitations, parts, and explanations very creditably. A vote of thanks to Professor West was moved, seconded, and spoken on by the children, and carried by acclamation. The whole concluded with the Maypole dance. This institution is managed by the children themselves. The basis of the institution is good order. It teaches self-reliance, tolerance not indifference, courage not forwardness. Ethics eclectic. They elect from themselves a conductor, treasurer, secretary, and committee to manage. We believe this is the first institution of the kind started in the colonies, and so far it augers a great success. Their motto is "Never ask others to do for you what you can do for yourself."

The House of Commons has carried the second reading of the Marriage with Deceased Wife's