

The book is a record of the heroically dogged struggles of woman to regain her position as (in Miss Becker's words) the co-ordinate, not the subordinate, half of humanity.

I say *regain* her position, for, as indicated in the first pages, in ancient times in England, possessions and titles and honours were transmitted by right of birth. "Though the 'Spear' side was held of first importance in those days of warlike nurture, the

'Spindle' side

was never permitted to succumb. Other things being equal, birth, not sex, determined the devolution of responsibilities. The seals of women were as much tokens of their own act and deed as the seals of men. The maintenance of orderly conduct amongst their retainers, by court of frank pledge, and other territorial obligations, devolved on the holder of the manor, irrespective of that holder being lord or lady. So, too, the duty of providing men and arms for the King's wars." Peeresses and abbesses received frequent writs for military service, and were summoned to attend the councils of the King.

But with the disappearance of the abbeys (which were practically the colleges and high schools of the centuries from Alfred to Henry VII.), the "doors of honourable careers of studious, useful service were closed to many women, the stream of culture cut off from all except the few and exceptionally placed." The disappearance of the Guilds in like manner grievously affected the status of the women of the commercial and industrial classes.

For the story of this "Long Ebb" the reader is referred to Mrs Stopes' "British Free-women."

Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset, was probably the "last of the women of the old traditions. . . . She lived true to her motto, 'Maintain your loyalty and preserve your rights.' She upheld her lawful claim as hereditary Sheriff of Westmoreland against King James I. himself, and she

Defended her Castles

against the troops of Cromwell. While her strenuous life closes the ancient type of aspirant womanhood, the writings of Mary Astell gave the first note to the aspirations only attained to by the women workers of to-day."

Among others who passed on the "lamp of learning" were Mrs Barbauld and Hannah More. "These all devoted their best powers to the produc-

tion of books for the young, and therefore stand foremost as preparing the way for the awakening of just discontent in the generations that followed."

In the chapter on the First Stages of the Movement, Miss Blackburn says: "The old electors might have been women. No bar stayed them—in law—only the bar of non-user that had been drawn across their path by custom during the long period of discouragement. . . . The Reform Act of 1832 enacted the first statutory disability. The seed of the Women's Suffrage agitation lay in that one short word, 'male,' introduced into 19 and 20 of 2 W. IV., c. 45 (1832). That one word gave the sanction of law to the custom which had been for two centuries insidiously working to press women back from all interest or care for public duties."

Curiously enough, as a writer in 1843 pointed out, while British women were

thus debarred

from electing the legislators of their own country, they might, if possessing the necessary property qualification, vote for those who were to govern India.

The refusal of the Anti-Slavery Convention, held in London, in 1840, to receive as delegates the duly accredited ladies sent from the United States, gave the impetus to the agitation for Woman Suffrage in the United States. But the Anti-Corn Law agitation was more educative for English women. Women took an active part in the necessary canvassing, the Manchester women alone obtaining more than 50,000 signatures to the memorial. Writing of the services rendered by women to this cause, Mr F. Bastiat, the French economist, remarked, "Woman has comprehended that the effort is a course of justice and reparation towards the suffering classes; she has comprehended that almsgiving is not the only form of charity. We are ready to succour the unfortunate, say they, but that is no reason why the law should make unfortunates. We are willing to feed those who are hungry, to clothe those who are cold, but we applaud efforts which have for their object the removal of the barriers which interfere between clothing and nakedness, between subsistence and starvation."

Needless to say, the leaders of the Anti-Corn Law agitation (Richard Cobden, C. P. Villiers, and others) were strongly in favour of women

sharing political power.

The facsimile of the earliest leaflet printed in favour of Woman's Suffrage is given. The concluding words are—"If woman be the complement of man, we may surely venture the intimation that all our social transactions will be incomplete or otherwise until they have been guided alike by the wisdom of each sex. The mothers of the State or nation might contribute as much to the good order, the peace, the thrift of the body politic as they severally do to the well-being of their families."

"The next sign of the leaven which was steadily working" was an article in the "Westminster Review," of July, 1851, on the enfranchisement of Women, written by Mrs John Stuart Mill, and afterwards reprinted as a pamphlet. The article mentions a petition of women, claiming the elective franchise, presented to the House of Lords in Feb., 1851.

Part II. is devoted to Biographical Notes and Reminiscences of Miss Becker, the fine woman, "who will stand forth to after times as the leader whose personality was impressed on its early work, whose forethought and judgment moulded its policy." Miss Becker entered upon the work in the early sixties, and remained in harness until her almost tragic death, which occurred at Geneva, in 1890.

The first petition to Parliament was presented in 1866, by John Stuart Mill, when a Reform Bill was before the country. The record of the patient, heroic work done through all the years between then and the present time needs but to be read to fill one with

admiration and hope—

hope for the country whose women, in spite of sneer and rebuff, and slight, and discouragement of every kind, keep their eye fixed on their righteous goal.

One is tempted to dwell on the workers in the cause (many of whose portraits are given), women who are known to us in almost every department of philanthropic and educational effort, from Florence Nightingale to the founders of Girton College. Lack of space forbids.

The final chapter is devoted to Colonial Progress, and, in speaking of New Zealand, Miss Blackburn mentions the Petition of 1892, bearing 18,784 signatures, but omits notice of that of the following year, which was signed by over 31,000 women.