

FROM OUR OWN OBSERVATORY.

THE LITERATURE OF MARRIAGE AND SEX RELATIONSHIP.

The Legitimation League.

THE New Woman—and the Old Woman, too—can hardly grumble at the amount of literature that has of late years been devoted to the discussion of the questions in which she is primarily interested, or at the radical nature of that discussion in the journals and books devoted especially to it. There seems, however, to be a considerable amount of confusion in the way the questions involved are handled, which leads to much misunderstanding, and often to angry recriminations. It seems to us that we can only deal satisfactorily with such questions by separating the advocates into two camps: (1) those who wish to remove all unjust restrictions, so as to place men and women upon terms of perfect equality in society and before the law; and those who advocate total abolition not only of all legal restrictions, but of our social ideas and customs in regard to what are to-day considered to be sexual offences and disabilities. We have received several works relating to these questions at various times during the last year, but have not had an opportunity to more than just glance at them. "The Bar Sinister and Licit Love," edited by Oswald Dawson, (W. Reeves, 185 Fleet Street, London, price 1s.) is the biennial report of the Legitimation League, an organization the prime object of which is to place on terms of equality with the legitimate children of a married couple, their "natural children that may have been born prior to the legal ceremony of marriage;" and a secondary object of which is to abolish the present marriage ceremony as a contract for life. The League recognizes "the advantage, almost the necessity, of some form of public registration of marriage and public acknowledgement of paternity"; it thinks that "all suitable persons should marry in some form, but it contends that the laws should place the poor man on a level with the rich, and that divorce should be obtained as easily as marriage is effected, so that an earthly hell might be often avoided."

With these objects we are perfectly in sympathy. We see no earthly use in forcing a couple to keep up a pretence of being "married and happy" when all chance of happiness has disappeared; we can conceive of no reason why, for good and sufficient cause shown before a judge, or even on a mere joint declaration before the registering officer, a decree of divorce should not issue, if, as in other dissolutions of partnerships, the contracting parties enter into proper securities for fulfilment of obligations incurred. And if, in the case of divorced persons who re-married, a proper registration of children were made, there could be no more dispute as to heirship to property than there is at present. Though the League thus favors a rational amendment of the law in this way, its object is