

Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



In December, 1893, an address was delivered by Sir Dyce Duckworth, before the Scottish Society of Literature in Glasgow, entitled, "Women: their Probable Place and Prospects in the twentieth century." This address is significant, and, from the point of view of a man of wide and tender sympathies, has much in it which should commend itself to our consideration. The keynote is sounded on the first page:—

"I will declare at the outset of my address," says Sir Dyce, "that all I am about to state is prompted by a profound and wide admiration of woman; by a chivalrous respect for her highest qualities, and by an appreciation and lofty conception of her legitimate aims and position as a divinely created companion of man in his present phase of existence."

How many weak and tired women, toiling daily in an uncongenial (yet compulsory) environment, would not gladly accept and fill the position for which she was "divinely" created?

What we have got to face is the fact that, in this age, women must work if they would eat, and they are not always able to choose the sphere of work most congenial to their sex. Speaking of the rapid changes in the position of women, Sir Dyce remarks:—

"The first steps, which cost most, have been taken—woman is now free to follow pursuits, and engage in lines of work, which were once considered as closed to her. Some enthusiasts would open all doors, and set women free to do anything that may be done with human brains and limbs. This I at once condemn, and hasten to add that women should engage in no calling which is unfit for womanly effort. I recognize at the outset the sexual difference between man and woman. That is an eternal and unalterable law. It can be broken, as may all God's laws, only with peril to the breaker. But this has been too much forgotten in the earlier efforts to emancipate woman from long-continued repression. These fixed sexual differences relate to the welfare and happiness of the human race. We are all bipeds, but we are differentiated in nature, both in mental and in structural organization. The mind and nature of woman are very different, and are divinely intended to be very different, from those of man. It is not a question of weight of brain, of muscular power, of length of limb, nor yet of capacity for mathematical, classical, or philosophical attainments, for these may be all superior in a given woman to those possessed by a given man, and all the world knows that a clever woman is more than a match for a stupid man; but it is a question of the eternal fitness of things, as to the effects produced, and the result attained, by exposing one sex to training and influences not contemplated, and not designed, in the natural evolution of perfect womanhood."

Sir Dyce is opposed to women taking a public part in politics; he would advise them not to press their claims for what are sometimes called "Women's rights," and although he thinks women of property, in their own right, are entitled to every privilege carried

by such possession, if they are wise they will not be too keen to avail themselves of them under ordinary circumstances. For our part, we find it a little difficult to dis sever the "privileges" from the responsibility of public duty, and from women who hold real estate, and pay taxes, surely the rights of citizenship should not be withheld.

We are inclined to agree with Sir Dyce in his opinion of women's *physical* incapacity.

"I have said nothing so far," he says, "on the topic of woman's physical capacity to enter on the strife and competition of professional life. Allowing for the highest possible attainment of physical power and energy on her part, it is all too small and inadequate for the end in view, unless, again, we reckon the feats of extraordinary women, and put them in the scale against the average work of ordinary men. If women compete with men they will certainly fail in the long run, and they will add some of the men's ailments to the already long list of their own. They are not intended by nature to do the work, bodily or mental, that men do, and those who best know and love women know this full well, and it is right to let such aspirants know this in time. A few exceptional cases do nothing but test or prove the great general rule to the contrary."

Again:—

"Human nature has been, is still, and I venture to think, will be, for all time, very human. We may feel the utmost confidence in all that is to come, provided that each sex keeps true to itself, and strives to maintain its inherent qualities intact, and in obedience to the physical and moral laws, which, being God's laws, are plainly enjoined upon each. Happily, it may be affirmed with confidence that recent developments, are, in the main, for good, and not for evil, and that they tend in the general direction of robustness and wholesomeness. I have already stated that I have no fear for the future provided that with each new accretion there is lost not a jot or tittle of the superlative grace of true womanliness. Get wisdom, get understanding, yes, but get also righteousness along with these, for truly what exalteth a nation no less exalteth the individuals in it. Womanly women necessitate chivalrous men, and each in their spheres cannot fail to make things better."

We are entirely in sympathy with Sir Dyce concerning the value of a womanly appearance. We read:—

"There is no necessity for the conjunction of learning and ugliness. Only reflect how very charming and winning might be the blend of learning with beauty, or, at least, of sweet feminine and womanly grace. I repeat that cropped heads, ill-fitting dress, general untidiness, and clumsy boots do little to commend culture to the weaker sisters who may be quite kindly disposed to it, while the result of this on the average man is, without doubt, to excite repulsion, and it is also very bad for him, since it drives him into the toils of the inane feminine ranks."

The parting word of advice we may all take to heart:—

"Let us see to it that our young women go forward, encouraged only by the best examples and the highest types of womanhood, to be brave and bright, hopeful and tender. Let them be robust in body and in mind, strong in character, virtuous and high-minded, sweet with womanly graces, bold for truth, patient in well doing, and keepers at Home. Guided by these principles we need have no misgivings for them in the future, for to carry out all this is, I believe, safely to keep God's eternal law in respect of the place and the influence of woman for all time.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)