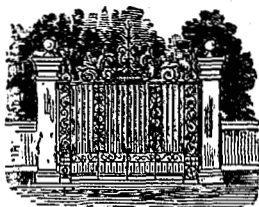


## Outside the Gates.

### WOMEN.



THE inaugural meeting of the National Council of Women of Australia was recently held in Sydney, at which Lady Hampden presided.

Miss Margaret Windeyer, the delegate from the International Council of Women which met in Chicago in 1893, addressed the meeting, and clearly explained its objects. After explaining the proposed organisation, she said that at the council's meetings each delegate would represent the particular principle for which her organisation existed, but any member of any organisation federating with the national council would be allowed to take part in the council's proceedings, and would be able to move resolutions and speak, but would not be allowed to vote. The council would be the means of giving to every cause for which separate societies existed increased moral force if the society were affiliated. The organisations would reap the same advantage from membership in the national council which individuals reaped from membership in any organisation, and the council would tend to establish solidarity of sentiment and purpose among women now working in every direction in the hope that they might leave the world a little better than they found it. Another result would be to increase the interest of individual women in associated work. Much overlapping in work would be prevented if representatives of different organisations and committees met in conference at stated periods, as would be brought about by the establishment of the proposed council. The meetings of the council would secure for each organisation having membership in it a wider bearing and a larger interest on the part of the public than it could command alone. The council would serve as a means of prosecuting any work of common interest. It would put the wisdom and experience of each at the service of all. It would unite all societies of women, so that with a mighty aggregate of power they might move in directions upon which all could agree.

The following officers were elected unanimously :— President, Lady Hampden ; vice-presidents, Lady Darley and Lady Renwick ; corresponding secretary, Miss M. Windeyer ; recording secretary, Mrs. Robjohns.

National Councils of women have now been established and affiliated to the International Council in the United States, France, Germany, Belgium, Bohemia, Finland, Canada, New Zealand, Australia ; and the Provisional Committee for Great Britain and Ireland have been in active correspondence with Lady Aberdeen, the President of the International Council, and hope that by the autumn the organisation for this country will be satisfactorily inaugurated.

## A Book of the Week.

### "NETS FOR THE WIND."\*

THE problem in æsthetics, which is so often propounded only to remain for ever unsolved, as to where lies the distinction between the art of the painter and that of the writer, or to the subjects legitimate for treatment by the brush or by the pen, is involuntarily forced upon one again after the perusal of this, one of the strangest of strange volumes which the "nineteenth century renaissance" has bequeathed to us, accustomed as we should be to every form of artistic extravagance and fantasy. And Miss Una Taylor's little book is another proof of the futility of the attempt at a solution of the sphinx-like riddle, and one seems to learn again how in art as in life we must be content to drink from the crystal spring without an enquiry whence its waters flow, for, as we are ever reminded, "art is long and life is short," and already our day is far spent. A set of stories this book cannot be called, "a little gallery of word pictures" is as near an approach to the expression of the inexpressible as language permits. It is in truth a world of beautiful fantasy into which we are led, where lives were lived when life itself was young, but into which there enters the throbbing of passionate love—with those handmaidens who through the ages bear her company—sorrow and death. To take each of Miss Taylor's eleven little pictures and discuss it separately would only show how inadequate criticism of work like this must always be, when encompassed within a newspaper column, not, indeed, because they are above criticism—far from it—but because their indefinable limits elude the grasping of definite points, without which such criticism can be neither useful nor even intelligible. There are, however, characteristics of each which are common to nearly all—a gorgeous loveliness which is at times almost overpowering, a note of passion which vibrates through the soul, and an overstraining after the paradoxical and metaphorical, which, at times, is iterated to the point of irritation.

The sketch which gives its name to the volume, and the longest in the book, deals with the loves of a man and a woman—that of the former being of the spirit, spiritual ; that of the latter being of the earth, earthly. In literature we have been more accustomed to a reversal of the position, but in life is it not sometimes as it was with Joel and Hesper? The tragedy of its close is carried well-nigh to the limits of the painless, but the delicacy of treatment reconciles one to the almost repellent nature of the subject.

"The Sword of Michel" is unlike anything we remember having met with before, and, in spite of its obscurity, the rather disagreeably weird impression it leaves is likely to remain fixed in an imaginative reader's mind for many a day to come. As we have said, it is impossible within the space at our command to give any adequate idea of these sketches ; they vary much in merit ; the two we have mentioned and others, notably "The King's Mountebank" and "The Knight of Blessed Mary" (especially the latter, though it is of the slightest, and runs but to six pages), attain real merit, while others are

\* "Nets for the Wind," by Una Taylor. 3s. 6d. net. (John Lane, 1896).

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)