

Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



THE Women's Liberal Federation has this year completed its first decade, and there is every reason to congratulate the Executive Committee upon the work which has been accomplished during that period. The foundation of much future usefulness, by means

of the excellent organization of the Federation, has also been laid, and at the present time its unity, its far-reaching influence, and its educational character render it an important instrument for good, both to Liberal women and to the Liberal party generally. Mrs. Creighton, in addressing a meeting of women in the Victoria Hall, Nottingham, during the recent Church Congress, urged all women who had the municipal vote to use it, and to take an interest in public affairs. We trust that many women will take this excellent advice to heart. Coming from such a source it must at least demand their respect and consideration, and it may be hoped that many will act upon it.

We notice with satisfaction that Mr. Drage, M.P., in speaking on the condition of pauper children at the Nottingham Church Congress, stated that "they wanted many more women guardians, and pressure should be brought on the Government to give help to the one lady inspector for 1800 boarded-out children, and to place the teaching staff in pauper schools on a better footing. The suitability of, and the need for, the services of women in many of the offices which fall to the lot of guardians must be obvious to all.

A training house for women missionaries has been opened at Redclyffe House, Upton Park, E., Miss Slater being appointed superintendent. While there are various training colleges for men, it is most difficult for women to find any place where they may be tested for the work they desire to undertake. The need of such houses is, however, obvious, and the want of them sorely felt by experienced workers abroad. Not unfrequently the desire for mission work, evinced in the offer of service, is accepted as the evidence of vocation, or it may be a sudden demand from an understaffed mission leads to the departure, equally sudden, of a worker who eventually proves a very thorn in the flesh to those who counted much on the help to be received from the new arrival. Again, other workers embark on foreign mission work, zealous, eager, and full of good intentions, who, after many mistakes, and more humiliations, which, being genuinely in earnest, they accept and profit by, eventually settle down into valuable members of the mission they have joined. But, it is surely only right that the testing and weeding out process should be undergone at home, that poor missions should not have the expense of providing outfits, passages, and salaries for persons whom events prove are unsuitable, for various reasons, for the work they have undertaken. It is surely not unreasonable to ask that, at least, only trained, experienced, and disciplined persons shall be detailed for active service,

not those who *may* be admirable, but whose qualifications are untested. It is the disciplined soldier, not the recruit, whose services are most valuable on the battlefield. For these reasons, as well as because the value of a quiet time of preparation, for work which will tax all the energies and resources of the worker when she has once embarked upon it, cannot be over-estimated, that we observe with much satisfaction the establishment of the new training home.

A Book of the Week.

"LIZA OF LAMBETH."*

I AM told on very good authority, that this curious and impressive book was written by a doctor, and perhaps it is this fact which gives to it its almost uncanny atmosphere of truth. It is a book that bites deep into the mind, that will not be cast out, that recurs persistently to the thoughts, and touches all the springs of sympathy.

Liza of Lambeth, it must be distinctly understood, is not a book for the young person. There is not much reticence among us anywhere to-day, but least of all in the class to which *Liza* belongs. Mr. Maugham admits this with the quiet simplicity which is probably the secret of his strength. "Her expression was quite unprintable, neither can it be euphemized," he remarks, in chronicling *Liza's* expression of opinion to a strange man who had kissed her.

And yet, in spite of her Billingsgate, in spite of her unspeakable fringe, her great black hat and feathers, her innate immodesty, poor little *Liza* commands all our sympathy, and even our tears.

The author attempts to point no moral, to preach no sermon; he chronicles without a single comment. He has on his palette none of those lurid colours which belong to the new realism; no doubt he thinks that his story speaks for itself. It is a page from the life of a London slum, and he knows much better than to make the mistake which, with all due deference, I think is made by Mr. Morrison, of attributing to the dwellers in his slum the emotions and self-analysis which in no sort belong to them. The whole atmosphere of life in Vere Street is the absolute absence of reflection of any kind. No thought of the future darkens the minds of these savages; they love, hate, enjoy themselves, beget children, mind each other's business, quarrel and fight, suffer and die, with no apparent motive but the gratification of a momentary impulse. In fact they are singularly like the people in Ibsen's dramas, with the exception that in Norway, people seem just beginning to ask themselves and each other "Why is this thus?"—a thing no inhabitant of Vere Street would ever do.

The story of poor little *Liza* is very simple. It has as Mr. Henry James said of Mr. Morrison, "the inevitableness of a Greek tragedy."

The sole code of honour or morals in Vere Street, appears to be that it is a mean thing to take another woman's husband from her; and this is the transgression of *Liza*, the belle of the neighbourhood. The only form of repentance or regret possible to *Liza*, one feels, is the cry that one day bursts from her, when the delirium of passion is beginning to fade:—"I wish I was straight!"

* "*Liza of Lambeth*." By William Somerset Maugham. (Fisher Unwin.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)