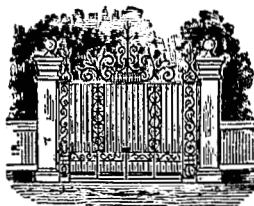


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



The Women Writers' Dinner held in the Grand Hall at the Criterion Restaurant on Monday, was a quite delightful function. The guests were received by Mrs. St. Leger Harrison (Lucas Malet), who looked most stately in mauve satin and lace; and

she presided later at the centre table. Amongst the Members of the Committee who headed tables, were the Lady Mayoress, a charming girl; Madame Sarah Grand, looking very handsome; Mrs. Alec. Tweedie, in lemon satin and tea roses, her beautiful little head dressed without a hair awry; Miss Thorneycroft Fowler, in white satin, and Miss Beatrice Harraden. The guests numbered nearly 200, including many of the most interesting women of letters whose names are a household word.

After a very festive dinner the Women Writers toasted "The King," and then listened to a very fine address written by the Chairman, and spoken by Miss Sydney Phelps, and to a witty speech from Sarah Grand; then everyone circulated genially around and chatted with friends, and with quite undisguised curiosity scrutinized the little name cards with which the majority of guests were ticketed. The Hon. Secretaries, Miss G. M. I. Blackburne and Miss L. R. Mitchell, are now quite experts in arranging this yearly gathering, and were as successful this year as on former occasions.

Mrs. Charles McLaren has a party for the members of the Women Writers' Club on the 26th inst., at her beautiful house in Belgrave Square. Mrs. McLaren is one of the leading Liberal hostesses in London, a keen and fearless politician, and a little lady of very great charm. The fact that she is acquainting herself with the true inwardness of the nursing question is eminently satisfactory from the point of view of those who desire to see trained nursing take its position as a skilled profession for women, as she is sure to arrive at conclusions in sympathy with the progressive party.

A few collectors of ceramics have lately met at the house of Miss Samuda in Albion Street, W., and formed The Ceramic and Art Collectors' Society, which promises to be a most fascinating association of those who delight in beautiful things. Mr. Frank Freeth—who with Mrs. Freeth has of late years formed an almost unique collection of English pottery—has been elected President, and they have sent out invitations for an afternoon party for Wednesday, June 26th, when a Paper will be read on Finger Rings, by Mr. A. E. Clarke, of Wisbech.

It is hoped that the influence exerted by the Society will tend both to a wider cultivation of the beautiful in design, colour, and workmanship, and to a marked improvement in the Art of the Home. Private collectors are cordially invited to join the Society, of which Miss Samuda is hon. secretary and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick hon. treasurer.

A Book of the Week.

THE SUPREME CRIME.*

Seldom indeed does the reviewer chance upon a more completely artistic book than this remarkable work of Miss Gerard. In it she vindicates supremely her right to be considered among the best of our woman writers. There is none of the slipshod, half-hearted handling which spoilt "The Conquest of London." This book is a finished whole, dealing with a phase of life with which the author is intimately acquainted, and the result is most impressive.

The life of the peasants of Ruthenian Austria is the theme, and the hero, young Gregor Petrow, is a schoolmaster when the story opens, and imagines himself in love with Zenobia Mostewicz, the eldest daughter of the parish priest, or Pope. It is probably superfluous to point out to my present readers that in the Greek Church the parish clergy are almost universally married. A man unmarried when he takes orders must remain so; therefore almost all the young candidates for orders are married, and the curious etiquette is that they rarely take a "secular" wife; that is to say, they usually select their wife from the daughters of a priest. In Lemburg, where the theological seminary is, there is a book kept, in which are inserted the photos of the marriageable priests' daughters in the neighbourhood, with particulars of the dowry of each.

The father of Zenobia is pleased at the prospect of Gregor as a son-in-law, but suggests that he, Gregor, should allow his future father-in-law to defray the expenses of his course at the seminary, and become a Pope, in which case, his being in a position to marry is secured. The offer is accepted, and the young fellow, full of religious fervour, goes to Lemburg, and is soon absorbed in the mysteries of his study and his future calling, so much above anything he had dared to hope.

By the desire of Zenia's father, there has been no engagement, but when Gregor revisits the Vicarage, at the end of his three years, he is regarded as Zenia's future husband.

But during these years, Wasylya, the second daughter, has grown up, and grown wonderfully beautiful. The sedate charms of the grave, somewhat heavy Zenia, fade before the splendours of her younger sister. The young man falls hopelessly, wildly, in love. The Pope discovers Wasylya in his arms, and to his surprise, is just as well content that he should take one daughter as another. The engagement is made known, and Zenia has to hide her terrible suffering as best she may; but her jealousy is like a devouring fire. By the advice of Hania, the stupid little servant girl, she goes to consult a witch, who sells various drugs. Then comes the tragedy. On the wedding morning, the bride is found dead in her bed.

Poor Gregor almost loses his senses with grief, but knows of no reason whatever to connect the death of Wasylya with her sister. His ordination is approaching, and after the wild frenzy of his grief has abated, remembering what the Pope has done for him, he goes to the parsonage and asks Zenia to marry him. The curious attitude of the parents on the occasion surprises him, but it is not until he is actually married to

* By Dorothea Gerard. (Methuen.)

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