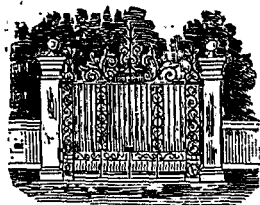


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



Women are more and more realising the convenience and pleasure of clubs of their own, where they can show hospitality to guests whom they wish to honour. A luncheon was given last week at the Lyceum Club in honour of four distinguished American women—Miss Laura Gill, Dean of Barnard College; Miss Hazard, President of Wellesley College; Miss Woolley, President of Mount Holyoake; and Miss Willcox, Professor of Zoology at Bryn Mawr College—who are now in this country at the invitation of the British Association, and who are closely concerned with the formation of a Lyceum Club for women in the United States. Miss Beatrice Harraden, in welcoming the guests, said that the object of all present was to bring professional women of different countries together to know each other better. Nowadays women were admitted to possess some kind of intelligence, and were even allowed to exercise that intelligence under certain conditions. It was only fitting, therefore, that women should assemble together occasionally. After Madame Blanc and M. Langevin had spoken for the Lyceum Club now being inaugurated in Paris, the guests of the day responded. Such international amenities cannot fail to be productive of much good, as well as of pleasure to those participating.

Miss Florence Margaret Rees, a Welsh schoolgirl of fifteen years of age, living in the Swansea valley, recently displayed so unusual a knowledge of legal lore when attending as a witness at the Glamorgan Assizes that the representative of a contemporary subsequently visited her in her own home. He found her an enthusiast on legal subjects, and that she devotes all her spare time to the study of legal books. In her "office" off the cottage kitchen the shelves are well stocked with legal books, covering the period from the reign of Henry III. to the present time. She pursues her reading late into the night, and often rises in the morning as early as four o'clock with the object of investigating some knotty point. Her interest in the subject has dated from her eighth year, when her father, mother, and brothers went daily to work at the pit, and the child filled up solitary hours by reading a few old law books which she found in a cupboard. As her father prospered she enlarged her library. Now he is owner of a small colliery, and his daughter's bookshelves are laden with 1,000 volumes. The inhabitants for miles around come to consult her on the simple problems of their lives. She can prepare writs, draft affidavits, and take depositions. She does not desire to specialise, as she likes the law in all its branches. Her ambition is to become a lawyer, to charge the rich for her services and to be generous to the poor. She is determined after leaving school and college to become articled, if possible, and pass her examinations. If refused, she will urge her claims personally on the Lord Chancellor, and, if unsuccessful, she may go to France and work out her scheme there.

A Book of the Week.

THE APPRENTICE.*

Mrs. Stepney Rawson's writing can lay claim to that indescribable quality which we call distinction. There is a delicacy, a poignancy, a charm, a power of imparting interest to common things, which renders her work agreeable reading—work which one can relish and approve with a whole heart.

It is, therefore, to be regretted that she shows signs, in both her later books, of writing to suit the market, and not to please herself. In her second book she burdened herself unduly by introducing Georges Sand and a host of other notoriety. In "The Apprentice" she has yielded to what is now understood to be the one thing needful, and has applied local colour so freely that her book might almost be described as a guide to Rye and Winchelsea.

To the mind of the present reviewer, this kind of thing may be easily overdone; and, for those who know the district, the glib list given of local patronymics may provoke a smile over the little knowledge which is apt to be such a dangerous thing. But, stripped of its little pedantries, the book has a living heart of its own, and is full of fire and life and motion.

The hero is Sterne Wildish, a man who bears through life the weight of the "bar sinister." This man is apprenticed to the master shipbuilder, William Malines, and loves his pretty daughter Foy.

The enemy of Malines is Sir George Orwald, who owns much of the salted pastures on the marsh, and has raised dykes to keep out that sea which Malines would fain see sweeping in once more to the foot of the old town itself, restoring it to its ancient lustre as a foremost port of Britain.

Orwald's son, Jack Orwald, by loving Foy Malines, creates indeed a Montague-Capulet situation. The only doubt lies as to whether of the two parents would most abhor such a union.

To still further complicate the position, Sterne Wildish is the illegitimate elder brother of the young man who courts Foy.

The rôle of Sterne is throughout the rôle of sacrifice. He knows that Foy loves Jack Orwald; he knows that she has given him all a maid can give. When news of Jack's death comes, he offers to shield the girl and cloak her shame by giving her the position of his wife. It does not seem to strike Mrs. Rawson that marriage with the girl who had been, in all but name, his brother's wife, was at all inexpedient, though she must know that it would have been illegal had Foy and Jack ever gone through the marriage ceremony.

There are charming scenes in the story—notably the day when Sterne and Foy go for a picnic, and the barge is attacked on the way home by Orwald's faction.

The least effective scene is that in which Sterne goes to acquaint his father with the knowledge of who he is, and of Jack's treachery to the girl he loved. This scene shows the incapacity of the author for dealing with passion; but she has gifts enough of her own without that one.

She has deeply felt the spell of the marshland, and, though we could well spare the itineraries of all Sterne's rambles, there does remain on the mind an impress, a reminder of the charm of the old place and its vanished history.

G. M. R.

* By Mrs. Stepney Rawson. (Hutchinson and Co.)

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