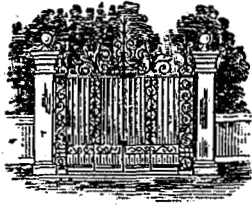


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



Once again the Women's Enfranchisement Bill has been talked out in the House of Commons on its second reading. On Friday in last week three Bills next on the order paper were withdrawn by Mr. P. O'Brien, one of the Nationalist Whips, and at a quarter to five the House was confronted with the Women's Suffrage Bill. Its opponents hastily rallied their forces. First Mr. T. H. Robertson continued the speech seconding its rejection, which he began on the last debate. The women enfranchised by the measure would, he said, be chiefly unmarried, and he did not think it desirable to confine the vote to that class. Next, if women were enfranchised there would be a demand for their admission to the House, which would not be a beneficial change in our Parliamentary system.

Thus, as a contemporary puts it, five o'clock was reached, and somehow or other half an hour of time was to be occupied. The hour had come—and the man, Sir Frederick Banbury, the champion obstructionist, from Peckham, rose. He argued in, he argued out, he also argued round about. In a musing and conversational strain he kept up an unceasing sequence of words. What he said was never quite to the point, but, on the other hand, he never wandered entirely from it. Indeed, the speech was conceived in the best Banburian strain; it was length without breadth, plausible sound, though it signified nothing. And so he kept on and on.

At length the clock chimed the half-hour, the House was up, and once more this measure of justice to women lost its chance of a second reading, not because the precious time for its discussion had not been secured, but because the present methods of the House permit of wilful waste of time for purely obstructive purposes.

The annual Conference of the Association of Head Mistresses was concluded at Winchester on Saturday. The proceedings opened with the address of the President, Mrs. Bryant, D.Sc., who observed that what was wanted in this life, whether in self-help or in the service of the State, was a training that embodied active observation, quick judgment, and sound reason in order that the mind might be economical as well as safe. Miss Florence Gadesden, M.A., of Blackheath, was unanimously chosen as the president for 1905-6-7. A number of papers were read by members, and votes of thanks were accorded the retiring president and the Head Master of Winchester. After luncheon Dr. Burge gave a garden party at the college.

The Society of Women Journalists is eminently practical and helpful to the members, and the last result of the combination of women writers is that they can now use the new rooms of the society in Clifford's Inn until two o'clock in the morning. This must indeed be a boon to the members on the up-to-date "dailies."

A Book of the Week.

FOND ADVENTURES.*

In this volume of stories, Mr. Hewlett has failed, so we think, to recapture the first fine careless rapture of the "Little Novels of Italy." But we welcome them as samples if not of his best, at least of the kind of thing that he does best.

The world of the Renaissance, with its flower of intellect, its passion for Art, its decaying morals, and lifeless religion, has for ever a poignant fascination for the imagination. As in the Southern States of America, before the Union produced centralisation of government, so in the small Italian republics, the lack of a central idea seemed in the course of things to beget and foster family feuds, to a degree very difficult for the Anglo-Saxon, who for so many centuries has been governed with a strong hand, to perfectly understand.

The study of these feuds results in the discovery of endless material for romance; most often there was a woman at the heart of things. Mr. Anthony Hope was irresistibly drawn thitherward at one time. But of all our modern writers, Maurice Hewlett has most unmistakably made it his own.

One result of his saturation in the period, is his adoption of an archaic diction, which is at times a weariness. In the case of a translation, one puts up with, nay, even takes pleasure in these archaisms, as typical of the man who writes and the age in which he wrote. But in the hands of the man who is deliberately imitating, it is wondrous how the thing palls.

There is yet another reason why a great many English readers may fail to find Mr. Hewlett's dexterous romancing convincing; and this is because the age of which he writes and the age in which we live are diametrically opposed as regards the main theme on which you build up romance; namely, the thing called love.

We love with our intellects; the mediæval Florentine loved with his flesh, pure and simple, and no disguise.

The woman went with the man who was strong enough to intimidate her, nor flinched when his horse's feet spurned the dead body of her more gentle lover. The noble saw a ripe girl at Mass, and for desire to possess her, embroiled the various Florentine parties in one general butchery. To read Boccaccio is to see full rein given to the animal in man. At the other end of the scale perhaps we might place Mr. Henry James!

What antithesis could be more complete? Well, it is to Boccaccio, and not to Mr. Henry James, that Mr. Maurice Hewlett owes allegiance. And because Boccaccio was the natural product of his age, and Mr. Hewlett, as we might say, does it on purpose—there is something about his thoughts which some of us will resent.

On the other hand, he is glowing and hilarious, and dexterous to a surprising degree. The birds sing and the horses prance and the sun shines in his pages, as in a fresco by Benozzo Gozzoli. The gay pagan irresponsibility of Italy throbs in his lines, and we walk with him through meads of blossom as well as through shambles and houses of doubtful honesty.

The story which of the collection seems to have the

* By Maurice Hewlett. (Macmillan.)

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