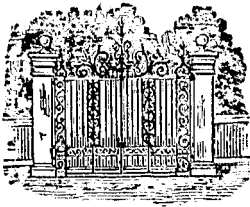


## Outside the Gates.

### WOMEN.



A writer in the *Daily Mail* says in relation to the married woman as a citizen:— There is no doubt that marriage, with its attendant duties and responsibilities, ought to play a very important part in the life of a large number of women; but to maintain, as many do, that because a woman is married she must therefore centre all her interests in her own home, shows a surprising narrowness of mind and indifference to woman's true happiness.

Because a woman is a wife and mother, is it possible for her to be anything else? Among the professional classes, housekeeping and the general care of children is a very different thing from what it formerly was. In days of old, the lady of the house was expected to devote her time to many things which are now far better and more quickly done by machinery. In the twentieth century, however domesticated she may be, household matters cannot possibly occupy all her spare time, and when she has attended to those affairs, has anyone the right to say she is going outside her "sphere" when she takes up other pursuits?

The need for a wider outlook is keenly felt by thousands of married women. The habit of drug-taking is terribly on the increase among women in the London suburbs, due, in a large degree, to the dreary lives they lead. What good these women might do in the community! In the overwhelming majority of cases, however, they are debarred from taking any active part in civic life.

"The outcome of twenty-five years' experience, thought, and feeling upon this point," says Charles Kingsley; "is that I have been led to something more than a suspicion, I may almost say a conclusion, that the principal cause of the failure of so many magnificent schemes—social, political, and religious—which have followed each other age after age, has been this: that in almost every age they have ignored, often utterly, and all of them too much, the rights and powers of one-half of the human race—namely, women."

The writer proceeds to point out the good which women might do on boards of hospitals, and the invaluable help they could render, a proposition with which we are in entire agreement.

Miss Margaret Macgregor, in an interesting article in *Good Words* on "Behind the Lattice and the Veil," describes the Turkish woman of to-day, whose ingenuity seems more than a match for the edicts of the Sultan. She writes:—

The Sultan is continually issuing orders enforcing the wearing of the thick black veil that effectually hides her charms, but these orders are perhaps

obeyed for a day, and then the Turkish beauty again brings out her thinnest and most transparent gauze.

Just as her veil fails to hide her face, so also her trim black tchartchaff fails in its end, that of hiding her figure, and it is to-day taking lines that are distinctly Parisian, instead of being the shapeless black cloak that her grandmother wore over her baggy trousers.

Beneath the tchartchaff almost every Turkish woman is a European, and the orthodox trousers of the Moslem women are practically never seen. It is Paris and Vienna that supply the gowns of the ladies of the grand harems, while cheap Manchester cottons in befrilled blouses of loud patterns peep out from under the tchartchaffs of the less wealthy.

Turkish girls may be lovely, but Miss Macgregor asserts she has never seen a beautiful Turkish woman. The true type is "a fat figure, sallow hag-like face, hard, expressionless eyes."

As soon as you enter a *dames turques* your fellow-passengers will at once throw back their veils and devour every detail of your costume, and before you are seated you will probably be asked how much you paid for the material of your dress, nor will they scruple to take it in their hands and examine and discuss its quality. They will find out how that frill is put on, and this tuck arranged, not improbably will they pick up your skirt to see what your petticoat is like! You will then be asked whether you are married or not, and if you are married how many children you have, what your husband's occupation is, and what income he has!

And all these questions are not impertinent in their eyes, but a rather flattering interest in your affairs, or so you must regard them.

"Harem life is simple unalloyed dulness," as the modern Turk finds one wife as much as he can afford, as a rule. His veneration for his parents is extreme:—

"A man can get another wife, but he cannot get another mother," is the Turk's explanation of putting his mother before his wife, and as it is the accepted order of things, the wife does not feel aggrieved.

It is regrettable to learn that in the furnishing of the harem the picturesque East is disappearing, and tawdry Western decoration is the present fashion:—

It is usually Europeanised until it has no touch of the East, and is only a travesty of the taste of the West. The rugs and hangings and divans are all superseded by linoleums and muslin curtains, and velvet upholstered chairs! The wall-papers are in colouring and pattern what you would have chosen for your servants' bedrooms twenty years ago! The rooms are more like the showrooms of an upholsterer's than the lived-in rooms of a home, excepting that the modern upholsterer is artistic.

The Turkish women have lost all their own Oriental picturesqueness, and have not yet gained that indefinable charm that belongs to cultivated women of the West. Many Turkish women are highly educated; they read and speak, perhaps, English and French, they are often good musicians, and usually beautiful workers, but all those little touches and little graces that reveal a woman in a house are entirely wanting in an Eastern harem. The women check all their natural Oriental taste and strive to be European, and the result is pitiable. They have given up their beautiful Eastern embroidery for crude European crewel work on satin.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)