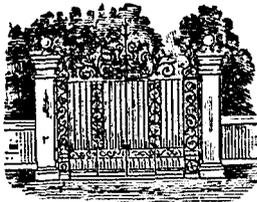


Outside the Gates.

Book of the Week.

WOMEN.



Mrs. Garrett Fawcett's letter to the Press on Women's Suffrage was timely, and her attitude towards the courageous working women who alone appear to have the pluck to attend political meetings and question candidates on this burning question is welcome. As Mrs. Fawcett points out, the "disturbance" complained of by male electors has been caused by reluctance upon the part of candidates to give a plain answer of "Yes" or "No" to the question usually unfurled on flags, "Are the Liberals going to give Women the Vote?"

Instead of a straightforward reply women have been greeted with cries of "Chuck her out"—and out she goes—roughly handled by men present. Mrs. Fawcett wisely writes:—"Let me counsel all friends of Women's Suffrage not to denounce the flag-waving women who ask questions about Women's Suffrage at meetings, even at the risk of rough handling and jeers. It is proving to men what many of them have not realised—that women are in earnest when they ask not to be put in a lower political status than the Kaffirs at the Cape and on a level with criminals and lunatics at home."

The change from a Conservative to a Liberal Government practically means very little to women, because so long as they are one of the four disfranchised classes of the community (they enjoy this distinction in conjunction with lunatics, paupers and criminals), they are a negligible quantity to both Parties, and as there are just and liberal-minded men on both sides, women must appeal to these individually, and not to either Party for justice.

At the same time we are pleased to note that several friends who have given proof in the past of their goodwill towards the Registration of Trained Nurses by the State, have been given high office in the new Liberal Government, so that we may hope for their influential help in the future. We nurses must remember, however, that legislators are not easily moved to action, and before we can command their active support we must give evidence of that strenuous conviction in the justice of our cause that will impel us to convince others. No half-hearted, apathetic attitude will avail. Remember there is a huge mass of preconceived prejudice, and a monstrous mass of pecuniary self-interest to overcome wherever the work and status of women are concerned. There are also plenty of generous-minded people around who see in the better education and the up-raising of women the surest foundation for the nation's prosperity. Let us enlist the kind offices of all these dear people, irrespective of Party. The State Registration of Trained Nurses is a national question.

"MISS DESMOND."*

It may be remembered that Miss Van Vorst's "Amanda of the Mill" was last year about this time reviewed with appreciation in these pages. The present story is about as strong a contrast as could well be.

"Amanda of the Mill" was a long, complicated novel, containing a fierce indictment of modern commercial conditions in the States, and of the lamentable condition of the "poor whites."

"Miss Desmond" is a peaceful idyll, almost without plot—just a situation, touched in by a hand that is lacking neither in delicacy nor discrimination.

Virginia Desmond was a Puritan. The traditions of her family were of those stern, limited days, when any natural feeling was regarded as a device of Satan. When one realises that there actually was a time in New England when punishment could be meted out to a man for kissing his own wife on Sunday, it goes a long way towards enabling us to understand the modern American.

It is small wonder that the people who imposed on themselves these heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, should have sought some place, other than England, in which to make their gallant attempt to crush out nature, and increase the number of the commandments *ad infinitum!*

Virginia's elder sister, Beatrice, had very early married, and had flouted all family ideals by divorcing her first husband and marrying an Englishman, Lord Morges-Fair. Virginia, who was twelve years younger, stayed at home, and devoted her life to an invalid mother, who, in course of time, died and left her alone.

At this crisis, Molly Struthers, daughter of Beatrice's first marriage, happened to be ill, and also, her lovely, worldly, selfish mother, happened ardently to desire the said daughter's absence for a time, as it interfered with her pleasure of the moment. Virginia was appealed to. Would she leave the calm and cloistered peace of The Pillars, and take her niece to Caux?

The lovely woman, not much over thirty, fresh, unsullied and innocent as a dove, comes to chaperon—save the mark!—the competent, knowing, worldly, independent, and *blasée* Molly, whose knowledge of her mother's intrigues is so unwelcome to the latter.

To the same hotel comes Robert Bedford, the subject of Lady Morges-Fair's last flirtation, a man who is represented as extremely experienced in the modern ways of intrigue, but who had honestly cared for Beatrice, and had been prepared to marry her, had she been free.

Virginia presents herself—Beatrice over again, but with the soul superadded—twelve years younger and lovelier, with the dew upon her, virgin, exquisite, untried.

The dexterity of the writer consists in the way in which she allows Virginia to surrender to the charms of the hardened man of the world, without for a moment descending from the pedestal on which he had

* By Marie Van Vorst. (Heinemann.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)