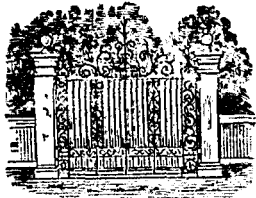


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



Governors and members of the staff of the London Hospital, wishing to celebrate the acceptance by the Queen of the position of president of the hospital and the completion of the rebuilding of the hospital, have subscribed for a statue of her Majesty, which will be presented to the hospital and placed in the centre garden. Mr. George Wade will be the sculptor, and the Queen has kindly consented to give sittings.

The text of a Bill, entitled the Franchise and Removal of Women's Disabilities Bill, to be presented by Sir Charles Dilke, to establish a single franchise at all elections and thereby to abolish University representation, and to remove the disabilities of women, was issued on Saturday. The measure contains a clause that no person shall be disqualified by sex or marriage from being elected or being a member of either House of Parliament, or of a borough or county council, or from exercising any public function whatever.

This sounds quite just and feasible, and so it is if justice were the basic principle of the conduct of the strong towards the weak. But, alas! it is not so.

This bold measure of electoral reform has our unqualified approval. It is honest in intention and fearless in scope. May we live to see the day when an honourable Parliament of men will disdain to govern slaves; when, strong in the knowledge of righteousness, they will cast aside the ignoble part of tyrant, and call out in a loud voice, "Come up little mothers, dear wives, and daughters—come. Come and help us to make this world healthier and happier. We, the regenerate, venerate the sovereign souls of you, by us damned erstwhile. *Come, we have need of you.*" We seem to hear the murmur of the calling even now.

Meanwhile the old tyrant dies hard, and the assaults on and the ejection of women from political meetings has aroused very hostile feeling. We learn that the Householders' League is to appoint a commission of inquiry into these outrages, and that meanwhile every effort is to be made to put a stop to the deportation of British working women to Canada, and every other colony where they are denied the Parliamentary Franchise which is their only protection from the Labour Sweater. A very full account of these legalised assaults is being sent to the United States, where severe punishment is meted out to creatures (they do not call them men) who strike women, an almost unheard of offence in America excepting amongst European immigrants.

Book of the Week.

HUGO.*

Let us turn to something totally distinct in character as well as feature—to one of Mr. Arnold Bennett's extravaganzas.

"Hugo" is, of course, utterly unreal; it makes no pretence to be real. It is preposterous, it is exaggerated, it is utterly absurd; but it is bright and brisk, it carries you along, it makes you dwell for a time in Aladdin's palace of jewels, it transports you to a realm of intrigue and romance and adventure and mystery, dark and deep; and all this takes place—where? At certain stores in Sloane Street, if you please, called Hugo's for the purposes of narration, but thinly disguised by the pseudonym!

Hugo, the great mind which has designed and evolved those mighty premises, is the hero. When the story begins he is forty-eight years of age, and in love for the first time—with a girl in the millinery department!

Above those floors of his vast blocks of building which are devoted to his business are other floors of luxurious flats. And it is with one of these flats, which is let to a young man called Francis Tudor, that the mystery is concerned. Hugo, noticing that his beloved milliner is somewhat overcome by the heat of a sultry summer day, suddenly placards his entire establishment with an announcement of a wholly unexpected early closing. This is the kind of whim in which the only modern potentate, the Plutocrat, can indulge. An entire universe of industry is brought to a sudden stop, the course of business sharply interrupted, in order that the one being in all those busy thousands upon whom the Master's thought is set may have rest from her labours, without its being suspected that Hugo is unduly favouring her.

This young lady's first action, upon her unexpected release, is to whisk round the corner and take the lift to Mr. Tudor's flat!

From this point starts the mystery which culminates so satisfactorily in the end.

But the cleverest part of the whole book is that which treats of the great Sale in which Hugo's reputation is made to totter, and his future well-nigh ruined, through the cunning schemes of the villain, Louis Ravengar, who has managed to corrupt many of the employes, to remove much of the advertised stock, and to do many other things to make the much advertised Sale a fiasco.

"Strange sights are to be seen in London.

"At five minutes to nine a.m. on the first day of the year, seven vast crowds stood before the seven principal entrances to Hugo's; seven crowds of immortal souls enclosed in the bodies of women. They meant to begin the year well, by an honest attempt to get something for nothing. . . . They waited stolidly, silently, in a suppressed and dangerous fever, as besiegers await the signal for an attack. . . . Over every portal was a purple warning: 'Beware of pickpockets, male and female.' No possible male pickpockets, however, were visible to the eye.

*By Arnold Bennett. (Chatto and Windus).

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)