

Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



THE quotations made in this column, last week, from Sir Dyce Duckworth's Paper on "Women, their Probable Place and Prospects in the Twentieth Century," have called forth a number of letters of which the following are very good specimens.

A correspondent writes:—

"I am sorry to see that Sir Dyce Duckworth, in his eloquent address on 'Women,' falls into expressions that tend to support the old-world fallacies about the position of women—fallacies strengthened by the Hebrew tradition that Woman was created as an afterthought to meet the apparently unforeseen needs of Man. This tradition, childish and profane as it is in its crude acceptance, has, in the past, found credence amongst primitive people, people still in their spiritual infancy (and these types are amongst us always). But it is strange to see a cultivated man of the 19th century using, no doubt unwittingly, a phrase describing woman as 'a divinely created companion of man in his present phase of existence.' We are bold if we attempt to fathom the Divine intention in creating humanity, but we may perhaps assume that 'woman was divinely created to be the companion of man' in the same way that we may assume that 'man was divinely created to be the companion of woman,' unless one statement implies the other, it is a logical absurdity. Moreover, since we speculate on the subject, we must see that whether the ultimate destiny of humanity is to reach spiritual life, or whether it is to perish as the beasts of the field—the old Hebrew belief again—no question of sex can alter this destiny. Woman is most assuredly not a temporary creation for man 'in his present phase of existence.' The sentence is unfortunately chosen as it stands, limiting the need of companionship to one sex alone, and limiting it also to a comparatively short time—as though when man reaches his spiritual development, woman will disappear, as missing links are said to have disappeared.

It naturally follows that the deductions Sir Dyce draws from these false premises do not appear to me to be sound. If I understand him correctly, he would argue that since woman was created to be the companion of man, she should on that account be debarred from entrance into public and professional life; on the contrary, it appears to me to be a reason *in favour* of her entering and sharing with him public and professional life. The incompleteness and imperfection of the one sex necessitates the companionship and help of the other sex in every department of life. Humanity consists of Man and Woman, and the Home and the World alike can only be ruled and governed by the combined wisdom of the Man and the Woman.

The old-fashioned notion that home is the only sphere for woman has done everything to foster in her the feeling of narrow selfishness that characterizes so many married women. As Ruskin tells us, these women 'seem to think there is no one in the world but themselves and their children; so long as their fireside is warm, the whole world may perish of cold. Nothing could be more immoral, nor more unchristian than this feeling, but custom has blunted our appreciation of its callousness—in fact some persons call it 'womanly.'

In contradistinction to this 'fireside' type, there have always existed in the world noble, large-hearted women who have, so far as they have been able, made the world their home, and the poor, the oppressed and the orphan their children—they are 'the salt of the earth.' And we may

trust that a broader, larger life in the world will have the effect of infusing into all women some of the feeling that has actuated these few, and so succeed in making every woman live a life more worthy and more unselfish than in the past she has had scope to realize or to understand."

Another correspondent writes:—

MADAM,—I have read with surprise the comments of Sir Dyce Duckworth on "Women" in your last issue. He wisely refrains from talking about our "sphere," but I gather from his contemptuous comparison between the "average" man and the "extraordinary" woman that he would like to shut out women from any honourable exercise of public or professional life. Too late, Sir Dyce! Women have tasted the sweets of liberty, and can never again return to contented domesticity and unhonoured drudgery. If the next generation is inclined to forget the scorn and derision that men have always hurled against the domestic woman; the classic literature of the Greeks and Romans, equally with the novels of to-day, will remind them of this fact, and teach them the value of honeyed phrases about "keepers at home."

No one will dispute with Sir Dyce Duckworth that there is sexual difference between men and women, or that the normal physique of women unfits them for severe mental and physical strain, but we need not draw the same deductions as he would draw. If nature were to send into the world a woman with a hand missing, the world would have no right to act on the assumption that it was the Divine Will that the one hand *should be cut off*. Yet this the world does in effect when it debar women from public life and entrance into the higher branches of professional life. It is a hard saying, but it is none the less true, that women will always be helpless and will always be despised until they have the power of making money and a voice in making laws. At present, women have no such power; if they demand it they are called "unwomanly." Why, let me ask, should it be more "unwomanly" to earn than to inherit, or to marry, money? Surely, if work is "unwomanly," it is because of the nature and degree of the work in question, and can have no relation to the honour or remuneration entailed. This is the point that is always lost sight of. A High-School Teacher on poor pay, living on bread and butter and tea, may work her brain to the verge of insanity, and no one calls her "unwomanly"; but, working with possibly less strain and labour, another woman is denied a Senior Wranglership because the position would be "unwomanly." A Clergyman's wife or daughter is expected to do the rough, hard work of the parish, visiting among the outcast of both sexes, familiar on all sides with scenes of cruelty and vice—well and good!—but she may not be a candidate for Holy Orders, because, forsooth, to serve at the Altar, and to read the lessons and prayers would be "unwomanly." Yet the Egyptians, who reached a higher civilisation than we have yet attained to, had Priestesses, as had also the Greeks.

Even amongst medical men, disciples of the most advanced and enlightened of all professions, one sometimes hears it said, 'Women are not strong enough to be Doctors, let them be Nurses.' As well might one say, 'Women are not strong enough to be artisans, let them be navvies.'

Only men of chivalrous and generous nature can endure the idea of women working on equal terms with themselves, and having what honour and emoluments are attached to their calling. The average man—and his name is legion—has a vague idea that a woman ought not to earn money, but if circumstances compel her to do so she is exceptional, and it matters little how she is slaved and how she is sweated. And so it has come to pass that in the richest country in the world, where money and social eminence are open to most men, who work assiduously, very few women, unless they go on to the music-hall stage—and no man objects to *this* form of 'unwomanliness'—can make more than a bare, in most instances a very bare, livelihood.

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