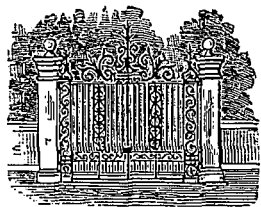


— Outside the Gates. —

WOMEN.



It is gratifying to listen to the high testimony of Mr. Drage, Secretary of the Labour Commission, to the fine qualities produced by the training given in University Women's Colleges. Speaking last Saturday to the students of Lady Margaret Hall and Somerville College, Oxford, he said that the Labour Commission had been the first public body to employ women, and that in a large number, in the highly skilled as well as routine office work. Much of the success of the Commission, he went on to say, was due to the loyalty and efforts of the women. Speaking of the Colleges, he remarked that no institution turned out so distinct a type of woman, not only as regards actual learning, but also as regards those qualities which are indispensable in a public department, namely, patience, dignity, reticence, public spirit and common sense. This is indeed high praise; and it certainly would not have been given if not deserved. We would like to lay stress upon the words, "public spirit and reticence," for these are qualities in which women have been declared to be sadly deficient. Doubtless, as Miss Maitland, Principal of Somerville College, pointed out at Glasgow, public spirit is, to a great extent, the result of healthy communal life.

Shall we or shall we not have religion in our Board Schools. Are our children, the future citizens, to grow up a godless race, knowing nothing or next to nothing of the difference between right and wrong save what is instilled into them by the wholesome fear of a policeman. That is the question; and round that question fierce controversy is raging, and becoming daily more stormy as the 22nd—the polling day arrives.

On the one side is drawn up Mr. Athelstan Riley and his army, with Mr. Diggle, Chairman of the present School Board, as Assistant General. On the other side are the Progressives who have rallied to their help so many of our best men that it is invidious to mention names.

Mr. Athelstan Riley is an ardent Christian, and belongs to the High Church party; and in conjunction with many others would like to see more distinct religious training in our Board Schools. At present, as everybody knows, the children are taught certain passages of Scripture, upon which the teachers are not expected to put any interpretation which would influence their pupils towards one creed or another. In a word, there is no proselytising. This compromise between one sect and another was provided for by the Cowper-Temple Clause in 1870. True, its limitations are great, but it provides for the best possible form of undenominational teaching, and as Archdeacon Farrar wrote a few days ago "That education is thoroughly Biblical and Christian, and is well adapted to the needs and capacities of children of tender years."

And yet, in spite of this, Mr. Riley and Mr. Diggle (who, by the way, is a clergyman) declare that the

question at issue is whether the first principles of Christianity shall be taught. What these two men mean by Christianity is not the great elements in Christianity about which every sect are agreed. Their Christianity is Churchianity, the established religion of the realm. Of course, if every ratepayer in London belonged to the established Church, they, paying the piper, would have the right to call the tune. But in this vast city the rates are paid by persons representing nearly every creed under heaven. It is not likely, therefore, that the Roman Catholic will be satisfied to pay rates and have his child brought up in the Protestant religion; or that the Nonconformist will submit to teaching dictated by the High Church party.

In compromise, then, lies the only hope of peace. Compromise has worked well for twenty years, why should it be disturbed now? Mr. Athelstan Riley is an earnest, brave, and good man. Even his enemies, whose eyes have not been blurred by party feeling, acknowledge that. But how he could ever have imagined that, if his party wins at the next election, the Christianity of the Established Church would continue for any length of time to be taught it is difficult to imagine. Every sect not in sympathy with High Church doctrines would be up in arms. And it is not difficult to foresee that the result of this would be surely and inevitably the elimination of *all* religion from our Board Schools.

But the point at issue does not merely concern the children. The teachers would feel any change most keenly. Fancy a Baptist teacher impressing upon a child the necessity of going to confession! The incongruity of the whole thing would naturally lead to the imposition of a religious test. Then those with high principles would resign, and others would stifle their conscience in view of self-interest.

Therefore, many pin their hope and faith to the Progressive Party which declares its wish to hold by the Compromise. And this is strongly upheld by the representative members of the Church, such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archdeacon Farrar (of Westminster Abbey), and Archdeacon Sinclair (of St. Paul's). The Progressives also undertake to give efficient teaching, to provide a sufficient number of teachers and schools. The present School Board has proved itself beyond doubt to be extravagant, and has no adequate results to show for its outlay.

But what is greatly wanted is more of the feminine element on the School Board. Mrs. Brownlow, the candidate for Southwark, said lately, "There are in the schools more than 5,000 female teachers and over 250,000 girls, while upon the present Board of fifty-five members there are only three women to look after their special interests."

Most certainly there should be more women; and we most earnestly hope that every woman who is now standing as candidate will be successful in obtaining a seat. Of the fourteen women who are candidates, seven have joined themselves to the Progressives, three are Independent or Independent Progressive. Of the rest, three belong to the Social Democratic Federation, and only one to the Diggleite (alias Rileyite) Party.

With the increase of women members, we may anticipate decreased rates; or at least full value for our money.

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