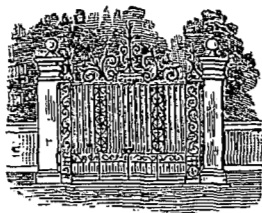


— Outside the Gates. —

A FORTHCOMING EXHIBITION OF
WOMEN'S WORK.

THE Chicago Exhibition of last year will have much to answer for. The enthusiasm aroused there will exert its influence to the four quarters of the earth till a similar International Gathering again sharpens the aspirations of the nations while it softens their artificial animosities.

"The Imperial Exhibition of Women's Work," which, it may be confidently expected, will be held in London in the year 1897 or 1898, was first suggested by the success which attended the Women's Section at Chicago. At a meeting held last week at the rooms of the Society of Arts, with the Countess of Aberdeen in the Chair, the idea received hearty endorsement by all present as it had by many ladies previously appealed to, amongst whom might be mentioned the Duchess of Sutherland, Lady Henry Somerset, and Lady Meath. The Hon. Secretary, Mrs. Roberts-Austen, read the following report of the Provisional Committee:—

"The interests of this country at the International Exhibition held at Chicago in 1893, were, it will be remembered, represented by a Royal Commission, which appointed, for the first time in the history of International Exhibitions, a Committee of Ladies, under the Presidency of H.R.H. Princess Christian, which was entrusted with the care of all that appertained to Women's Work. The results of the Women's Section of the Chicago Exhibition were very interesting, and many members of the Ladies' Committee felt that as the Reign of Her Majesty the Queen has been so remarkable for progress in art, education, intellectual development, and in all that relates to the well-being of women, it would be fitting (as the century draws to a close) that a special Exhibition should be held in London, in which this progress could be shown.

With this object in view, some of the members of the Ladies' Committee, to which reference has just been made, held preliminary meetings at the houses of Lady Jeune and Mrs. Carmichael. It soon, however, became evident that a wide appeal should be made to all who have the interests of women at heart, and especially to those who are actually engaged in professional or industrial pursuits, as well as to those whose influence has enabled them to aid in promoting the development of women's work. It was felt that no more suitable place could be selected for a representative meeting than the House of the Society of Arts, where, under the guidance of the Prince Consort, the Exhibition of 1851 was organised. The Council of the Society of Arts has, moreover, exerted a noteworthy influence on all succeeding Exhibitions, and the Provisional Committee of the proposed Women's Exhibition are therefore specially grateful to Sir H. Trueman Wood, for permitting the present meeting to be held here. As regards the steps which have as yet been taken to promote the proposed Imperial Exhibition of Women's Work, it was considered that an expression of the views of the Mayoresses of the provincial towns throughout the country would afford a useful indication as to the degree of success which might be hoped for. It is gratifying to record the fact that of one hundred and twenty replies which have been received, only nine are unfavourable, while very many are in the highest degree satisfactory. It should be added that the

answers received to letters addressed to women engaged in professional work are marked by much enthusiasm.

The time has been too short to permit an appeal to be made to women in India, in the Dominion of Canada, or in the Colonies. It is, however, from these possessions of Her Majesty that much of the interest of the Exhibition will be derived. The Committee would finally record the fact that, notwithstanding the wonderful development in women's work which marks the last half-century, and astonishes all who study the question, there is still as urgent a need for providing and directing suitable employment for women as there is an abundant field for such employment. The Committee are satisfied, from the inquiries they have instituted, that such a need exists. The object, therefore, in calling this meeting is to enlist the sympathies of all who are willing to help in the promotion of a scheme which, it is believed, cannot fail to add to the industrial and material well-being of the nation."

Lady Aberdeen then called upon Major General Webber to move the first resolution: "That it is desirable that an Exhibition, to be called 'The Imperial Exhibition of Women's Work,' should be held in 1897 or 1898 to celebrate the progress of Women's Work during the Victorian Era." The public, said the General, little know to what an extent women's work has supplanted that of men; indeed, Trades Unions have connived at such non-recognition. Such an Exhibition would throw much light on the subject, and enable justice and honour to be bestowed where it was due. It would stimulate inquiry into the conditions under which women labour; and would doubtless do much to ameliorate the hardships of those employed in chemical and other works where poisonous gases are prevalent. Further, to those who declare or echo the sentiment that women lack the power of organization, of decision, and initiative, it would prove the groundlessness of their assertions. The existence of the Exhibition itself would protest against such an assertion. Where women have been entrusted with responsible posts, they have fulfilled their duties creditably. There was no question in their minds of Women *versus* Men; or of collision with the vast sphere of men's work. What they desired was that the achievements and capabilities of women be fully recognised; and he regarded the proposed Exhibition as an attractive, interesting, and practical scheme.

Sir Donald Smith, whose support of any movement, said Lady Aberdeen, is in Canada regarded as a guarantee of its value and practicability, briefly seconded the motion; Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, in supporting it, said the "Victorian Era" had emphatically been the "Women's Era," for never in the history of the world had their claims received more sympathetic recognition and encouragement. She desired emphatically to state that this was not an aggressive women's movement, but rather a desire on the part of women to celebrate the close of the nineteenth century by an expression of gratitude for the great facilities which had been granted to them of late years for development and independence, and to show to the world some results of these influences. In no branch of women's work had greater progress been made in the Victorian age than in Nursing the sick, and the magnificent results now achieved in our Hospitals were greatly due to the efforts of educated women, and to the strong personal interest taken in the progress of Nursing by the Queen and her royal daughters. She hoped, however, they would not confine the exhibits or records to what had been done

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