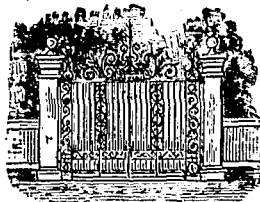


**Outside the Gates.**

**Women in Art.**

**WOMEN WRITERS' DINNER.**



THE social function of the week was, without doubt, the Women Writers' Dinner, which was held at the Criterion Restaurant, and at which two hundred of the most eminent literary women of the day assembled. The guests were received by Miss Elizabeth Robins, author of the "Open Question," who also took the Chair, and whose *spirituelle* beauty was charmingly enhanced by her rose-coloured gown, clouded with filmy lace.

The arrangements for the dinner were excellent, and the scheme of decoration of the tables in white and yellow soothing and harmonious; great gold cups were filled with yellow iris, wide-eyed marguerites and feathery grasses, jars of tinted roses filled the air with sweetness, and scattered on a pale yellow drapery, running down the table-centres, were creamy "gloires," and deep toned russet leaves—to the masterly touches of Mrs. Emily Crawford, artist of brush and pen, we were indebted for this dream of beauty.

At the seven tables presided Mrs. Walford and Mrs. Flora Annie Steel, Miss. Coleridge and Mrs. Percy Leake, Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Alec Tweedie, Miss Elizabeth Robins and Miss Honnor Morten, Miss Beatrice Harraden and Mrs. Belloc-Lowndes, Mrs. Henry Norman and Mrs. Sidgwick, and Mrs. Meade and Miss Clementina Black.

Miss G. M. Ireland-Blackburne, the Hon. Sec., flitted hither and thither, daintily fresh in white satin and pearls, proving her power for social organisation, and, with the Executive Committee, she is sincerely to be congratulated upon the immense success of this function.

Guests found their seats as denoted on the Programme by their names attached to badges, consisting of white satin ribbon bows, and butterfly pins, which clipped on to one's bodice and proclaimed to the naturally inquisitive who was who. By this means one had the pleasure of making the acquaintance visually of many women whose work had brought many hours of delight into one's life.

The gowns were generally very tasteful, Kassandra Vivaria, in poppy satin, with great glowing poppies tucked in her black hair, was a picture. Mrs. Henry Norman, in white and emerald green, her golden hair so smoothly and artistically dressed; Mrs. Alec Tweedie, the pink of taste and form; Mrs. Montefiore, beautifully stately; and radiant Madame Sarah Grand, evidently in her element.

The speeches were delightful, and Miss Honnor Morten repeated the lessons of history in her account of the modest inception of the women writers' dinner, and of how, in spite of ridicule cast upon it by an incredulous male press, the custom has grown steadily year by year in popularity until 200 seats are all too few to meet the requests for tickets of those longing to be present.

E. G. F.

THE present position of women in Art is considerably improved, although it falls very far short of what it was before the recent times, when, Art having become a trade, the men of business engaged in it have fallen to jealously guarding every possible inlet which might divert honour and emolument from themselves. The closest of all close Boroughs is our own national school of art, the Royal Academy; it owes its existence chiefly to the initiative and efforts of Mary Moser, who was high in favour as a Court Painter, and who exerted her influence to launch it successfully; she was, as a matter of course, a "Royal Academician," but when she died, in 1819, the very body she had called together, quietly dropped women students out of the schools, and obliterated her own claims and memory as far as possible.

Of the fierce fight to get this matter set right, we need not waste space, it is ancient history, and scores of students are now enjoying those advantages that had been deliberately stolen from them; it is a common saying in the City, "Committees have no conscience," and therefore we need not be surprised at the Royal Academy following the old precedents, viz.: firstly the absorption of the best of women's work, secondly the suppression of names and chronicling, and the systematic dropping out of mention in books of reference, and—after a century or two—this practice has had so much effect that we are, at this epoch, treated to the spectacle of would-be critics actually debating as to whether there were women artists in the "middle ages" or not!

Those who know the Italian galleries will not fail to be amused, or perhaps irritated by this exhibition of profound ignorance, they will recall the many times they have noticed some work and found it was painted in the long ago by some woman, whose genius was well recognised by her contemporaries, and the splendid portraits left by Lavinia Fontana, of Bologna, Barbara Longhi, etc., are to be found in the princely private collections of their country, as well as in the public galleries.

In those times Art had no sex, and the Frati working patiently in their monasteries, were not jealous of the nuns also working in their convents painting altarpieces and illuminating books—it was all done for the glory of God, and there was little personal feeling about it. The galleries of Turin, Milan, Siena, Modena, etc., have many examples of women's painting, as early as 1500 (dated), and it would be but slight trouble to get the list of names carried further back.

In our own National Portrait Gallery are various Royal portraits executed by various women, but in our great National Gallery we find only three names, Vigee-Lebrun (French), Rachel Ruysch (Dutch), and Rosa Bonheur (French), the greatest animal painter the world has yet seen, who was buried (with military honours) this month.

It should not be long now before women are reinstated in the honours, which were formerly theirs, which they have allowed to slip out of their hands, or were craftily deprived of, often to gratify the private spite of some unworthy, but influential individual, and everyone should take and cherish that which is her due, if only for the sake of the precedent, and for those

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)