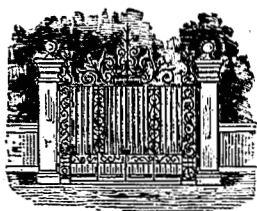


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



MISS LOUISA TWINING, writing to the *Times* on the subject of Poor Law Reform, and expressing her regret at the delay which is supposed to be unavoidable in carrying out some much needed reforms, "which" she adds "I may say some of us have been urging and hoping for during a space at least of forty years," concludes her letter thus:—"May I add that if the counsel and advice of some practical and experienced women could be added to the present Council of the Local Government Board, I think we should not have quite so long to wait for the reforms which we so earnestly desire to see carried out."

The London County Council has opened its Home for Women Inebriates at Farmfield. The estate contains upwards of 370 acres, and was purchased at a cost of £13,000. As a beginning, provision has been made for the reception of 30 female inmates, but it is proposed eventually to provide for a much larger number, and also to open a similar home for men. The present home will be superintended by a lady of much experience in this special branch of work. The idea is to infuse into the environment a sense of home, and the residents will be employed in gardening, dairy, and household work. The experiment will be watched with great interest, more especially by those who believe that drunkenness is a disease rather than a moral failure.

The books sent by the Guild of Women-Binders to the Paris Exhibition have gained the silver medal. As it is only two years since the Guild was started, its success is all the more remarkable. Its secret is no doubt the pride taken by the workers in the beauty and originality of their work. They never repeat a design, and aim at perfection of workmanship. At Paris they show some fifty or sixty volumes. The work, with the exception of that of some women binders at Edinburgh, is English, and to a great extent that of women residing in the districts bordering on London.

Mrs. Sheppard, President of the National Council of the Women of New Zealand, said some wise things in the course of her address from the chair at the Fifth Session of the Council held in the City Council Chambers, Dunedin. For instance:—"For years I have advocated a legal equality of opportunity for men and women. There should be no artificial lines drawn between the sexes. Dame Nature will take good care that the real differences shall be recognized. Men and women should take counsel together in all human affairs, whether they concern the home, the municipality or the State. The State is only the larger home, and the experience of women might well be utilised in many branches of the State's work. The children of the State want mothers as well as fathers." This is our experience in the old country.

A Book of the Week.

"THE GATELESS BARRIER."*

It is not very long since the most modern and most realistic of writers—Mr. Henry James—electrified the public by becoming the author of a psychic story, and a psychic story, moreover, of a conspicuously creepy and weird description. It was an amusing study to see the critics wondering what they ought to do with it; whether they should praise or condemn this new departure—bid the cobbler stick to his last, or hail another recruit to the ranks of those who can give us a new sensation.

Now the poor souls find themselves confronted with the spectacle of another novelist of the front rank, what is more, another realist—Lucas Malet, of all people—writing what is neither more nor less than a ghost story, the framework of which is laid on the good old lines, but the treatment of which is as new as it can possibly be made. I own that I hailed with interest and gladness this essay of another branch of this writer's power; I am pleased that this skilful cobbler has left her last to construct for us a cobweb, just this once. The psychic vein is one which must be rarely struck, this being one cause of its alluring fascination to the reader.

One can understand the strong attraction to the modern author existing in the marked contrast between present-day materialism and the ghost as it existed in the old story. Ghosts are not aggressive things. The modern young man and the modern young woman are aggressive, as becomes youth and progress. A really thorough-going materialist might live for years in the same house with a veritable spectre and have no consciousness that such a thing existed, simply because the faculties had not been trained to expect it. Such an experience would by no means show that there was no ghost there, but merely that the intelligence of the living inhabitant moved along a different plane, which did not include such things.

Laurence Rivers, the young Englishman who goes through the uncanny experiences recounted in the "Gateless Barrier," is very *fin-de-siècle*. He has mixed in American society, and has made a marriage which he believes to be a notable success, in which belief all his friends cordially concur—with a pretty young leader of American society, who has made him clearly understand that child-bearing is not by any means among the duties of the modern wife.

Plunged from this social atmosphere into that of the dark, weird old house in England, the home of his ancestors, inhabited by one misogynistic old man, with "atrophied affections," as Laurence well puts it, it was only to be expected that the sweet, old-world maiden, with her rose-coloured gown and her innocent eyes, who flirts about the yellow drawing room at night, in this place from which all living women are banished, should fire the young man's imagination to the point of entire absorption.

Agnes Rivers was the old-time Woman with One Idea; and that idea a man. For his sake the poor little forsaken spirit, whose corpse has been denied Christian burial, haunts for ever the scene where she tasted those sweets of love which made up the whole of her short and narrow existence. But may a modern reviewer be allowed to express the thought which will

* By Lucas Malet. (Methuen.)

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