

## Outside the Gates.

## WOMEN.



The Annual Meeting of the National Council of Women will this year be held in London on October 29th, in the Morley Hall, 26, George Street, Hanover Square, from 11 to 1.30 and at 2.30 p.m. A Conversation will be held in the evening of the same day.

The Executive have arranged to hold a Conference on Rural and Urban Housing of the Poor on Wednesday, October 30th, in the Large Hall of Sion College, Victoria Embankment. This is a question of national importance, and will no doubt arouse deep interest. Offers of beds in London and the nearer suburbs will be gladly received by the Hospitality Committee, which will meet at the office, 59, Berners Street, W., on September 24th.

The Executive Committee of the N.U.W.W. (National Council) have requested Miss Louisa Stevenson, one of the Scottish Vice-Presidents, to represent it at the International Congress of Nurses at Buffalo in September.

At the recent meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Council of Women, held at the Hague, the National Council of the Women of France was received into the International Council. Subject to the approval of the President, Mrs. May Wright Sewall, the next meeting of the Executive will be held in Copenhagen in the summer of 1892.

We are glad to learn that the question of more liberal representation of National Councils on the International Council of Women is receiving consideration. The President, Mrs. May Wright Sewall, intends to reintroduce the amendment sent up by the National Council of the United States to the Quinquennial of 1899 (but unintentionally omitted from the agenda of that meeting) to the following effect:—

"Resolved, That Article v., Section 3, shall be so amended as to provide that the voting body of the International Council shall include the general officers of the International Council, the President, and two delegates at large for each federated National Council; also from five to ten delegates from each National Council, according to the number of general divisions into which it shall finally be decided that the subjects considered at the Quinquennial sessions shall be classified."

By this means the subjects under consideration will be dealt with by experts, the only means by which questions can be satisfactorily discussed, and a useful policy formulated.

The committee of ladies to visit the concentration camps is now complete, and will commence operations at once. Dr. Jane Waterston, Miss Scarlett, and Miss Brereton, who are already in South Africa, will join Lady Knox, Mrs. Fawcett, and Miss Deane at Cape Town, where they were due about August 7th.

## A Book of the Week.

## THE HERO.\*

It seems a pity that Mr. Maugham, with his quickness at hitting off certain social foibles, and his strenuous power of depicting passion, should not have a collaborator who could supply him with a plot, or, as plots are now out of date, let us say an adequate motive for the exercise of his undoubted abilities in story writing.

James Parsons, the "Hero," is the son of an ignorant, narrow-minded couple, who have the one great saving grace of earnestly trying to do their duty, so far as they see it. The father, a colonel, has been dismissed the army because he led his men into an ambush. James, the son, inherits all, and more, of his fatal instability of purpose and incapability of knowing his own mind; but he does not inherit the self-distrust, and faith in God, which have enabled his father to bear humiliation and disappointment as a brave man should.

James has been in Africa, and before he left England he engaged himself to Mary Clibborn, a good sort of stupid girl without much physical attraction for whom he felt the "boy and girl" kind of sentiment. While in India he fell in love with a half-breed woman, utterly worthless, the wife of a good, loyal English officer. The unreasoning force of a weak youth's passion for a crafty woman is given with wonderful power.

James comes home with the Victoria Cross, and at once decides that Mary will not do. After some shilly-shally he musters resolution to tell her so. Then he is attacked with enteric fever, and Mary—the worst nurse on record, to judge by the specimen we are given of her powers in the district-visiting line—nurses him devotedly. When he gets better gratitude causes this flabby young man to renew his engagement. Then, as the wedding-day draws on, he feels that it is too much, and shoots himself.

Who can sympathize with this hero?

Mr. Maugham apparently believes that a man is simply and solely what his father and mother have made him; but, if this were so, James Parsons would have been a Christian. His parents endowed him with all their many failings, but not with their one greatness.

This is to apply the law of Degeneration with a vengeance. The author, too, gives vent, on his own account, to some rather incoherent remarks upon the purity of the flesh. What does this mean? To say that the flesh is intrinsically pure seems as erroneous as to declare it to be, *per se*, intrinsically vile. It is the living will informing the flesh that makes it pure or impure. It is natural, and therefore right, that men and women should be drawn together by the mutual attraction of sex; but it is obvious that it is the duty of the individual so to use this attraction as to conduce to the good of the race. What kind of citizens, we ask Dr. Maugham, extreme believer in heredity, would be likely to result from the union of an invertebrate ass like James Parsons with a low type of woman like Mrs. Wallace Pritchard?

We think Mrs. Stetson would pronounce Dr. Maugham to be over-sexed. It hardly seems as though, in the present state of society, the demands of the flesh needed insisting upon. When will this author give

\* By William Somerset Maugham. (Hutchinson & Co.)

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