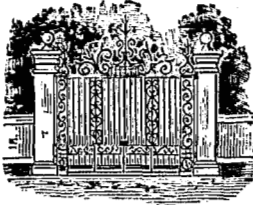


## Outside the Gates.

### WOMEN.



We are informed that on the invitation of the Victoria League a committee has been formed of well-known ladies and gentlemen of both political parties, who have resolved to give their help for the relief of the sick women and children in the Boer concentration camps.

The committee has been appointed with the approval of the Secretary of State for War. The aims of the committee are purely philanthropic and absolutely non-political.

A Committee of ladies is also being formed by the Secretary of State for War who are to visit these camps in South Africa, and report their condition monthly to the Government. This is indeed a most significant appreciation of the value of women's work, and is bound to have far reaching and splendid results.

In the Court of Session, Edinburgh, last week, a question that has been agitating legal circles in Scotland, as to whether or not a lady can practise as a solicitor under Scottish statutes, was decided. Miss Margaret Strang Hall, a lady of eighteen years, who proposed entering as an apprentice with a Troon solicitor, was refused entrance to the Law Agents' Examination, which it was necessary she should pass, and petitioned the court to order the examiners to receive her. Lords Adam, Kinnear, and Pearson stated that they were unanimous with the other judges who had been consulted in the matter, in deciding that they had no power to admit the lady to the examination. They therefore dismissed her petition, saying there must be an alteration in the law before it can be legal for a lady to be a solicitor.

The sooner an alteration in the law is made the better. It is a scandal that the women of the United Kingdom should be debarred from following professions which have been thrown open to them in the United States and Canada, France and Belgium. The boasted liberty of Englishwomen is becoming a sorry joke—and we have got to remember that no nation can compete with the lively progress of the age, which deals unjustly with and represses the intellectual force of its women. Human beings are apt to exceed and excel in one line or another, and where women are prevented becoming an intellectual force they make for animal influence—and the "animal" nation is not going to keep top in the struggle for existence in the twentieth century. How is this for a reason of the advance of the Stars and Stripes?

At the request of the Consistory of the Alexander University at Helsingfors the Emperor of Russia has decreed that women shall be granted the same rights as men in regard to admission to that university.

M. Marcel Prévost, the novelist, who has made a speciality of analysing the feminine mind, is of the opinion that the reign of physical beauty in woman is over. The mind is what people most regard now-a-days.

## A Book of the Week.

### CRUCIAL INSTANCES.\*

The literary quality of Mrs. Wharton's work was so well assured in her recent book, "A Gift from the Grave," that one takes up her new volume in delighted anticipation, which is by no means disappointed, for the contents are varied and interesting.

The first of the series is by far the least meritorious of the collection. It belongs to a type of story which Mr. Maurice Hewlett has popularised with his "Little Novels of Italy," and the plot is the plot of Browning's matchless "My Last Duchess." A stranger is being shown round a deserted Italian villa by the aged custodian. It has not been inhabited since the death of the Duchess, two hundred years ago. There follows the description of the lady's portrait, and of her easy laughter, just as in the poem. The vengeance taken by the Duke is of singular malevolence. The story is spoilt by being over described; the style is so painstaking, that it grows laboured. Why "the subaqueous gloom" of a darkened room? There seems lack of justification for so strained a simile.

"The Angel of the Grave" and "The Recovery" are quite modern, and form two very clever studies of two very modern kinds of life stories. The artist, Keniston, worshipped by a circle of half-educated admirers, who discover that he has passed through three distinct manners, and shows signs of developing a fourth, is a very distinct person, sketched in with wonderfully few strokes. His feeling when he forsakes the United States and provincialism for the National Gallery and Paris, reminds us of Kipling's American journalist when he stood for the first time in Westminster Abbey, and actually *heard* the wings of the centuries roll over his head.

"Copy," the fourth story is a brilliant piece of dialogue between a lady novelist and a male poet. It is written in the form of a drama, but considered in that light it is futile, for it leads nowhere. It deals with the same subject as Mrs. Wharton's former book,—the attitude towards each other,—one should rather say, the duty towards each other, of two people who have written intimately to each other, and have since grown famous.

"The Rembrandt" is very humorous and lifelike, and makes one wish that the author would more frequently indulge her lighter vein. "The Moving Finger" is a curious and not altogether satisfactory story, and shows greater strain than the others.

The last of the collection is the deepest and most moving, "The Confessional." This again transports us to Italy, but to the Italy of the Revolution. The tale is told by Don Egidio, an Italian priest, in exile in America. It tells how Count Roberto Siviano, patriot and patrician, takes to wife Faustina, daughter of an impoverished noble. His life has been too full of Italy and her struggle for him to think of the joys of love and marriage; but he overhears a coarse remark by an Austrian officer on the young girl's beauty.

Now, Roberto is forty, and udedemonstrative; his bride is eighteen. His younger brother and his wife, who thought Roberto a confirmed bachelor, hate the young bride with all their hearts, and tell him that she has a lover—worse, an Austrian lover. Roberto, on the eve of starting to defend his country, has no time

\* By Edith Wharton. (John Murray.)

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