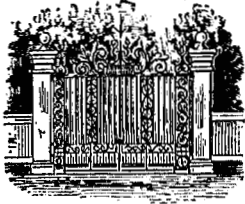


## Outside the Gates.

### WOMEN.



The ballot for Bills and motions gave favourable places to some measures which always excite keen interest outside as well as inside Parliament. Amongst them is the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, in charge of Sir Gilbert Parker.

The Bishop of London is using uncompromising opposition to the Bill, and his remarks at a recent meeting at the Church House—when he pleaded that it was on behalf of the women and children of England and the purity of family life that he protested against attempts to legalise marriage with a deceased wife's sister—have called forth the following expression of opinion from a colonist:—"As a resident of more than forty years in a colony where marriage with a deceased wife's sister is legal—and practically this is the case in every British colony as well as in the United States of America—I venture to protest against the grounds of opposition to the proposed alteration in the English marriage law to legalise such marriages here. I maintain that the purity of married life is no less highly prized in Britain Beyond the Seas than in England, and its keystone is as secure there as it is here, notwithstanding the removal of the illiberal—and, I submit, indefensible—restriction."

What, of course, is the most deplorable aspect of the case is the fact that women, having no vote, and, therefore, no representation in Parliament, can have their most solemn affairs wrangled over and disposed of without their consent one way or the other.

Representatives of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies held a meeting in London last week, to consult with their Parliamentary advisers.

The house-to-house canvass now being made by the police, as a preliminary to the preparation of federal electoral rolls in Australia is steadily proceeding. The electoral authorities state that the work is being carried out without a hitch of any moment, and they expect that the name of every adult in the State will have been enrolled within three weeks. They also state that some women have at first declined to give the information required before they can be included in the electoral lists, but in most instances they have repented of their refusal before the police have left their houses. Only very few women are reported to have absolutely objected to being enfranchised.

It is reported that Society women in New York are filling up the hospitals, sanatoriums, and rest-cure homes because of the rapid life they are leading.

Dr. John Girdner, an authority on pathology, says that the women of New York smoke and drink too much, and live too fast, and neurasthenia is prevalent everywhere.

The Rev. Mr. Rainsford says it is no wonder that women in society collapse after the terrific, hysteric, and senseless programme they follow.

## A Book of the Week.

### A CASTLE IN SPAIN.\*

Our romantic school of novelists is scouring Europe and searching its history with candles; and Mr. Capes, like Mrs. Clifford in the "Shadow of the Sword," has selected the Peninsular War as the theatre of his new story.

No two novels could be more completely different, though there are incidents common to both; we may perhaps be biased in preferring the work of the woman, both as regards artistic merit and as regards human sympathy,

Human sympathy is the quality in which Mr. Capes, after a long series of specimens of his work, must be pronounced lacking. His imagination is admirable, and seldom fails; he usually manages to escape the conventional; he has a style which is not only good, but improving; but his persistent leaning towards the *bizarre*, and towards the unpleasant, apparently for its own sake, cause a feeling of dissatisfaction in the mind of the reader.

The odious incident of the scourged pig—the form of torture applied by the Chevalier to Robin, in order to elicit his secret; the sickening circumstances of his mother's marriage, her attempt to strangle her younger son—all these things belong to a region of incident which, like the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's, seems a direct appeal to a set of feelings upon which no good novelist need depend for success.

The character of Robin Lois's mother—*née* de Beaufremont—is from first to last unreal, and entirely fails to make the appeal, which is quite evidently intended by the writer, to the reader's sympathy. The feminine political intriguer needs, in truth, much to make her a truly sympathetic creation.

The idea of the story is that Madame is of those who believed that the Dauphin of France did not, as was supposed, perish in the Temple, but was saved, taken to Spain, and there brought up in a Convent. To fetch this young man to France is the task set by Lady Lois to her elder son, Robin. The moment chosen to send one solitary emissary on this most dangerous errand is the moment when Spain is overrun by the armies of the French, the English, the Spanish, and the Portuguese, when especially the district in which the convent is situated is in a ring of hostile forces. The friends of the Duke of Orleans, who apparently have wind of the designs of Lady Lois, imitate her folly in sending apparently only one spy to watch the proceeding of Robin. The French attack the Convent of Our Lady of Woe, the intrepid old Abbess fires a mine, and blows up herself and her nuns, together with their invaders; Robin escapes with the alleged King, and with one young girl, Ninon, a Provençal, who has been the King's attendant, and who is the daughter of Robin's foster-mother.

The poor youth, whether Capet or no, is the most pitiable being. He is almost half-witted, flabby bloated, cruel, foolish. But the dangers and difficulties of the route rouse in the poor wretch what seems like a spark of royal spirit; he patiently endures the hardships which are wrecking his enfeebled constitu-

\* By Bernard Capes. Smith, Elder and Co.

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