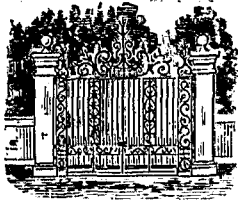


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



At a recent meeting of the Preston Women's Liberal Association a letter was read in which the daughter of Mr. George Meredith said: "My father, George Meredith, wishes me to say that it heartens him to see women banded together in union. What Nature originally decreed men are but beginning to see—that they are fitted for most of the avenues open to energy, and by their entering upon active life they will no longer be open to the accusation men so frequently bring against them of their being narrow and craven. Much more he could say, but he has short time at his command."

The Technical Education Board of the London County Council is again inviting applications for training scholarships for teachers of domestic economy. The scholarships will be awarded on the result of a competitive examination in general subjects, which will be held in June next, and they will be tenable at the Battersea Polytechnic Training School for about two and a quarter years from September, 1903. During this time the scholars will be trained, free of charge, as teachers of cookery, laundrywork, needlework, dressmaking, and housewifery, and at the end of their course they will be examined for teachers' diplomas in these subjects. The scholarships are of considerable value (the usual fee for the training course being £55), and the free provision of dinner and tea, together with the materials for the classes in needlework and dressmaking, gives still further aid to the students. Candidates for the scholarships must be resident in the Administrative County of London, the daughters of parents possessing an income of not more than £400 a year, and they must be between eighteen and thirty years of age. The demand for teachers of domestic economy is steadily increasing, and the great success which has attended the work of the Battersea Training School hitherto enables the Technical Education Board to recommend the scholarships with all confidence to the attention of well-educated girls anxious to train for a profession. Full particulars of the scholarships can be obtained on application to the secretary of the Technical Education Board, London County Council, at the Board's offices, 116, St. Martin's Lane.

From what nation ought a woman who desires to be happy through married to choose her husband? This knotty point has been solved by a Chicago convention. Three young lady delegates were despatched to Europe to study the question on the spot. Their report was that the Englishman is surly and overbearing, the Frenchman is agreeable but egotistical, the German rather slow and cogitative, the Italian insignificant, and the Russian too much of a sot. Ultimately, the Monroe doctrine—"American husbands for American wives"—was reaffirmed, because it is the American man who allows his wife most freedom.

Mrs. Wu Ting Fang, the wife of the former Chinese Minister in the United States, who has left San Francisco for China, says she intends to start a crusade in China against foot-binding.

A Book of the Week.

"PEARL-MAIDEN."*

Mr. Rider Haggard's book seems to carry us back a couple of decades, to the days of romances like "Ben Hur," or even further, back to the days of "The Last Days of Pompeii," or "The Last of the Barons."

Historical romance of the description before us is a different thing indeed from "Count Hannibal" or "Richard Yea-and-nay." The author trusts for the interest of his tale entirely on circumstance, and not at all on character. He weaves a story of great and deep interest; but it lacks altogether the poignancy which the juxtaposition of people in whom we take a warm personal interest gives.

The style is clear, simple, unpretentious. It is as lacking in that subtle charm called literary merit as—with all due deference to Mr. Andrew Lang—all Mr. Haggard's work has always been. But it has a real merit of its own. One feels that, had Mr. Haggard lived, as do the persons in his story, in the days of the fall of Jerusalem, he would have been a just and a laborious chronicler; one who could see the ultimate trend of events, and judge them with fairness. He does not make all his Christians saints and all his heathen devils. One has no reason to suppose that this was so, even in the early ages of the Church, when to be a Christian at all required a moral courage as great, and a physical courage far greater, than in the present day.

The mother of the heroine of the tale, a young and beautiful Christian Jewess, escapes martyrdom in the arena only by the accident of the fatal illness of Herod, chronicled in the Acts of the Apostles. Aided by her Lybyan slave, Nehushta, the young mother-to-be is safely smuggled out of Caesarea, on board a ship which is wrecked. The crew take to the boats, and are all drowned in sight of Nehushta and her helpless mistress; and there, on the Syrian beach, in the half-crushed vessel, the life of Miriam, the Pearl-Maiden, begins and that of her mother ends. Nehushta, by the dying command of the mother, carries the child to the settlement of the Essenes, near the Dead Sea. The part of the book which treats of this curious confraternity is most interesting. They all take vows of celibacy, and never look at a woman if they can help it. In other respects their views seem to have been not unlike those of the Quakers—never resisting by force, deciding all difficulties in meeting, and cultivating a spirit of calm simplicity.

The orphan Miriam is solemnly adopted by this assembly of simple old boys, and grows up beautiful and adored, the pet first, later the Queen of the Essenes. She has, as playmate, a boy of noble Jewish birth, Caleb by name, who is also an adopted child of the sect. Later, she meets and loves the young Roman captain, Marcus Emilius. Marriage with him is impossible, as her mother's dying command to Nehushta was that the child should marry a Christian only. These two young men become the dominating influences of Miriam's life.

Through the fanaticism of her grandfather, Benoni, the girl, who leaves the Essenes at the age of eighteen, is shut up in Jerusalem during the siege. Mr. Haggard is to be congratulated on the way in which he treats this awful subject, neither slurring over nor dwelling upon its horrors.

* By Rider Haggard. Longmans and Co.

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