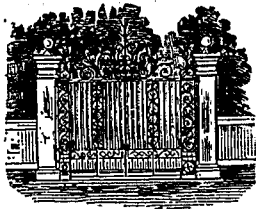


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



Lady Brassey, last week, presided at a meeting at 24, Park Lane, convened to bring the Horticultural College at Swanley to the attention of the public. The college was established in 1889 for the purpose of providing a sound education in gardening and allied subjects. It aims chiefly at giving a thoroughly systematic training to women who wish to become market growers and gardeners, and in fitting students to act efficiently as landowners, teachers, stewards, or colonists. Miss Wilkinson is the principal, and under her the college has made much progress. Mr. J. C. Medd said the college hoped to obtain recognition as a national school of agriculture, and in order to obtain that and to justify a claim to assistance from the State they must show that their work was valuable and that there was a demand for the instruction which they gave. That they succeeded in doing so was shown by the number of girls who desired to become students, and by the fact that it was recognised by the Board of Education, which had awarded two King's prizes to their students this year. Mr. Buckmaster pointed out the importance of the scientific education combined with practical work given by the college, and said it might be regarded as one of the permanent institutions of the country. Mrs. Pember Reeves, a member of the governing body, spoke of the healthy, happy life of the girls at Swanley, and said that the college was turning out all-round capable women. Sir John Cockburn urged the claims of the institution to public support, on the ground that it was doing a great work for the nation and for the Empire at large.

By permission of the Countess of Meath, vice-president of the Central Society for Women's Suffrage, a well-attended meeting, organised by the association, was held at 83, Lancaster Gate recently. The Countess of Bective, who presided, said the gathering was the first of a series to be held in Paddington. A motion in favour of a Woman's Suffrage Committee for Paddington was passed unanimously.

Referring to the overcrowding of cities, President Roosevelt, in his message to Congress, remarks "that the death-rate shows a terrible increase, especially in infant mortality, in overcrowded tenements, not merely in the great crowded slums of high buildings in New York and Chicago, but in the alley slums of Washington. There should be severe child labour and factory inspection laws. It is very desirable that married women should not work in factories. The prime duty of the man is to work, to be the breadwinner; the prime duty of the woman is to be the mother, the housewife."

Then why do not the men so perform their prime duty that they can win bread for all their women-kind? Moreover, without breach of the law, how are all women to marry if there are not enough men to go round?

And how about that sacred Charter of personal

liberty of which we hear so much in the States, if a woman may not elect to remain a spinster?

We know President Roosevelt for a fine, strenuous, and dominating personality, but unless he can coerce Providence to equalise the birthrate of male and female baby Yankees, and unless he can eliminate the love of liberty from the temperament of the mothers of the American nation, he is not going to alter the laws of labour without grave injustice.

He has got two tremendous natural instincts to control to bring about his millennium. He's got to have every woman choose to be a mother, and he's got to have every child born in wedlock, and we are prepared to bet him his bottom dollar that, if he makes the attempt, the natural law will outwit him. Why should woman be the only female animal who is denied the right to help to feed her young? There can be no "rough riding" over the fundamental Laws of Life.

A Book of the Week.

THE DIVINE FIRE.*

Miss Sinclair's writing has always been interesting; and in "Mr. and Mrs. Neville Tyson" she touched a very high level. Her present effort, though I am not prepared to say it is a complete success, is a most noteworthy performance. It charms by its very daring. For a woman to set herself to lay bare the heart of a man—and not only of a man, but of a genius—in a book of 667 closely printed pages, is a feat that might make the boldest flinch. It is most emphatically, to hitch one's wagon to a star.

I earnestly recommend everybody to read "The Divine Fire," and not to be put off by the laboured nature of the first fifty pages or so.

One could hardly cite a more conspicuous example of literary recklessness than the book now before us. Not content with explaining her genius to us, Miss Sinclair is even equal to giving us specimens of his work. A whole sonnet she gives us, and is not afraid. And one would not like to say that this splendid audacity is altogether unjustified.

As the book gets on, one grows more and more interested in Mr. Savage Keith Rickman, son of the Strand bookseller. If this youth has any prototype, it is the ever attractive Keats, cockney and second-rate child of the immortals.

"Perhaps it was not to be wondered at if Mr. Rickman had not yet found himself. There were, as he sorrowfully reflected, so many Mr. Rickmans. There was Mr. Rickman, of the front shop and secondhand department, known as 'our' Mr. Rickman. . . . There was Mr. Rickman the student and recluse, who inhabited the insides of other men's books. Owing to his habitual converse with intellects greater—really greater than his own, he was an exceedingly humble and reverent person. A high and stainless soul. You would never have suspected his connection with Mr. Rickman, the Junior Journalist, the obscure writer of brilliant paragraphs, a fellow destitute of reverence and decency, and everything except consummate impudence, a disconcerting humour and a startling style. But he was still more distantly related to Mr. Rickman, the young man about town. And that made four. Besides these four there was a fifth, the serene and perfect intelli-

* By May Sinclair. (Constable, London.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)