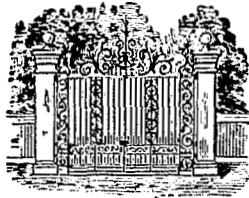


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



Lady Selborne, who recently contributed an article to the *Nineteenth Century* on "Woman's Suffrage, from a Common-sense Point of View," is of opinion that the really serious opponents of the movement may be divided into three classes—

(1) the Constitutionalists, who fear the introduction of a new principle; (2) chivalrous men, who have such a respect for our sex that they are afraid of the contaminating influence of politics upon it; and (3) those who, having associated much with the baser members of it, have a hearty and scarcely veiled contempt for all women. "Whigs, prigs, and pigs, as I once heard them flippantly described; these all have a genuine fear that the concession of women's suffrage would be a national disaster.

"Now let us see if there is any evidence that our sex unfits us to form sensible opinions on political matters, and to choose the best men for carrying those opinions into effect. I do not deny that there are many things that men can do which women cannot do. But what are these things? Women cannot be great composers of original music. But they can be politicians. Political ability, a capacity for the science of government, call it what you will, seems to be almost more common among women than it is among men.

"Very few women have been queens or regents. They have never been selected for any special fitness. The accidental failure of male heirs, the death or absence of a husband, has suddenly placed the reins of power in their hands. In all ages, in all states of civilisation, what a large measure of success has attended their rule! The reign of a queen is almost always a period of progress and prosperity; and many nations, notably our own among them, have made their most conspicuous advances when under the government of a woman. Have queens been exceptionally emotional in their public acts? Have they sacrificed the welfare of their people to their private affections? Have they been lacking in courage to defend the national honour when necessary? I think no fair-minded man can deny that history would answer all these questions in the negative. Is it not probable that, as the sample is, so will the bulk be—that the humble voter will not be influenced by very different motives from those which have ruled the conduct of her more brilliant sisters? I commend this line of thought to all those, both men and women, who regard the proposed innovation as dangerous. Sane common-sense is a quality not more rare among women than among men, and that is after all the quality that is most valuable in political matters."

We are apt to think ourselves far ahead of Russia, but the attitude of Russian men and women may well afford food for thought to those Englishmen who, in spite of all their enlightenment, class women politically with lunatics, paupers, and incarcerated criminals. M. Gaston Leroux, in a recent article in *Le Matin*, after describing the significance of the constitutional revolution engineered by the *Zemstvos*, says:—

"Someone put forward a proposition in favour of

woman's suffrage. Almost all the delegates were opposed to it. Suddenly M. Stochepkine, a member of the Moscow Municipal Council, and member of the Permanent Committee of the Representatives of Towns, sprang into the tribune. In a few burning phrases he described the attitude of the Russian woman in the present crisis. He dwelt upon the encouragement that each of them received in their own home—from the mother, from the wife, from the sister. And as he spoke of the true heroism which they inspired in the hearts of all, a thunder of applause drowned the voice of the orator. 'The Revolution. It will be the work of our women. Let us interest them in the business, and we shall be invincible.' And universal suffrage extended to women was voted with unanimity."

The first demand of the Peasants' Union, which recently met at Moscow, and issued a proclamation was "That before the elections of national representatives are proceeded with, universal suffrage, with direct voting powers, shall be accorded to all persons over twenty years, without distinction of sex."

Russia was also much ahead of this country in recognising the right of women to own property and to enjoy a first-class education.

Apparently this country must wake up if it is not to be behind Russia where women are concerned.

It is interesting to note that when Mrs. Byers, Principal of Victoria College, Belfast, recently received from Dublin University the degree of LL.D., her academical dress was the gift of the present teachers and pupils of the college, who thus testified not only to the respect and affection in which they hold their Principal, but to their appreciation of the recognition by Dublin University of her work.

In introducing Mrs. Byers, the public orator said: "It is with deep respect that I present to you a lady deserving of note, honour, and veneration, Margaret Byers, the pride and glory of the great city in the North, who not only there but throughout our whole island, in word and deed, with energy and wisdom, has stood in the forefront of a great and praiseworthy revolution. Long ago, when she had scarcely attained to womanhood she saw as it were in prophetic vision how the education of girls, if freed from the chains of too antiquated custom, could be extended through a wider sphere, and that their minds could be strengthened by sound training and yet their maiden graciousness gain withal an added charm. And as the years glided on the vision passed into reality. Of this long and unwearying labour the crown stands out before us all in that famous college, happily called Victoria, begun, advanced, equipped, directed under the auspicious guidance of this lady—a college which conducts its pupils through all the paths of useful learning and liberal training, and for which we know not what greater things are in store, but we expect the greatest. For fifty years—a large space in mortal life—she has stood beside the helm with unflinching firmness, having experienced storm and calm, but with a steady mind in either fortune. For such resolute constancy she surely deserves the reward of our highest honours. These well-merited honours, accordingly, we bestow. And now that this eminent lady is about to receive our chief academical distinction, I beg of you to accompany her cordially with the happy omen of your applause."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)