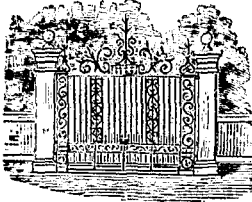


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



The luncheon given by the Society of American Women in London, at the Hotel Cecil on Monday, to welcome the American Delegates to the International Red Cross Conference was more than usually brilliant. Mrs. Webster Glynes, the charming President, was surrounded by many eminent guests, amongst them, his Excellency the American Ambassador and Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, and Mr. and Mrs. Ridgely Carter. American, English, French, Swiss, and Japanese Red Cross delegates were all present, and received a most cordial welcome from the President, Mrs. Hugh Reid Griffin, the American Consul-General, Mr. Robert G. Wynne, and Mrs. Bedford Fenwick.

Lieut.-Col. W. G. Macpherson, C.M.G., Royal Army Medical Corps, England; Baron Ozawa, Japan; Mme. Perouse, France; and Mr. Ernest P. Bicknell, the representative of the American National Red Cross during the organised relief at San Francisco, eloquently returned thanks for the reception and welcome.

The key-note of most of the speeches sounded the harmony of peace. Once the civilised nations recognised war as barbaric, the great work of the Red Cross would develop more and more in time of peace, in the amelioration of the disaster and disease.

The humanitarian spirit, which is the very essence of Red Cross work, must, as it gathers force, make to cease the horrible carnage of scientific warfare, a game, alas! in which money, not personal courage, is conqueror.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Asquith), answering on behalf of the Prime Minister in the House of Commons, said the Scottish law concerning the power of women to sit on school boards and parish councils was rather different from the English law, and it had been necessary, therefore, to prepare a Bill for the case of Scotland separate from, but generally similar to, that applying to England. That Bill was ready, and would shortly be introduced into the House of Lords.

Mlle. Lydia Ritz, of Chaux de Fonds, has been authorised by the authorities to act as chemist. She has recently passed her examinations brilliantly, and intends to open a chemist's shop shortly at Neuchâtel. During the last five years Swiss women have entered the majority of professions, and in every case with much success. It may be added that all the professions are open to the sex in Switzerland, and there are already women lawyers, doctors, architects, professors, and one engineer.

Book of the Week.

A DULL GIRL'S DESTINY.*

"It is so odd how monotonous plots are just now," said Celia softly, and Celia Farquhar was the wife of a well-known publisher, who had good opportunity for studying the question. "The only interest in the book is in the dialogue and characterisation. You know the plot before you turn a page." "The constant use of extreme situations," said Joan Forman, who also moved in the literary world, "is not a sign that writers think those things usually happen, but comes from the desire to be thought daring. The odd thing is, that the selection of a very extreme situation is a sign of weakness, not strength."

Could anything be more admirable than this terse summing up of the most glaring defects of current literature? It is a daring criticism to have made, but Mrs. Baillie Reynolds justifies her sweeping assertion in every page of the book in which it occurs. There is no monotony in the plot of "A Dull Girl's Destiny," a new and entirely unique line has been struck out by the author, rendering it an impossibility for the reader even to guess at the development of the plot. But, in addition, the dialogue is excellent, the characterisation profoundly natural. Therein lies the charm of the whole story—it is absolutely true to life. No "extreme situations" mar the strength, yet there are many scenes of such vivid interest and intrinsic value to the plot as to hold one breathless. There is very little art needed in the dressing up of the abnormal so as to awaken curiosity and excitement—it takes nothing short of genius to present the commonplace in a guise that is enthralling, but there can be no two opinions that this last has been achieved in "A Dull Girl's Destiny."

One of the cleverest points in the story is that the moment the Dull Girl enters it she ceases to be dull, not because her personality changes, the reader becomes unconsciously enlightened. At the same time it is perfectly conceivable why those around her should have remained so long under the impression that she is exceedingly dull. This double effect, though often striven after, is rarely compassed.

When Vincent Kenrick first meets Avril Eden in the company of the daringly brilliant Betty Lebreton, it is small wonder he hardly notices the reserved, unresponsive girl, but is carried away by the practised woman of the world who, in a flash of time fancies she has plumbed the depths of the simple-hearted Professor. The shallow natured has no plumb line long enough to measure the depths of simplicity, however, as is presently very ably manifested. Nevertheless, with unflinching accuracy of insight, it is also demonstrated that nothing less drastic than the personality of Betty Lebreton could have aroused Kenrick to a sense of his own incompleteness. She "awakened in him the side of life which makes a man long for a

* By Mrs. Baillie Reynolds. (Hutchinson & Co.)

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