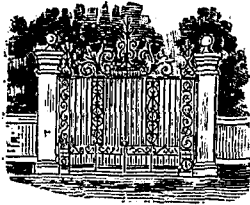


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



The Society of Women Journalists hold their annual meeting on Monday, 4th November, and are making a new departure by holding it—and subsequently a reception—at Rumpelmayer's beautiful rooms, St. James's, London. Mrs. Humphry Ward has accepted the office of President for 1907-8, and it is hoped that Madame Sarah Bernhardt will be the guest of honour.

It was unanimously agreed that the Conference of the National Union of Women Workers, held last week at Manchester, was a very useful gathering of experts. At the annual meeting of the Council the delegates unanimously endorsed the resolution proposed by Mrs. W. N. Shaw: "That the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland desires to urge the Local Government Board to bring before the notice of the Board of Guardians the desirability of the more frequent appointment of women as relieving officers, on the ground that the duties of such officers include the following:—Bringing pauper invalid women into the workhouse, removing women lunatics, receiving applications for admission to maternity wards, inspecting children boarded out within the Union, distributing out relief to women and children, and seeing that the homes of the recipients are kept in a sanitary condition; and, further, because such appointments are specially desirable where the Relieving Officer is also Inspector under the Infant Life Protection Act." The Union will meet at Aberdeen in 1908.

Medical opinion is not altogether in favour of some modern reforms in woman's attire. Thus the *British Medical Journal* expresses a doubt whether those who argue that all clothes should be suspended from the shoulders really have science on their side. When thus hung, the journal points out, "the weight to be supported is transmitted to the ground, from a position nearly at the top of a long and flexible column made up of a great number of small bones, imposed one upon the other, and kept erect mainly by the action of muscles. If the weight could be so arranged as to exercise its pull from the shoulders backwards there might be little to say against it, for it would then assist the muscles in keeping the spine erect. But all shoulder dress-hanging arrangements pull as much forward as backward, and thus tend, unless the back muscles are kept constantly in action, to throw the pectoral muscles out of action, and to contract the chest, by rendering full inspirations impossible.

"The heaviest part of a woman's dress is her skirt, and, when hung from her hips and sacrum, its weight is transmitted straight through the hip-

joints, knees, and ankles to the ground, instead of through those same joints plus some sixteen others. Much less muscle action is, therefore, called for to support a skirt thus hung.

Book of the Week.

THE BURNING TORCH.*

"The Burning Torch," by Miss F. F. Montrèsor, is chiefly remarkable for the number of surprises it contains: it is most unconventional. The apparently inevitable does not occur, the hero and heroine do not behave at all according to set rules, and it is quite impossible to surmise what is likely to be the outcome of any single event in the book.

We meet the heroine, Dolores Ellerson, when she is a mere child, but an exceedingly peculiar one, given to having visions akin to the power of second sight. They frighten her, though at first she hardly understands them, but when people begin to discover that there is something horribly prophetic about the girl's utterances it does not add to her popularity.

Circumstances force her to make her home with an aunt and uncle who have a large family of handsome, but quite commonplace, girls and boys, to whom the sensitive, strangely constituted child is an enigma. There is just one boy amongst her cousins who takes to her, and he is the ugly duckling, and quite the most unsatisfactory of them all.

There is no little skill in Miss Montrèsor's portrayal of this large and entirely unsympathetic family. She has daringly defied the old proverb that "blood is thicker than water," the Muncassans are actually antipathetic to each other, and as they grow older drift further and further apart. Amongst them all only Sebastian, the unstable, has any pretensions to an affectionate nature, and he is utterly selfish, as he eventually proves.

In curious contrast to the Muncassans stand the Mums, their mysterious, unknown relations, a most amusing trio of whom Olympia is the most delightful in her complete candour and lack of all affectation. In spite of her vulgarity, which is a trifle insisted upon, she has the refinement of good feeling throughout, and is a really beautiful character.

The being with the strongest personality in the book is Gregory Charrington, a man who, as a young fellow is inadvertently the cause of horrible tragedy, and who thereafter dedicates his life to the service of others in a strange Brotherhood of workers. He is the kind of man to whom everyone instinctively turns for help, and among others in childhood and in womanhood Dolores seeks his sympathy. He cannot choose but give it: he understands the girl as no one else is able to, not even the dear old great-aunt, who presently adopts her and takes her away from the uncongenial cousins into an abode of peace in the country. The old aunt knows herself to be approaching her life's

* By F. F. Montrèsor. (John Murray.)

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