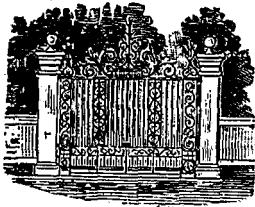


## Outside the Gates.

### WOMEN.



Although not mentioned in the King's Speech, the question of Women's Suffrage is, of all others, most pregnant with expectation, and the imp who controls the ballot-box for private members' Bills has again proved that he is a whole-hogger where our enfranchisement is concerned. Last year he gave us a splendid chance, enabling Mr. Dickenson to bring in his Women's Suffrage Bill—only lost because the Speaker refused the closure and permitted it to be talked out—and now our good friend Mr. H. Y. Stanger, who was third in order in the ballot, will bring in a Bill substantially, it is believed, to the same effect as Mr. Dickenson's measure of last year. It simply removes sex disability in qualification for a vote, and provides that women shall have the right to vote on the same basis as men. A wise principle to adopt. The Bill has been put down for a second reading in the House of Commons on February 28th.

All the Suffrage Societies have been up and doing during the past week. Meeting after meeting has taken place, at which women rightfully demanded that there shall be no taxation without representation. This is slavery, and we all know it. The Liberal and Unionist parties have their Women's Suffrage Committees within the House, and a Sessional Committee has been appointed to press the claims of the question upon the attention of the Government. "In these meanwhiles," Cabinet Ministers who are found napping at 9.30 a.m. are likely to be somewhat rudely awakened from their slumbers.

It is an interesting fact that for some time past nearly two-thirds of the candidates for the certificates of the London Apothecaries' Society have been women, and some hundreds of women throughout the country hold positions as dispensers to hospitals, infirmaries, medical missions, and doctors. Among the public institutions which have appointed lady dispensers may be mentioned the Hampstead General Hospital, the Royal Free Hospital, the Heart Hospital, the Hereford Victoria Hospital, the Oxford Eye Hospital, and the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital, Nice. The Apothecaries' certificate is also recognised by the Local Government Board, and as the continent and the colonies have opened their doors to this phase of women's employment there is everywhere an indication of a continuously increasing demand for qualified dispensers. The tuition fee is usually ten guineas, the examination fee five guineas, and one text-book which costs 5s. 8d. Thus £16, after six months' training, will give any woman of average capacity a profession which will yield her an income from £50 to £130 a year, according to her own intelligence and initiative.

## Book of the Week.

### THOU FOOL.\*

One scarcely looks for serious work to the man who establishes his reputation as a humorous writer, and the author of books so farcically comical as "Wee Macgregor." True, humour and pathos are very closely allied, but an equal capacity for, together with the power of expressing both, is a rarity. Mr. Bell proves himself a veritable master in the two emotions, and his recent novel, "Thou Fool," is to be most heartily recommended. We have spoken of it as serious work, but the description must not be mistaken for "ponderous" or "heavy." Throughout the book there are gleams of dry humour of the type one is prone to label as proverbially Scottish, though it is not, mercifully, an adjunct entirely monopolised by those dwelling across the border.

Of course Mr. Bell's book deals with his own people, but they are not of the class whose sayings must be deciphered with the aid of a glossary: there are no stumbling-blocks in the enjoyment of "Thou Fool." Secondly, Mr. Bell thoroughly understands his own countrymen, and he does not make the patriotic mistake of blowing their trumpet with the brazenly triumphant note that is so singularly irritating to a next-door neighbour. These are both virtues worth consideration.

It must, of course, be presumed that the "Fool" is the hero of the book, but in truth Robert Barker is no hero in the real sense of the word. The story is practically the biography of a hard, astute business man who allows nothing to stand in the way of his progress from the position of assistant in a grocer's shop, in a small provincial town, to the head of a world famed provisioning company that swamps the smaller trades-people, and ruins countless numbers. Robert Barker is scrupulously honest; we find him doing amazingly straightforward business with astounding cruelty. The very first step he takes towards fortune, and his means of taking it are alike detestable; he sets up a rival shop in the same village as his kindly old master, with money wrung as his due from a sometime erring, but then broken-down father. It is upon the ruins of lesser businesses that he builds up his own gigantic fortune. Broken hearts and homes are nothing to him: "Some individuals are bound to suffer," he argues coolly. In course of time Barker contributes largely to charities, but when a poor old man he has ruined begs humbly for employment he meets with curt refusal. Maddened by a hopeless search for work, this man curses Barker: "D'ye mind what God said to the rich man?" cries the miserable creature, "Thou Fool!" Barker receives the shaft calmly, but long years after, at the very summit of his success the poison of it works: "Thou fool," he whispers to himself, "O, thou fool!"

The book has an extraordinary number of characters in it, all necessary, perfectly distinct and

\* By John Joy Bell. (Hodder and Stoughton.)

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