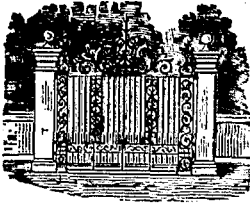


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



King Alfonso has signed a decree conferring the Grand Cross of the Order of Benevolence on Queen Elena for her services to the sufferers from the earthquake at Messina and Reggio.

Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands has expressed, through her Private Secretary, her deep appreciation of the proofs of rejoicing and loyalty which she is receiving from all parts of the country in regard to the approaching happy event. Her Majesty desires, however, that, if possible, a portion of the sums which would otherwise be spent on presents for herself may be devoted to public charity, of which there is at the present time special need.

The King of Sweden has received a Suffragist deputation. The *Times* Stockholm correspondent says that the ladies who waited upon his Majesty presented a petition from the Female Suffrage League. The King assured them of his personal sympathy with their aspirations.

The National Women's Social and Political Union have written to the Prime Minister asking him to receive a small deputation in order that a statement may be laid before him of the reasons why woman suffrage should be the subject of immediate Government action. His reply was a refusal.

The offices of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association are now established at 48, Dover Street, Piccadilly, at which address all the business of the Association will be conducted.

The Women's Labour League, now in its fourth year, and which is affiliated to the Labour Party, discussed some interesting business at the Annual Conference at Portsmouth. One resolution was in favour of the Nationalisation of Hospitals and Dispensaries, and asked that in all congested areas maternity wards should be provided, "in order that the best medical aid may be at the service of all classes of the community without the delays, uncertainty, and disorganisation inseparable from the present charitable system."

Mme. Adelina Patti (Baroness Cederström) has been decorated by the Society of the Red Cross of Russia with the medal of the Society to commemorate her services in singing at the concert given in aid of the wounded Russian officers and soldiers and their families during the Russo-Japanese war, which was held at the Salle de la Noblesse, St. Petersburg, in December, 1904.

Book of the Week.

SEPTIMUS.*

A book from the pen of Mr. Locke may always be safely welcomed. A writer with infinite and graceful power of expression himself, also great insight into the various motives which go to form character, he deals with the commonplace in such a manner as to rob it of all dullness. There is a want of conventionality in his treatment of quite ordinary mortals and events which at once invests them with keen interest.

In this book there are several minor personages all necessary to the working out of the story. They are, however, mere etchings, but every line tells, and one realises they are living pictures of people one might meet any day. The whole real interest of the story rests in the doings of four persons, and they are worked out with the carefulness of detail which makes one understand, and sympathise with, their every action.

The conversations are those of real people speaking in a natural manner, sometimes amusingly, always coherent, and not over-weighted with epigram, so often the stumbling block of the brilliant writer.

Septimus Dix is a most lovable character. Out of the most promising materials Mr. Locke has evolved a man who claims sympathy and admiration at every turn. No mere physical attraction is claimed for him: Small and slight, with pale-blue, dreamy eyes; hair which stands up all over his head like Struwelpeter's; undecided and inconsequent in all his actions, which is doubtless due to his being a genius, with a marvellous power of invention—such is Septimus Dix! His greatest possession is a heart of gold, innocent and guileless as a child. Involuntarily, and quite unconsciously, he becomes a kind of guardian angel to those brought intimately into contact with him.

His friend, Clement Sypher, says aptly of him: "Septimus seems to be gifted with an unconscious sense of right in an infinitely higher degree than any man I have ever known," and in this unquestionably lay his power.

Sypher himself is amusingly put before us. A big man, with a huge belief in himself and his "cure," a patent salve, which he has compounded as a universal healer, he announces himself on the strength of it to be "The Friend of Humanity."

It is at Monte-Carlo that he first meets Septimus and Lora Middlemist, a young, attractive widow. She has left her mother's quiet home at Minsmere, "a spot where faded lives are laid away in lavender," as someone quaintly put it, and set forth on her travels in quest of a mission in life. "I'm not a faded life," she declares, "and I'm not going to be put away in lavender. But she means to stand alone, and vows "by all the saints in her hierarchy that no man should ever again enter her life, her soul revolted against the unutterable sex." So this beautiful and quite irrational young woman wanders far and wide in search of her great mission, and after all finds it in Nunsmere, as the helpmate of the big man, Clem Sypher. In his

*By William J. Locke. (John Murray.)

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