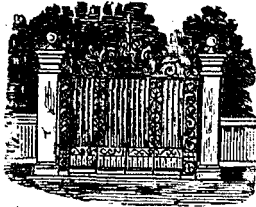


Outside the Gates.

WOMEN.



Speaking at Southampton Mr. Haldane said he ventured to conjecture that the most powerful recruiting agency were the ladies. If they cared to put their hearts and souls into the cause of national defence, he had little doubt but that the best of our young men would be forthcoming and the shortage made up.

Lord Robert Cecil was the chief speaker at a meeting of the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association, held at the Curzon Hotel, W. Lord Robert said one of the strongest tendencies with which the supporters of the movement had to cope was the essential conservatism of human nature. But he thought that in this case the feeling was exaggerated because the amount of change which was proposed was also exaggerated. There was no reason to suppose that giving the Parliamentary vote to women would make any fundamental alteration in our institutions. Substantially men and women were intellectually and morally on the same plane. To give women the vote was not likely, on the face of it, to produce any violent change, and that was precisely the result of our experience on the subject. The evidence was overwhelming that it had been of advantage in every country where it had been tried. . . . No one could doubt that women had the deepest possible interest in, and had very important means of, information concerning all those social questions which necessarily bulked so largely in the political life of the present day, and it was little short of insanity not to ask and receive assistance at first hand from those members of the community who had necessarily the best information. Women had a different point of view from men, and that point of view could not be properly represented by men.

Some sensible resolutions were passed at the annual meeting of the Council of the Women's Local Government Society, held at Caxton Hall, and presided over by Lady Strachey. The Council decided on means for promoting the participation of women as administrators in the case of the mentally defective, and expressed solicitude as to fresh legislation and their sense of the need for a woman on the Lunacy Commission. Another resolution dealt with the great need in the public interest that all women appointed for the work of "health visiting" should have the qualification and status of sanitary inspectors, as well as suitable nursing qualifications. The meeting considered how best to promote the passing into law of the Local Government Qualification Bill, which provides that a residential qualification shall suffice for a candidate for a county or a town council—a Bill which, while applying to all persons, is especially needed to facilitate the candidature of married women.

The French Academy of Science has refused to elect the discoverer of radium, Mme. Curie, because she is a woman! And now the question of the creation of a sixth branch of the Institute of France—namely, an Academy of Women is on the tapis. We hope distinguished Frenchwomen will decline to support any such silly subterfuge. All or nothing should be the claim of transcendent genius.

The circumstances which have been published recently as to risks run by white women in South Africa of assault and rape by black men will not predispose Englishwomen to emigrate to that Dominion, where Lady Gladstone recently opened at Johannesburg a new women's hostel built by the South African Colonisation Society.

What is known as "the Umtali case," in connection with which Lord Gladstone's action—in commuting the death sentence on a black man, found guilty of the rape of a white woman, to penal servitude for life—has occasioned such hot resentment in South Africa, proves that Englishwomen before proceeding there should realise that the circumstances of life in that country are very different to those at home.

The terrible facts of the case are briefly, that a powerfully-built native, formerly in the employ of a white family, entered the bedroom of a white married woman in the absence of her husband, she being asleep at the time, and assaulted her after a prolonged struggle, returning later to find the bedroom door barricaded. The death sentence commended itself as an act of elemental justice, for so horrible a crime, and a mass meeting at Buluwayo followed the reprieve of this criminal, when a resolution was passed unanimously protesting against his Excellency's interference with the law, responsible residents hinting that unless the culprit were hanged in all such cases lynching might be resorted to.

Lord Gladstone's reply to the adverse comments is that there is a distinct doubt as to whether rape had actually been committed, that the native was intoxicated, and that grave as the offence of assault with intent is, it is secondary to rape, just as attempted murder is secondary to murder! While legal points are disputed let white women take the lesson to heart and give a wide berth to a country where such crimes are not summarily dealt with. The Government are primarily to blame for enfranchising black men under the new South African Constitution, whilst leaving white women legally and therefore physically at their mercy.

A well-known Colonist in Rhodesia said to a representative of the Press Association, "I think that Lord Gladstone's action will have a very bad effect, as the South African law, which empowers sentence of death in such cases, is the only effective deterrent against such outrages. The law has been made by men who have seriously weighed the responsibility, and they would not have passed it unanimously if they had not felt it to be a real necessity to safeguard the white womenfolk of the country."

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