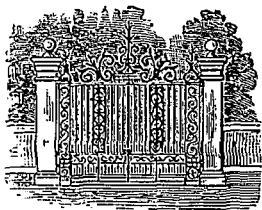


— Outside the Gates. —

WOMEN'S CLUBS.



ONCE upon a time, as the fairy stories always begin—and not so long a time either—Clubs, with all their delights and privileges, existed for man alone. The husbands, the brothers, and the uncles, were wont to say, in somewhat lordly fashion, “Never mind, little woman, being left alone this evening; I *must* go to the Club.” And this used to happen on a good many evenings, and the “little woman” would sit at home and sew her seams, and eat a meagre meal—for where was the use of a dinner when the “lord of creation,” for whom all things were made, was not there to eat it. And, perhaps, the “little woman,” who smiled prettily but faintly at the prospect of another dull evening, when there were so many of them, would think that perhaps there was some mysterious obligation which caused her husband so often to martyr himself on the altars of “the Club.” And then it was so nice to be told on his return, that the Club was a “beastly bore,” and that he would so much have preferred a quiet evening at home. But then, as he said, of course he must do as other fellows did, if he wanted to get on in business.

The “little person” has expanded into the “new woman,” and the delights of Clubland are now thrown open to her. And she need no longer take a “scrappy” meal in solitude when her male relatives have gone to Freemason functions and City dinners. She can take her hansom and dine at the Pioneer, where she will find congenial friendship and advanced thought. Or if she is of more moderate tastes, she hies her to the Somerville, where she can get a meal well suited to slender means, and where the rest of the evening may be spent listening to, or taking part in, some discussion for the interest and amusement of the members.

Women's Clubs differ essentially from men's, inasmuch as they are distinctly sociable. Men frequently describe their Clubs as places where they can “jam their hats on their heads, read a paper, and be as grumpy as they please; and where they can get a dinner without the beastly bore of being talked to.”

Women, on the contrary, regard a Club as common ground on which they may meet their fellow women—and fellow men, for the matter of that, as the stronger sex are admitted to most of the Women's Clubs; at least, on stated occasions and at weekly “At-homes.”

At one very notable and advanced Club, the members are enjoined to be “Clubable” and friendly with one another, and to relegate to that past to which it belongs, the suspicion that every stranger is a possible enemy.

The necessity for Women's Clubs has arisen from the development of women's work. The union of strength can best be reached by the welding of women's needs into a common interest, and the Sisterhood of Woman can be attained only by linking every chain of varied professions and callings into one strong bond. American women have done far

more than English women in this direction. Amongst the working-women of New York there are some twenty-four clubs, self-governed, co-operative, and self-supporting. They have club-rooms and libraries, classes in literature, etc., instruction and practice in physical exercises, and opportunities for helpful social intercourse.

It is to be hoped that the Nurses of the R.B.N.A. will unite to make their new Club a centre for all that is most helpful and progressive for woman as well as for Nurse. This can only be accomplished by the members themselves. It is impossible for any President or Committee to make a Club. They can start it and put it on the road that leads to success; but the goal can be reached solely by the individual interest of the members. It is for them to decide what their Club shall be; and what use they will make of the advantage that has been gained for them after many years of persistent, patient, hard work, and struggle.

Science Notes.

THE PRESERVATION OF EPPING FOREST

MANY of our London readers, especially those located in the East End, are, no doubt, familiar with the beautiful walks and drives to be found in Epping Forest, and will be glad to know that the action of its conservators has been approved by a Special Committee, appointed by the Corporation of London to consider the question. About a year ago there began to be great popular indignation at the extensive clearing and felling of trees, which was carried on in various parts of the forest, and the public was quite right to be jealous of its recreation ground; but now it has been assured by those qualified to judge, that what is being done is for the preservation and future improvement of the forest.

There are, perhaps, those who think the preservation of the forest would be further served by the abolition of the numerous excursions of children and adults, and of the “Retreats” that minister to their bodily wants. When standing, on a blazing hot day, almost choked with dust raised by many feet, and almost deafened by the braying of a “musical” instrument belonging to a steam-round-about, and the shouts of the riders on wooden horses and in swinging boats, perhaps one may be excused for wishing, for a moment, that houses which can accommodate 1,700 or 2,000 people to tea on one afternoon should not be allowed. It is only for a moment, however, for then the thought occurs: What would be the use of the forest ten times more beautiful if it were only for the few and not the many? Besides, the foregoing is only one aspect of the forest, or rather of its outskirts. If we leave the tea and the swings and the “music” behind, and we make our way (first over ground perfectly bare of grass) for a comparatively short distance, not beyond the powers of the average child or East End adult (and it is remarkable what bad walkers the latter are), we arrive at great masses of bracken fern, heather, and delicate perfumed honey-suckle. How many bunches of these find their way to London every night throughout the summer, clasped in hot and grimy little hands, and yet always there are some left for the next party.

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