**Sarah Grand (1854-1943)**

**Place:** Lived in Tonbridge Wells 1898-1920.

Michelle, what images do you think? Spoiled for choice…

Sarah Grand (Frances Clarke) was born in County Down, Ireland in 1854. Like other intelligent women of her generation she was denied an education comparable to her brothers’, a theme that influences her depiction of variously ignorant and self-taught female characters in her major fiction. She made a disastrous early marriage in 1870 to a much older man, surgeon David Chambers McFall. By 1888 the marriage had broken down in 1888, Grand moved to London and began her literary career. Nonetheless McFall’s presence pervades the 1890s trilogy \_*Ideala\_* (1888), \_*The Heavenly Twins\_* (1893) and \_*The Beth Book\_* (1897). A vocal opponent of the Contagious Diseases Acts, Grand transparently draws on her husband’s work at the notorious lock hospitals as well as his support of vivisection, in her portrayal of Dan McClure, the man Beth is coerced into marrying as a young woman. As Beth Sutton-Ramspeck bluntly puts it, ‘her novels portray some of the most unpleasant households in literary history’.[[1]](#footnote-1) One of the most controversial novels of its time, \_*The Heavenly Twins\_* was published in 1893 and includes an emotive treatment of syphilitic death, attributed to the prevalent belief that young women should remain ‘innocent’ of sexual issues before marriage. Grand is also widely credited with coining the term ‘the New Woman’ in 1894.

But like Beth McClure, Sarah Grand later transferred her energies from writing to campaigning – her Boots ‘Books I Would Like to Read’ list includes precisely three entries. In 1898 she moved to Tonbridge Wells, where she became President of the local branches of the National Council of Women and the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies. In 1915 she also appears in connection with a proposed. Seconding a vote of thanks, Grand confessed that she had come to the meeting with a ‘neutral’ mind, but having heard the arguments – including the benefits of healthy exercise and the fear that without an organised body, over enthusiastic women ‘should be going about ready to shoot at any moment’ – she thought the movement ‘admirable’.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Grand moved to Bath in 1920, serving as Lady Mayoress from 1922 to 1929. She died in Wiltshire in 1943.

Bibliography

'Low-Heeled Shoes And No Cosmetics'. [Tonbridge Wells Advertiser, 13 March 1915]. Press Cuttings: Women's Volunteer Reserve. Supplementary Material. SUPP. 38/22. Microfilm Reel #95. Imperial War Museum . Gale Document NumberGALE|SC5108181054.

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Sutton-Ramspeck, Beth. \_*Raising the Dust: The Literary Housekeeping of Mary Ward, Sarah Grand, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman\_.* Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004.

1. Sutton-Rampseck 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 'Low-Heeled Shoes And No Cosmetics'. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)