

admirable half-timbered work still left in Surrey, "Old Tangle Manor," for instance, near Chilworth, Guildford. We forget whether Mrs. Allingham has ever painted this.

We will now for a moment turn to another matter. One of the most interesting of the pictures painted by women for the forthcoming Spring Exhibition is Mrs. Lea Merritt's picture, *The Watchers by the Straight Gate*. It represents the angels kneeling on either side of the straight gate, through which we see the world-worn face of the woman who is striving to enter therein. The whole picture is beautiful in Italian-like colours; the distant sky is tender and faint, giving strength to the warm draperies of the boy angels.

A Book of the Week.

"OUR MANIFOLD NATURE."*

A NEW book by the authoress of "The Heavenly Twins," that awakening bomb-shell that aroused so much spirited controversy a year ago, must needs be a matter of intelligent curiosity to most readers. "The Heavenly Twins" was a book that made many people get upon the edge of their temper, and few men or women seemed able to discuss the questions that it raised, with calmness or discretion. It has been a subject of regret to myself that I have never had the pleasure of reviewing the book in these pages, our editor perhaps wisely deciding that before last October, when I began writing about 'Books of the Week,' in the NURSING RECORD, "The Heavenly Twins" had become, not 'The Book of the Week,' but 'A Book of the Year,' and that, therefore, it was too late to write about it at all. However, I cannot refrain from stating here that it is my personal belief, that however people may differ as to the artistic and literary value of her writings, few women who have read them with any care will fail to acknowledge that their author is a writer with a great love and comprehension of her own sex, and a healthy and ardent desire to try and make this world a little better and happier place for her sisters to live in.

"The Yellow Leaf" is the name of the first story, which tells the history of three girls of widely differing characters and up-bringsings. 'Adelesa' is a most engagingly frank young person, and reminds the reader not a little of Angelica, the feminine half of what so many people have called the "Unsupportable Twins." Adelesa owns a brindle bulldog, which she takes to stay with her aunt, Lady Marsh, much to that lady's disgust. Evangeline, her daughter, is a conventionally brought up, dressed in white tulle, young girl, whose ambition is to be "a womanly woman." The girl who writes the story, whose name I have never been able to discover, Evangeline and Adelesa, all take part in a series of conversations, rides, and adventures that reveal their very diverse individualities, and Evangeline ends by stealing Adelesa's lover. That

is the end of the first part of the tale. In the second part all these women meet again at the same house, and all of them are married—Adelesa has become a duchess, and Evangeline a wreck. . . . The end of the story is tragic, and jars just a little after the bright, clever comedy of the earlier part of the tale; however, Sarah Grand, in her preface, assures us that "There is no fiction whatever in Evangeline's story; it began, continued, and ended exactly as described."

Adelesa says, at the end of the story, when she and the other woman, whose name is never revealed, are talking over their past experiences together:—

"Don't you appreciate things better now than you did?—at the moment, I mean, when one is young, one is never so satisfied. One looks back and lives those delights over again; but, at the time, we did not understand, and so lost the full flavour. Later, one has realised how precious it is just to be alive; and then, I think, it is that one begins to live."

"Eugenia" is the story of a modern maiden and a man amazed, for the modern maiden had read and thought, and, though slightly amused and interested at first, would have nothing to say to Lord Birkhampton, who was an amended, patched-up man for fear he should give way again in weak places. She says:—

"Now do you really think it is romantic to marry a man who has been sedulously deteriorating mentally, morally, and physically, in consequence of his weak-minded self-indulgence from his earliest youth?—a man who requires to be propped up on alcohol as soon as he gets out of bed in the morning, and soothed with sedative tobacco for the rest of the day? No! No! I will have the best of everything, and *my* man's *physique* must be self-supporting. . . . it was always the man who brought misfortune into the family; or rather, I think it would be fairer to say that the women brought it upon themselves by their want of discrimination in the choice of man."

So Eugenia, who, by-the-way, is really a charming, brave, lovely girl, though so wide awake, will have none of the good-looking, easy-mannered *roué*, but chooses her future husband with just that discrimination that her ancestresses lacked, with the happy result that she removes the curse which, for years past, has hung over the heads of all the heirs (male) of the previous generations of her family.

"Ah-Man" is a tale of a Chinese servant; and Sarah Grand's Chinese experiences, where she lived some of the early years of her existence, make a life-like back-ground to the tale.

The last three stories deal with our manifold nature as shown in various classes in English life.

All the stories have appeared before in Magazines; but the first two, "A Yellow Leaf" and "Eugenia," are the most interesting of the collection. They are well and pleasantly written, and, moreover, are suggestive as well as instructive reading. I suspect, however, that Sarah Grand will ever find her most enthusiastic admirers among those of her own sex, who will appreciate her brave endeavours to secure "a Higher Education for Men"; and that the average male reader will fail to relish the strong satire of some of her biting phrases, for it is to be observed that few, very few, men appreciate at their proper value the Spartan Ethics of the "Heavenly Twins."

A. M. G.

* "Our Manifold Nature." By Sarah Grand. 6s. Heinemann.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)