

A Book of the Week.

"UNINITIATED."*

MISS FRY has contributed a very suggestive little book on the ethics of the nursery. It will probably be more valuable for what it forces its adult readers to think and to remember for themselves, than for what the authoress actually relates of her own experiences in her nursery days. The isolation of childhood and the almost impossibility of a child's understanding the decrees of its elders are pathetically dwelt upon, for "there is never anyone to explain anything to children, or any way (known to them) of asking" . . . so that "they only feel in a blind kind of way that if 'grown-ups' hold the reins of power in such an absolute and over-bearing manner there is little help to be got from them," and "Each child lives alone, walled about with its own ignorance, and shut out mysteriously from the grown-up world of knowledge." If it was not for the intuition of mothers and for the vitality of children's interest in their work and play, this isolation would indeed be hard for them to bear, but fortunately, children are possessed of a marvellous recuperative power and endless hope and belief in the future, which practically saves them from a great deal of the suffering that their weary-hearted elders are forced to endure. New experiences have always a great charm for children—even new kinds of punishment have a certain attraction, and new ways of being naughty are exceedingly beguiling to healthy-minded little boys.

All creation is struggling for more light, and human nature of all ages aspires and does not achieve, questions and hears no reply; the only difference is that childhood has the enormous assistance of illusions, and these are an immense help to existence, for even older people have found during times of acute trial that what George Meredith has called "a strong-willed delusion" is an aid to endeavour. I have drifted away from Miss Fry's little book, but my object was to point out that though she speaks of the sorrows and troubles of the "uninitiated child" with subtlety and pathos, she does not dwell enough upon the immense compensations possessed by average healthy-minded young people. Punishment is always difficult for children to understand, and when "Nurse" shut the little autobiographer up in the nursery, and told her that God was always angry with disobedient children, she thought that—"Of course *He* was always on Nurse's side." The subsequent meditations that the little prisoner suffered from, in her lonely night nursery are very graphically described; they are too long to quote here, but they are well worth reading, only I contend that it is not merely children who suffer from this kind of purposeless striving to comprehend the decrees of Providence and the punishments of life. "Grown-ups," I venture to think, suffer quite as acutely at times, and comfort is sent to them in the same mysterious and indescribable manner.

The anecdote about the chestnuts is a far better instance of elder people's misunderstanding of children's little schemes, and the manner in which poor little Tib is punished for telling a supposed falsehood, is, I think, absolutely true to life. Almost all of us can remember in our infancy being chastised by reason of some equally dense miscomprehension on the part of our elders.

In a chapter called the "Powers of Darkness" Miss Fry describes with considerable power her own fears and dreads. But I do not agree with her when she says that "the dark" has an overmastering fear for children, however carefully the conversation of their mothers and nurses has been weeded. I believe that if healthy children are afraid of darkness it is entirely the fault of their parents and nursery guardians. If the idea of God as a terrible law-giver is for ever held before their eyes, and if the devil and hell fire are graphically dwelt upon, little wonder that imaginative boys and girls are nearly frightened to death when they are left alone in the dark. I don't think I know any sadder proof of the inadequacy of a child's religious teaching than the story of the poor, wretched, little shivering mite who had so poor and low a conception of its Father in Heaven that it said to its nurse "Oh! do please take God away and leave the candle." But independently of religious fears and more natural dreads of burglars and fire, young children need never be afraid in the dark, and, what is more, much experience teaches, that they never are afraid of the dark by themselves, that is, if ideas are not put into their heads by their elders.

The story of the death of Samson the Tortoise is almost the best thing in this tiny volume, and as we read of the incidents connected with his untimely end, we feel with Tib, that we should be so glad to know if the croquet ball did kill the animal or if he was ailing before the accident?

The book will interest women more than men, but I think it may be especially recommended to the notice of Nurses who so often have the care of sick children, for it may very possibly help them to comprehend some of the strange vagaries of mind and upside downness of reasoning that are peculiar to children. But more especially I venture to think of *girl* children, for I don't think *boys* would feel and suffer as little Tib did, according to the records of her published by Miss Fry.

A. M. G.

 Review.

"DISSECTIONS Illustrated" (Whittaker & Co. In four parts, price 10s. each). We have already commented upon the first two parts of this valuable book, which is rightly termed a graphic handbook for students of human anatomy. It is prepared by Mr. Gordon Brodie, with plates drawn and lithographed by Mr. Percy Highley, and is published by Messrs. Whittaker & Co., of London and New York. Part III. comprises the head, neck and thorax, with twenty coloured plates and eight diagrams, and Part IV. describes the abdomen, with sixteen coloured plates and thirteen diagrams. It would be difficult to praise this work too highly, because, after all, the best method of learning anatomy is by actual inspection of the dissected body, and the beautiful plates and diagrams presented by the author are the best substitute which most Nurses will be able to obtain. The four parts can be obtained complete in one volume, and in our opinion no hospital library should be considered complete unless it contains at least one copy of this valuable work.

* "Uninitiated," by Isabel Fry. (Osgood, McIlvaine & Co., 1895.)

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