

Books of the Week.

TWO SIXPENNY NOVELS.*

MR. UNWIN is publishing, under the title of "Little Novels," a series of original short stories at the price of sixpence in paper covers, and one shilling in cloth. I believe that seven of these are ready, and a dozen more are in preparation. These little novels are admirably produced and are printed in attractive black type. Their size is a little larger than the famous Pseudonym issued by the same firm, the paper covers are of a very novel blue shade and are very pleasing. I am always glad to be able to tell Nurses about cheap books, knowing how often they have to nurse infectious cases, and indeed it is always well to know about new books, the price of which is so moderate that they can be read on a journey, knocked about in a nursery, or burnt without a pang at the end of a fever case. The first novel is entitled "No Place for Repentance," and it is one of the truest, and at the same time the most pathetic that has appeared of late years. Miss or Mrs. Ellen Pinsent was the authoress of a book which attracted much attention some time ago, called "Jenny's Case." That book was full of the most human sympathy with the faults and failures of poor girls in this unhappy world, but this little novel is even more pathetic in its discriminating comprehension of the awful trials of an inherited and ineradicable taste for drink.

For the first part, the story is concerned with the temptation of one Bell, whose distracted and miserable wife was in the habit of seeing him come home every Saturday night, drunk with the week's wages. This unfortunate man is going down the drunkard's hill as fast as ever he can, when one day a new curate comes to the parish who quickly gains a powerful influence over Bell, and who persuades him with eloquent words to give up the terrible habit. There is a strong scene where Harold Champion, the enthusiastic curate, follows Bell into the public-house and wrestles with him, just as he is about to taste a glass of gin, and succeeds in pouring the fiery liquid on the ground. Mr. Champion mingles prayers and reproaches to induce the tempted Bell to leave the public-house to which Bell, maddened with the scent of the spirit, replies: "I'm going straight back for drink when I have settled with yer, so yer may just make up yer mind to that. I doant say nowt about your interferin', yer mean well—but yer doant know what a man suffers, yer doant. Nobody does who ain't been through it. I tell yer this 'ere craavin' is stronger than a man, he can't resist it, so now just gi' me your word as yer'll let me be, an' we'll part good friends."

Then in his desire to save this poor lost soul Herbert Champion was valiant, and in an agony of self-abasement, confessed that the temptation was stronger for him than for Bell, and cried out, "I can't fight any more, it's too strong for you, it's too strong for me." This scene is rather harrowing in its simplicity, for there are no superfluous words to mar its tragedy, and no moralising—the tale convinces by its truth to fallen and sinful human nature.

* "No Place for Repentance," by Ellen Pinsent. 6d. (Fisher Unwin, 1896).

"The World is Round," by Louisa Mack. 6d. (Fisher Unwin 1896).

The end of the story is equally forcible and equally sad. Bell is reclaimed by the prayers and the vigorous persuasions of the curate, who alas! succumbed himself to the terrible inherited craving for drink. He lost everything in life—his curacy, the love of his sweet girl friend, and last, but worst of all, he lost his own self-respect. Beatrice, the girl whom he loved, was broken-hearted, and one afternoon Bell, noticing and comprehending the source of her grief, speaks to her, and tells her how Mr. Champion saved him from the same demon which had subsequently conquered himself. After summing up the curate's many good qualities, Bell nevertheless shook his head when Beatrice tearfully inquired if there was any chance for the poor self-cast-away, and replied: "Noa, I doubt not. I reckon he ain't got the strength," and the story finishes with these pathetic words spoken in Bell's own native dialect.

"He saaved oothers, Himself he cannot saave." It will be easy to judge from this short synopsis how powerful is this tale of temptation and tragedy. I hope it will have the wide success that it deserves, and that many a hard-judging Christian worker will read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest its powerful lessons; but how provoking it is that books so seldom get into the hands of the people for whom they are written. This little volume is a case in point. Though it would be of the greatest value for a parish worker among the poor to read it, yet one could easily conceive that if it fell into the hands of a man who was wrestling but feebly with his drink demon, it would be very bad for him to read about sympathy being shown to a man who had not strength enough by prayer, striving and fasting, to overcome this unwholesome craving.

I was so interested in the perusal of this little book, and so much impressed with the study of characters in its pages, that I have left myself but little space to speak of the second volume of this interesting series. "The World is Round" is not so impressive a study. It relates the story of how a wily journalist beguiled a pretty, but silly young writing woman into the delusion that she had a genius for scribbling stories. These same stories this infatuated journalist re-wrote himself, and so got them to be accepted of the publishers. In the end he has to confess the fraud he has practised upon her. The final reconciliation between them is rather effectively described. It is to be hoped that the level excellence of these little novels will be maintained, and that Mr. Unwin will not be tempted to publish too many, but select the MS. with the same discrimination and care that has made his Pseudonym and Autonym Series so popular with the reading public.

A. M. G.

The Nursing Conference.

As we go to press, the Nursing Conference is being held. We hope to give a full account of it next week, and the Papers will be published as we can spare space for them.

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