

A Book of the Week.**"THE CARISSIMA."***

LUCAS MALET (*alias* Mrs. Harison, daughter of Charles Kingsley) had designed to call this novel "The Power of the Dog." Unfortunately, some other novelist published a book a few months ago under that same title. This was a great pity, because a title has a great deal to do with the success of a story—and that particular title was peculiarly appropriate to this story—"Save my soul from the lions, and my darling from the power of the dog."

"The Carissima" is nearly as bad a title for this novel as could have been found; it gives the idea of a tender love idyl, but, truth to tell, the story is nearly (if not quite), the most gruesome that ever was penned by the hand of an artist, for an artist Lucas Malet undoubtedly is, and her power of restraint and her genius for expression contributes to make the perusal of "The Carissima" anything but a pleasing task. A timid reader would dread keeping the book on his or her bedroom shelves, and even a very healthy-minded person would prefer reading the book before, in preference to after dinner—for Leversedge was haunted by "The Thing Too Much"; he had seen it, and the horror of it was burnt into his brain, so that he became partially insane, and was haunted by the green eyes and ghostly presence of a dog, whom he had found (and tried in vain to kill) in a starved camp, having kept itself alive on—but the tale is too long for quotation, and is too terrible to be re-told by any writer who is not possessed of the skill and dexterity of Lucas Malet herself.

"The Carissima" is the best character study in this clever, but exceedingly disagreeable book. Her innate selfishness, slightly plebeian manner, and entirely plebeian mind, are powerfully and remorselessly portrayed. Her argument when she is first told of her lovers' hallucination is eminently characteristic. She says to Hammond, the friend and confidant of her lover:—

"No, it has no terror for me. . . . If this curse is laid upon him, it is clearly my office to share it, to shield him, to sustain him in these dark seasons and places of his existence. And so far from repulsing, it attracts me. It supplies the touch of mystery which was lacking. It dignifies what was otherwise commonplace. It wraps us—him and me—about with a peculiar atmosphere." . . .
"If Constantine knew how to use it," she continued, "it might be tremendous and splendid. . . . Ah! what a superb opportunity some men would find in this! To have your legend thus ready to hand, and, if properly treated, such a legend! You might dominate society."

Yet after uttering the above subtlespeech the Circe-like Carissima tries to make Leversedge's devoted champion fall in love with her, that she might be furnished with a picturesque, and forgiveable reason for breaking off her engagement with his friend.

She is beautiful and most beguiling, but, though battered and bruised, Hammond remains staunch, and in the end she has to resort to a more wicked method, by means of which she remains the heiress of Leversedge's fortune, but free from him and his appalling dog for ever. What that method was we must leave the curious to discover for themselves.

* "The Carissima: a Modern Grotesque," by Lucas Malet. 6s. (Methuen & Co., 1896.)

The Carissima was possessed of a terrible papa, who must have been a worse incubus to her than the phantom dog to her lover. Mr. Perry is a wearisome old man, and his very common-place conversation is as dull to read as he would have been himself to hear in the flesh. The Perry père and mère are not a success from a literary point of view; they are vulgar without being funny, which many people succeed in being in the world, and they are not more amusing in the pages of a book than they would be in life. The craft of the story lies in the characters of Leversedge, his betrothed wife, the Carissima, and last, but not least, in the friend Hammond, who relates the terrible tale in his own person, and who reveals, apparently unconsciously, his own character and the power and subtlety of the temptation, which a pair of shoes alone helps him to ultimately resist. The story is never amusing or laughable when it is intended to be terrible, a somewhat rare achievement in a modern novel!

A. M. G.

Bookland.**WHAT TO READ.**

"Fridtjof Nansen, 1861-1893," by W. C. Brogger and Nordahl Rolfsen. Translated by William Archer. (Messrs. C. Longman & Co.)

"Alone in China," by Julian Ralph.

"Diary of a Citizen of Paris during 'The Terror,'" by Edmond Bire. Translated by John de Villiers.

"Among the Untrodden Ways," by Miss Francis.

"The Oriel Window," by Mrs. Molesworth.

"One of God's Dilemmas," by Allan Upward. (Heinemann.)

"Timbuctoo the Mysterious," by Felix Dubois.

"Undercurrents of the Second Empire," by Albert D. Vandam, Author of "An Englishman in Paris."

Coming Events.

November 23rd.—Queen's Hall, 8 p.m. Mr. Bancroft will read an arrangement of the "Christmas Carol," by Charles Dickens, in aid of the Cancer Wards of the Middlesex Hospital.

"Sewerage and Sewage Disposal," by Prof. Henry Robinson, M.Inst.C.E. Lecture at the Sanitary Institute, Margaret Street, W. 8 p.m.

November 24th.—Invalid Cookery at the Royal British Nurses' Association. Fourth lesson: Veal and Sago Broth, Quenelles, Fried Sole, Wine Jelly, Scones, Scrambled Eggs, Gruel.

Lecture by Dr. Stephen Mackenzie at the Toynbee Nursing Guild, Toynbee Hall, at 8 p.m., on "What Doctors expect of Nurses." Sir Vincent Barrington in the chair.

November 25th.—Inspection and Demonstration at L.C.C. Common Lodging House, Parker Street, Drury Lane, at 3 p.m. (number limited), conducted by Mr. Frank Ruddle, of the Estates and Valuation Department of the London County Council.

November 25th and 26th.—Sale of Needlework at the Cheyne Hospital, Cheyne Walk, in aid of the Laurence Street Annexe Fund. Open each day at 2 p.m.

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