

## A Book of the Week.

BRASS.\*

We, of the NURSING RECORD, always like to be in the van when welcoming a new author of the feminine gender, and to judge by this book, Miss Nellie Blissett has a future before her. "Brass" is a great advance upon "The Concert Director."

And what makes it really something of an achievement is that the story has neither hero nor heroine, and is on that account decidedly unsympathetic; and notwithstanding this enormous drawback, it interests us.

The plot is laid on lines which, a few years back, were exploited to the point of utter weariness.

We are introduced to Miss Lulu Gadden-Smith, a vulgar edition of Dodo, or a thousand other designing, heartless women. We are also introduced to some of the young men who were more or less engaged to Lulu; and we see some of her adroit treatment of them. When we come across Lord Bournemouth, the Apostle of Poverty, who has laid aside his wealth in order to live in the East End, and preach at street corners, we see at once that he is fore-doomed to the rôle of the disillusioned husband.

The way in which the two are brought together shows very strongly the author's strength and also her weakness. In the first scene, Gregory, Lord Bournemouth, is shown as a strong, young saint, confounding, by the very depth of his convictions, his worldly and successful relation, the Roman Cardinal, Christian Uberto.

But Miss Blissett has neither the capacity nor the desire to retain Gregory in this rôle. His convictions seem to take their rise in that flabby soil, philanthropy without religion; and we are not surprised that all should go by the board when a skilful flirt tackles his invertebrate lordship. When the sun arises, the scorching sun of discipline and hard work, the newly-sprung love of man withers in his heart, because it lacks moisture; and gives place to the entirely commonplace love of woman.

"Gregory Hubert (Lord Bournemouth) felt, as he had never felt before, that his eccentricities had put him on a pedestal of ridicule, and that he was regarded in the light of a variety entertainment. When you are devoting your life to your fellow men, it is not pleasant to feel that you are making yourself an object of public amusement; and yet this was exactly what Gregory felt. He felt suddenly alone in the midst of an unsympathetic world—alone, with the solitude, not of a martyr, but of a performing bear. Martyrdom, as we all know, has dignity; the performing bear has, unhappily, none. . . . He told himself that he had been working too hard—that he required a little social recreation. All work and no play was merely a form of mental suicide. He must see someone outside the Brotherhood of Poverty."

And it is while his mind is in this condition, empty, swept and garnished, that he encounters Lulu, and thinks, seeing her in contrast, not with the women of his own class, but with the daily hideousness of his street-corner life—that he has found a woman to sympathize with him.

Nothing happens, except exactly what anyone would expect to happen, all through the book. The talent is in the character studies. Bellingier, the modern novelist, without convictions or enthusiasms,

\* By Nellie K. Blissett. Hutchinson and Co.

and knowing that he will do nothing great, because he is a mere bundle of negatives—yet conscious that his Eminence the Cardinal, in his schemes against Gregory and his wife, has descended to depths which he, Bellingier, would not stoop to. And the Cardinal himself, seized with a twinge of remorse when his veiled hints have borne their poisonous fruit—utterly oblivious of anything so trivial as a moral scruple when he suddenly learns that the height of his worldly ambition is satisfied—these are very good.

Miss Blissett's work is full of immaturities; it is also full of promise. The girl who could write the lines quoted above, is an observer of life; and when she is a woman, she will probably arrive—if she steers clear of affectations. G. M. R.

## Coming Events.

*April 29th.*—Annual Dinner of the French Hospital and Dispensary, Hotel Cecil. The Lord Mayor will attend.

*May 1st.*—Prince of Wales presides over dinner at Hôtel Métropole in aid of the London Lifeboat Saturday Fund.

*May 2nd.*—The Duke of Cambridge presides at the Annual Dinner of the Sanitary Institute, Whitehall Rooms.

*May 3rd.*—Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Albany opens a Grand Bazaar at the Portman Rooms, Baker Street, in aid of the Great Northern Central Hospital.

Viscount Peel presides at the Annual Dinner in aid of the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, at the Hotel Cecil, 7.30.

The Bishop of London presides at the King's College Hospital Festival Dinner, Hotel Cecil.

*May 5th.*—Meeting at 125, Queen's Gate, S.W., by kind invitation of Mrs. Charles Hancock. The Countess of Aberdeen, and other speakers, will explain the objects of the International Congress of Women, 4.

*May 10th and 11th.*—London Homœopathic Hospital, Great Ormond Street, Bloomsbury. Sale of Work. Proceeds for providing necessities for the Children's Ward, and to increase the Annual Samaritan Fund for help to patients leaving the wards.

*May 11th.*—Chelsea Hospital for Women—Annual Meeting of Governors, Lord Glenesk presiding, 3.

## WHAT TO READ.

"Songs of Life and Love." By Washington Van Dusen.

"Essays in Psychical Research." By Miss X. (A. Goodrich Freer).

"Nelson's Friendships." By Mrs. Hilda Gamlin.

"A Yankee Boy's Success." Being an Account of How an American Lad Worked his Way Through Europe. By Harry Steele Morrison.

"Madame Izan." By Mrs. Campbell Praed.

"Anne Mauleverer." A Novel. By Mrs. Mannington Caffyn.

"The Old Dominion." By Mary Johnston.

"The Puritans." By Arlo Bates.

"The Hermits of Gray's Inn." By G. B. Burgin.

"The Fowler." By Beatrice Harraden.

"Garden of Swords." By Max Pemberton.

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