

A Book of the Week.

"THE FARRINGDONS."*

It is no light praise to say that this book is almost as witty as its predecessors by the same hand. Its wit is also precisely of the same calibre as that of "Isabel Carnaby" and "A Double Thread." That is to say, it is a shower of fireworks, brilliant and dazzling, soaring up and leaving no trace behind. After a long dialogue between the hero and heroine, one knows no more of either than one did before reading it, neither is the action of the story by any means more advanced, but this is a drawback which will trouble few readers. Neither will the almost total absence of plot; for these faults are largely counter-balanced by that unflagging flow of humour which is so excellent a thing in woman, and which Miss Fowler certainly possesses to a greater degree than any living writer of her sex.

Elizabeth Farringdon is a charming heroine; one may doubt whether she could have been attracted even for a moment by so barren a prig as Alan Tremaine, but even clever women are very foolish when they are very young. One of the very cleverest things in the book is the excursion which Alan gives on a Bank Holiday to the men employed in the Osierfield Works, in the hope of being able to suggest to their Wesleyan minds the idea that Christianity is superseded, and that the gospel of beauty has taken its place. The difference between his standpoint and theirs, as exemplified by his lecture on Pioneers with a picture of St. John the Baptist as his text, and their comments in private thereon are delightfully droll. One kind soul reminds the others that he has no mother to teach him better, and therefore should be leniently judged, even if he does not know John the Baptist by sight, a thing of which their own children would be ashamed at the age of four.

Mrs. Hankey's views on the subject of husbands are also very funny:—

"The very best of 'em don't properly know the difference between their souls and their stomachs; and they fancy they are a wrestling with their doubts when really it's their dinners a wrestling with them. Now take Bateson himself, and a kinder husband or a better Methodist never drew breath; yet so sure as he touches a bit of pork, he begins to worry himself about the doctrine of election till there's no living with him. . . . He'll sit in the front parlour and engage in prayer for hours at a time, till I says to him, 'Bateson,' says I, 'I'd be ashamed to go troubling the Lord with a prayer when a pinch of carbonate of soda would set things straight again.'"

Those who are interested in religious questions will be arrested by Miss Fowler's views on the subject of the sin of schism. The Farringdons, the great social lights of the town where the scene of the story is laid, are Wesleyans. Yet we have the rigid old lady quite willing that her niece should go to Church to hear a Bishop preach, and her niece "getting saved" as the result of that sermon. Also a window of stained glass in memory of that same old lady is put up in the church after her death. Now fifty years ago, one knows that the Methodist rejoiced in his schism, and is at a loss to think which he would have regarded with the greater horror—a bishop or a stained glass window. If the Methodists really think the Church would do as well for them, one fails to see the least

*Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler. (Hutchinson and Co.)

lingering remnant of a *raison d'être* for Methodism; and looks forward with renewed hope to the end of our "unhappy divisions" and the return of Wesley's wandering sheep to the bosom of the mother which it would so have grieved him to know they had ever left.

Alan Tremaine, the agnostic, becomes aware of the futility of his own unbelief through the death of his only little boy; but though he has succeeded in destroying the faith of the girl who married him, he finds that to restore it, is beyond his powers and we leave him in the bitterness of that despair.

The book bristles with witty sayings but space forbids their quotation. Here is just one sample.

"Life is made up of noughts and crosses; and the folks that get the crosses are better off than those that get the noughts." G. M. R.

Bookland.

Messrs. Methuen will publish in the course of the summer a novel by Miss Marie Corelli, entitled "The Master-Christian."

Amongst the books written by the late Duke of Argyll, is a novel entitled "The Highland Nurse," which is to a great extent autobiographical.

Messrs. Chapman and Hall are issuing an account of the Siege of Ladysmith, by Mr. R. J. MacHugh, special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, who was shut up in the Town through its beleaguering.

WHAT TO READ.

"A Fighter in Khaki: A Romance of the Present Boer War." By Ralph Rodd.

"The Green Flag, and Other Stories of War and Sport." By Conan Doyle.

"The Experiment of Doctor Nevill." By Emeric Hulme-Beaman.

"The Angel of Chance." By G. G. Chatterton.

"The West End." By Percy White.

Coming Events.

May 4th.—Lecture on "The Knights' Hospitallers and Ambulance Work in War," by Major A. C. Yate, at the Royal United Service Institution. Whitehall, S.W. 3 p.m.

May 7th.—King's College Hospital Dinner. Whitehall Rooms, Hôtel Métropole.

May 8th.—Concert, on behalf of the Mary Wardell Convalescent Home for Scarlet Fever, at Stafford House, St. James's.

May 9th.—Russian Reformation Society. Conversation and Conference in the Parlour of Exeter Hall, Strand, "to discuss the best means of promoting Civil and Religious Liberty in Russia, and the desirability of a Federation of the various kindred Organisations." 6.30 p.m. Public Meeting. 8 p.m. Chairman, Rev. Walter Baxendale.

May 10th.—Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland. Meeting at the Matron's House, St. Bartholomew's Hospital. 4 p.m.

May 12th.—The French Ambassador and the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs attend the Annual Dinner of the French Hospital, Hotel Cecil.

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