

A Book of the Week.

AN INLAND FERRY.*

The author of this book is presumably a novice. That being so, one has no hesitation in urging her at once to go on and prosper. But the curious thing is that, like so many of our modern tyros in the art of fiction, she seems to be beginning at the wrong end. Her manner is excellent, her matter very poor.

One would accord a warmer welcome to one who, with unaccustomed pen, was trying, with varying success, to express the ideas and the personages that crowded his or her brain to overflowing; but this new art of saying nothing whatever with the finish of a practised hand! It is a little extraordinary.

Philip Elwes, in the prologue, is a little boy, living in an old gaunt house, brought up by a most excellent sister, but misunderstood. In the adjoining house live Adeline and Josephine Hanning, the children of Lady Mary, widowed, and of small means.

Thus far the prologue. With the succeeding story Philip Elwes has nothing whatever to do, except that he is for a time tutor to the children of Adeline, who has married well; and that it is very obscurely hinted that Adeline is in love with him. He is a cold and fish-like person, who achieves fame, but in whom nobody feels the smallest interest.

Josephine is the heroine, and Josephine at the beginning of the story is frankly interesting. She is imbued with the hedonistic notions of many of the young women of the day; with absolutely no experience, she believes that she has a right to conclusive opinions upon the higher and deeper things of the world. In love with her is Adrian Long, member of Parliament and philanthropist; and there is no shadow of a reason of any sort or kind, except the purposes of Miss Susan Christian, why they should not be married and live happily ever after, in a very early chapter.

But as, in these circumstances, the book would have to come to an end, we are shown how Adrian called to propose, how he found the lady not in a very coming-on disposition, and how, in consequence, he walked, without a word, out of the house, out of England, and returned no more for the next ten years, when Josephine had taken to rouge, and her niece, Rachel Romilly, was grown up.

Adrian then reappeared, and fell in love with Rachel, who was mourning the loss of a lover by the name of George Thompson, and had made up her mind to go into a sisterhood.

And here we admit that the author does give us a surprise; for, contrary to all the devices for procuring the life-long separation and unhappiness of two suitable people, Rachel actually refuses the middle-aged Adrian, and remains fixed in her purpose of the sisterhood thus setting him free to continue his intermittent wooing of her aunt. But even now the author has to write another scene, in which Adrian arrives to propose, and does not get a chance, because Josephine, who is always a good deal absorbed in the clothes question, is taken by surprise in a short skirt, and feels shabby.

Finally, Josephine and the author, being both at their last limit of patience, the lady takes the matter into her own hands, and goes to call on the gentleman, who, after keeping her waiting while he shaves, leads

her upstairs into the best bedroom, not hitherto in use, and shows her a pincushion with her own name—Josephine—pricked out in pins upon it.

But let not the reader imagine, from this account, that the whole book is distinguished by folly. A great deal of the writing is very charming. The author sometimes shows quite a passion for the *mot juste*, and, if at times incoherent, is often admirable. It is a pity that the futility of the story should be so marked; it would cause some to feel a kind of resentment, as though they wasted time in reading about such rubbish. But the scene in which Josephine, arranging flowers in the hall, hears Adrian go in to propose to her niece, and awaits his return, is wonderfully well done.

G. M. R.

Thought.

What is thought? It is a mine
Whose gems are of a land divine;
A power no tyrant may control;
An emanation of the soul!—
A spark of a celestial fire,
To favoured man in mercy given;
Spirit of an immortal sire!
A plant whose flower is Heaven!
O! not beneath the sky's array
May highest thought with man unite;
'Tis but a gleam of that fine light
Whose glory shines through an eternal day.

What to Read.

"Life's Little Comedies and other Verses." By Hugh Bedwell.

"The Night Side of London." By Robert Machray.

"Words by an Eye-Witness: the Struggle in Natal." By "Linesman."

"At Sunwich Port." By W. W. Jacobs.

"North, South, and Over the Sea." By M. E. Francis.

"Tregarthen's Wife." By F. M. White.

Coming Events.

July 1st.—Garden Fête in aid of St. George's Hospital—Botanical Gardens.

July 2nd.—Princess Louise Duchess of Argyll lays the foundation stone of the new building of the Victoria Hospital for Children, Tite Street, Chelsea, 2 p.m. Her Royal Highness opens a Fête in the grounds of the Royal Hospital, Queen's Road, Chelsea, 2.30 p.m.

Coronation Ball at Crystal Palace in aid of King Edward's Hospital Fund, by permission of His Majesty the King.

July 4th.—Garden Fête, under the patronage of Her Majesty the Queen and other members of the Royal Family, in aid of St. George's Hospital—Royal Botanic Society's Gardens.

July 15th.—Princess Louise (Duchess of Argyll) attends a tournament and fête at the London Hippodrome in aid of Charing Cross Hospital, under the immediate patronage of the Queen and Princess of Wales.

* By Susan Christian. Smith, Elder.

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