

A Book of the Week.

THE MARRIAGE OF WILLIAM ASHE.*

With what delight does one sit down to enjoy a novel by Mrs. Ward! It is something like the anticipatory joy of ascending the staircase, when invited to the house of a friend whose taste can be relied upon, and who has asked you to meet various interesting and delightful people. And those who take up "The Marriage of William Ashe," having formed such anticipations, will by no means be disappointed. There is the usual gallery of careful portraiture, centring, as always with this writer, round the character of one woman. There is the usual careful, but by no means obvious, workmanship, the usual balance, the usual high aim, the usual intimate blending of head and heart which mark the exceedingly various works of Mrs. Ward, as a monogram, unostentatiously hidden in one corner of various masterpieces, may mark the hand of the same artist.

The study of Lady Kitty Bristol is one to which the author has brought all her deftness of touch. It will be particularly interesting to nurses from a pathological point of view. All who have seen the gradual development of heart disease, know the symptoms here described—the curious, vehement, urgency of restlessness, the unwillingness to pause, the ceaseless desire to shake off restraint, to create new activities, to live intensely, fiercely, while life lasts.

To Kitty is given such a temperament, with the additional burden of a terrible heredity. She is the daughter of a worthless nobleman and an adventuress. The "Maman" of these pages is admitted by the author to be a portrait, as was Julie in "Lady Rose's Daughter."

When William Ashe fell in love with, and married, Kitty, he knew her story, and he took his risk. How nearly his boldness subsequently justified itself it is the object of the story to let you know. He was determined from the first that there should be no coercion. Kitty should behave herself because she would, not because she must.

"A French novel on Kitty's little table drew his attention. He thought, not without a discomfortable humour, of what a French husband would have made of a similar situation—recalling the remark of a French acquaintance on some case illustrating the freedom of English wives. '*Il y a un élément Turc dans le mari Français, qui nous rendrait ces mœurs-là impossibles!*'"

"Let the Frenchman keep up his seraglio standards as he pleases. An Englishman trusts both his wife and his daughter—scorns even to consider whether he trusts them or no! And who comes worst off? Not the Englishman—if at least we are to believe the French novel on the French ménage!"

Is not that excellent? The case in a nutshell. Then take this account of the effect upon each other of the undisciplined Kitty and her aristocratic mother-in-law.

"Kitty met her with one of those outbursts of temper that women like Elizabeth Traumore cannot cope with. Their moral recoil is too great. It is the recoil of the spiritual aristocrat; and between them and the children of passion the links are few, the antagonism eternal."

The end of William Ashe's marriage is, indeed, tragedy. But Mrs. Ward seems unmistakably to

* Mrs. Humphry Ward. (Smith, Elder and Co.)

suggest that the tragedy would have been averted, had the man been able to offer to his wife the one thing the craving spirit yearned for—Religion. He sneered at faith: and no other anchor was strong enough to hold the sorely-tempted soul.

We have but one criticism to pass. The act of devilish cruelty and treachery attributed to Mary seems to us unlikely. Yet who shall say? Mary, when all is said and done, belongs to the camp of the self-righteous; and such seem peculiarly sensitive to the pressure of a sudden temptation. G. M. R.

Womanhood.

She must be honest, both in thought and deed,
(Of generous impulse, and above all greed;
Not seeking praise, or place, or power, or pelf,
But life's best blessings for her higher self.
Which means the best of all.

She must have faith,
To make good friends of Trouble, Pain and Death,
And understand their message.

She should be
As redolent with tender sympathy
As is a rose with fragrance.

Cheerfulness
Should be her mantle, even though her dress
May be of Sorrow's weaving.

On her face
A loyal nature leaves its seal of grace,
And chastity is in her atmosphere.
Not that chill chastity which seems austere
(Like untrod snow peaks, lovely to behold
Till once attained—then barren, loveless, cold);
But the white flame that feeds upon the soul
And lights the pathway to a peaceful goal;
A sense of humour, and a touch of mirth,
To brighten up the shadowy spots of earth;
And pride that passes evil—choosing good.
All these unite in perfect womanhood.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX,
in Poems of Power.

What to Read.

"Mid the Thiek Arrows." By Max Pemberton.

"The Millionaire Baby." By Anna Katherine Green.

"The Stone Lady: Ten little Papers and two Mad Stories." By Arthur Ransome.

"The Lure of the Labrador Wild," the Story of the Exploring Expedition conducted by Leonidas Hubbard, jun.

Coming Events.

April 14th.—Incorporated Society of Medical Officers of Health: Dr. G. H. Fosbrooke on "The Administration of the Midwives' Act," 9, Adelphi Terrace, 7.30.

May 5th.—The Board of Trade will hear objections to the granting of a Licence to the Incorporated Society for Promoting the Higher Education and Training of Nurses to incorporate without the word "Limited" after its name, in the Deputation Room of the Board, at 7, Whitehall Gardens, S. W., 11.30.

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