

Caxton Hall to the outer lobby at Westminster, and began a campaign for the vote, which is as sure to help win this urgent reform as "eggs is eggs," as a buoyant delegate from Manchester expressed it, telling us at the same time that she had partly tramped up from Lancashire and begged her fare by the way to be present at the meeting.

As for the babies present, they apparently listened to the eloquence of the speakers with silent admiration, one mother remarking proudly at the end of the meeting: "Now ain't they behaved themselves like little h'angels." We replied they had indeed, wishing as a proof of their vitality that their behaviour had been of a more demonstrative nature.

Book of the Week.

* THE PORTREEVE.

Those who like Mr. Eden Philpotts will like this book exceedingly. It contains all that this interesting writer has ever given them before, and nothing else at all. It is, like all his preceding books, a tale of rustic life on Dartmoor. Like all his other books, the topography is careful to the point of exactitude. Anybody going for a tour on Dartmoor could take one of Mr. Eden Philpotts' novels with them and identify all the places mentioned—a class of study which would appear to be particularly congenial to many novel readers, judging by the quantity of stuff which has been penned about the scenes of Dickens's various stories. I have been told that Mr. Eden Philpotts takes a campstool and goes out and writes his descriptions of landscape with the landscape in question under his nose; but we will hope that this is a libel.

However, for those who like it, here is any amount of peat and heather and morass and height and sunset and moonrise, and village and quarry. Here also is Mr. Philpotts' group of rustics—racy of the soil and full of wise saws—a mixture of wisdom and childishness which carries one back to the youth of the world, and links the men of this generation closely to their forefathers of centuries ago.

The story, too, departs in no single particular from Mr. Philpotts' own lines, the lines on which he has so justly won fame, but which he now might perhaps vary without injury to an assured reputation.

It is a picture of the wrong two marrying, and the various elements in the drama remaining as near neighbours, with the inevitable results of misery and tragedy and general gloom.

The Portreeve is a good-looking, well-disposed young man, more weak-minded than some are disposed to think him. He loves Ilet Yelland, but is loved by Primrose Horn, a she-devil of so unmitigated a kind that one finds it hard to believe in her at all. She manages to separate Ilet and the Portreeve, but, Ilet being left a widow, they come together after all, just when Primrose thought victory assured. She then determines upon a Monte Cristo career of vengeance, living only to strike blow after blow at the unfortunate Portreeve, whose long drawn out

sufferings compose the greater part of this lugubrious book.

Mr. Philpotts shows us how strong is the animal side of those who are bred on the Moor. Primrose is an animal, and so is Abel Pierce, the man who, loving Ilet, plots with Primrose to separate her from the Portreeve. Abel openly avows that his master passion is the desire for fatherhood. Ilet is the woman on whom he has set his mind to be the mother of his children, and to this craving he is willing to sacrifice his soul. The Portreeve is the man on whom Primrose has fixed to be the father of her children, and failing him she will have none. She does, indeed, marry Orlando Slanning, but declines to have children by him. In Mr. Philpotts' observations of life these earth-bound spirits, these beings who are wholly ruled by their animal instincts, are far stronger than the more spiritual. They can always succeed in pulling down the higher to their level.

This theory he works out with ruthless persistency, time after time, in novel after novel, each one thought out with elaborate care, and containing not a hint of scamped workmanship, nor haste, nor immaturity. Few novelists can be so completely trusted to give us always of their best. It is a pity that the special line of philosophy which this most able writer has selected seems to lead to an inevitable sameness.

G. M. R.

Coming Events.

February 27th.—Ninety-third Annual Festival of the London Orphan Asylum, the Lord Chief Justice of England in the chair.

February 28th.—The Duke of Marlborough presides at the eighty-fifth Annual and General Court of Governors of the Seamen's Hospital Society, "Dreadnought," 13A, Cockspur Street, Charing Cross.

February 28th.—Lord Ludlow presides at Annual Meeting of Governors of the Cancer Hospital (Free), Brompton.

February 28th.—League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses. Lecture on Bacteriology by Dr. F. W. Andrewes, at the Hospital, 5.45 p.m. Future Lecture, March 14th.

A Word for the Week.

"Let us ask ourselves what is the aim and object of politics? Is it not the upraising and general betterment of the community? and, if it be so, in what way can it be better attained than by organised effort, striving ever upward and onward, till, as Browning says:—

'Then the cloud rift broadens, spanning earth that's under,
Wide our world displays its worth, man's strife and strife's success;
And the good and beauty! wonder crowning wonder,
Till our hearts and soul applaud perfection—nothing less.'"

* By Eden Philpotts Methuen

MRS. ARTHUR SCAIFE.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)