

Book of the Week.

CROSSRIGGS.*

There are books in the world we may be thankful for, and "Crossriggs" is one of them. Surely no completer story of real life has ever been penned. It is the fashion to say of anything particularly strenuously portrayed: "But how like real life!" as if only by means of harsh lines and crude shadows that effect might be gained. The notion is a fallacy; it may apply to oil paint and canvas, but it is not true of novel writing any more than it could be true of biography writing. In every life, commonplace or the reverse, it is a fact that "trifles make up the sum of human things," and as those trifles deal with us, so shall we be the more or the less fitted to cope with the great events of life which only seem to be the turning points of our lives. The real turn—the first—was taken years ago in that endless struggle with poverty, or the carking care of riches combined with some blessing denied, or the inner workings of mind which have nothing to do with outer things. Life is honey-combed with detail, and some of the cells are very empty, while others are rich with plenty. It happens frequently that the plenteous are over-looked in the bewailment of the barren cells; they are sealed to the blind of heart.

There is nothing harsh or crude in the story of "Crossriggs"; the picture is drawn with infinite care for detail, and the seemingly insignificant happenings in the daily lives of the inhabitants of this sleepy little Scotch place. Sleepy? It is simply teeming with all that goes to awaken mankind and uplift it from the level of the brute creation: love, hate, strength, weakness, joy, and tragedy—all are there, all dealt with so gradually, so tenderly, so inimitably that the reader lives right in the very heart of the matter from beginning to end, not a mere spectator, but a participator. Long after the book is closed he will be haunted by the recollection of his new-formed acquaintance: Alexandra Hope, and young Van Cassilis, old Hopeful, and "Aunt E. V.," Robert Maitland, and the fresh-faced Matilda! We have lived in Crossriggs, and before us, too, "they pass now like a troop of ghosts." And the old Admiral, too, whose calling upon a newcomer was such a hall mark—he and Aunt E. V. between them set the standard of judgment. They are all delightful, even Miss Bessie Reid, in her showy, ill-made clothes with her "withering face," set into curves of galvanised cheerfulness, and her eventual "chinless" romance.

The occurrences in Crossriggs! Are they not the daily happenings of our own lives? We know them so well, but so few comparatively can draw from them the humour, the pathos, the food for deep reflection that Alexandra Hope found in them.

It is the book mainly of Alexandra Hope, the woman who, at close on thirty years of age, was already looking worn, with lines upon her face

*By Mary and Jane Findlater. (Smith, Elder, and Co.)

that should not have been there for ten years yet. They called her father "Old Hopeful," in real affection, but there lurked a tragedy even under that honourable title—the tragedy of Alexandra's wasted youth, for "Old Hopeful" had ruined the financial prospects of his family by his "hopes for this world, and his hopeless want of common-sense."

It would be a pity to spoil the story by any attempt to tell it here; it is too well worth reading for itself, every line of it, to detract from it by giving a clumsy epitome. Suffice it to say it will afford anyone who is fortunate enough to read it, hours of the most pure enjoyment and the most charming companionship the heart of man or woman could desire from a book.

E. L. H.

COMING EVENTS.

May 28th.—The President of the French Republic inspects the French Hospital, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C., and the French institutions in London.

May 29th.—Annual General Meeting, Asylum Workers' Association, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, London, W., 3.30 p.m.

June 2nd.—Lectures on Babies at the Infants' Hospital, Vincent Square. "Disorders incident to Birth," by Dr. T. N. Kelynack. June 16th.—"On the Boiling, Pasteurising, and Sterilising of Milk: their Uses and Disadvantages," by Dr. Ralph Vincent. June 23rd.—"Minor Ailments of Infancy," by Dr. T. N. Kelynack. 5 p.m.

June 3rd.—A Meeting for Nurses, Trained Nurses' Club, 12, Buckingham Street, Strand, to discuss how "Votes for Women" will affect the work of nurses. Speaker, Mrs. Pethick Lawrence. Nurses are invited. 2.30 p.m.

June 13th.—National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. Great Procession of Women Suffragists. Start Victoria Embankment, Northumberland Avenue, and march to the Albert Hall, 3 p.m. Mass meeting, Albert Hall, 5 p.m. Mrs. Fawcett, LL.D., in the chair. Speakers: The Lady Frances Balfour, the Lady Henry Somerset, the Rev. Anna Shaw, U.S.A.

June 15th.—Infant Health Exhibition, Institute of Hygiene, Devonshire Street, W.

June 15th.—The Pan-Anglican Congress opens in London. June 23rd.—Nurses' Day at the Pan-Anglican Congress. Meeting at Church House, Westminster, 2.30 p.m.

June 16th.—Examination of Central Midwives' Board in London and the Provinces.

June 21st.—The National Women's Social and Political Union, Great Demonstration of Suffragists will march to Hyde Park from Euston Station, Trafalgar Square, the Victoria Embankment, Chelsea Embankment, Kensington High Street, Paddington Station, Marylebone Road. Nurses invited to take part. All arrangements notified in "Votes for Women," price one penny weekly.

June 23rd.—The Duke of Portland presides at a Dinner in aid of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses, Hotel Cecil, 8 p.m.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)