

Books of the Week.

TWO NOVELS.

"Katherine Lauderdale." By Marion Crauford. Three Volumes. (Macmillan. 1894.)

It is really very surprising how interesting Mr. Marion Crauford contrives to make "Katherine Lauderdale." He is a writer who understands—we will not exactly say the art of literature, but the art of story-writing to perfection, for he presents his characters to us in a manner that at once awakens our attention. "Katherine Lauderdale" is an American novel, and, in describing American society, Marion Crauford seems almost at much at home as in his polished and life-like sketches of modern Italian life. He has a most engaging style, and a manner of relating the sequence of events that is peculiar to himself. I have never been able to quite make up my mind if I sincerely admire Mr. Crauford's style or not; but, at any rate, it is an original style, and, in consequence, it is one that captivates the reader, and carries him over many pages without ever boring or worrying him.

Mr. Marion Crauford is not a profound thinker. His manner of working is nearer akin to the talent of Trollope, then to the genius of George Eliot or Mr. Meredith. He is an admirable teller of tales, and, for beguiling a tedious hour, earns our sincere gratitude, although it is to be suspected that even the best of his stories will not outlive the present generation of readers.

I will not reveal the plot of "Katherine Lauderdale," for though the whole action of the novel takes place in the course of five days, it is very interesting; so I will content myself with heartily recommending it. When the third volume is ended, the reader will notice, with satisfaction, that the story is not, and that the writer promises us a second instalment ere long. Probably, if the public prove appreciative, "Katherine Lauderdale" will extend to a series of novels on American life, and, if they are as good as the Italian series, they will be welcome.

"The Queen of Love." By S. Baring Gould. Three Volumes. (Methuen & Co. 1894.)

Mr. Baring Gould, at his worst, is readable, and though the "Queen of Love" is by no means the *chef d'œuvre* of his art, it is an interesting story. The heroine is the orphan daughter of a circus manager. The scenery described in the novel is the salt-district in Cheshire. Saltwich is evidently intended for Northwich, when, "owing to the frequent and protracted subsidence of the land, as the salt-rock beneath the town was exhausted, the old Town Hall had gone to pieces, and had sunk half way up its second floor, and had to be pulled down." Saltwich was a serious-minded town, and the Elect were dismayed to discover that the very day that they had arranged for an eminent American preacher to address the people had been selected by Signor Santi's Circus Company to give their equestrian performance. The Elect could not suppress the circus, but they banished it to a field outside the town, where the ground was full of cracks and slipping in. The catastrophe to the circus is graphically described, and I feel sure that when a landslide does occur in Cheshire, it must take place in the

slipping, jerking, telescopic manner related. This episode is admirably told, but the rest of the novel is not so engaging. The financial speculations connected with the salt industries are not of great interest, and the people engaged in them do not arouse our attention. There is something depressing in their failure to secure our sympathy even when they endure failure, catastrophe, and even death itself. The characters do not grip hold of our imagination, and the minor personages connected with the development of the story do not live, and are weakly sketched. Throughout the novel are scattered some shrewd remarks, such as:—

"The human conscience is healthy and sturdy enough, and the fault I find with Dr. Tallows, and the likes of him, is, they don't let it alone, but go pricking and poking at it, and whipping up a lather about it, like them cuckoo-spittle insects on the young shoots in spring."

And—

"There is more mischief done in the world by weak people than by wicked people. We guard ourselves against the wicked, we are off our guard with the weak."

The description of the awful blow-hole, called Roaring Meg, in the side of the hill, is very gruesome, and the story of how her hunger was satisfied is blood-curdling. *Du reste*, Mr. Baring Gould has the gift of being able to describe locality, and certain peculiarities of nature, with an artist's pen.

A.M.G.

The Stage.

"The Best Man" at Toole's is an amusing farce by Mr. R. Lumley, and the interest throughout is centred on Mrs. Montaubyn (Miss Beatrice Lamb), and her endeavour to regain the diamond necklace presented to her by her affianced husband. Mr. Toole, as Price Puttlou, "The Best Man," is as full of merriment and humour as ever, in fact the whole cast leaves nothing to be desired, while the dresses, especially those for the wedding, are most handsome and artistic.

Reviews.

"The Medical Annual." (John Wright and Co., Bristol). This book is so well-known that it needs but little commendation. Its summary of the new work of the past year is especially good and will be found very valuable by the busy practitioner who desires to keep abreast of professional advances. We are glad to observe that, under the head of Aneurism, attention is called to the benefit which results in many cases from the abstraction of a small quantity of blood. Fortunately, there is now a growing belief, which the results obtained and recently published by various observers have done much to strengthen, that in suitable cases there is no more potent remedy than venesection.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)