

The novelist and her hen-pecked husband with their daughter lived in a cramped flat in London, and all the inconveniences of such a life are graphically described. Poor Mr. Wilbraham has to take refuge in a little box-room with his child, and his wife displayed a large placard with "Don't come in" outside her writing room whenever the fever of composition was upon her; but at last, even that haven of refuge, the box-room, is taken from the husband and child, and a friend of the authoress's, Mrs. Harley, takes up her abode in order to aid her patroness in her labours, for, by this time, George Mandeville is writing a Play. This part of the book strikes me as being very much exaggerated—for, surely, if the authoress had been clever enough to gain even a mediocre reputation, and at any rate to earn a certain amount of money, she would not have been such an egregious fool as she is described here. Knowing well the difficulties, I cannot help feeling considerable respect for the woman who earns a definite income, and I cannot help feeling that Mrs. or Miss Raimond is a most prejudiced and unjust observer of the human nature of her own sex. After all, the husband was a poor creature, and feeble to a degree, and, therefore, it is quite possible that there was another side to the story, and that if "George Mandeville" had not exerted herself, the whole family would have been very poor, in spite of Mr. Wilbraham's small patrimony. Certainly the way in which the husband is described as behaving in his own flat does not increase our respect for the male sex as described by Miss or Mrs. Raimond. The relations between the neglected husband and daughter are interestingly depicted—George Mandeville, absorbed in "coaching" the actors before the production of her ill-written play, fails to notice her daughter's ill-health, which is increased by her sitting in the damp theatre to watch the dress rehearsal of her mother's play. Rosina's fever is increased, but no one has time to notice her hacking cough. George Mandeville was too much engaged screaming out directions to the actors and actresses who were all, as well as the scene shifters, in the vilest of tempers, while her husband went round to a greasy Italian restaurant and sat there and smoked, and drank black coffee, while he ruminated for a time,

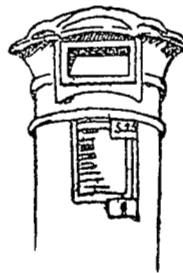
"with renewed wonder on the indecency of 'the good woman,' and in memory compared her taste unfavourably with that of certain persons she would call 'abandoned.' For brutal, plain speaking and unnecessary harping on the physical facts of life, commend me to the superior woman."

Wilbraham indulges in several more pages of maundering ruminations upon the ways of "The New Woman," some of which are just and unfortunately true; but the greater part of which are distorted, exaggerated, and hysterical. When he returns to the stage door, he finds everything in confusion, and when he hurries home he finds Rosina seriously ill and delirious. I don't know if readers will pity the poor girl most for having such a mother or such a father—neither of them were satisfactory parents for a nice young girl to possess. How much she had suffered in her short life between them is shown in her delirious ravings. Then she dies, and her father and mother are left childless. Her father is left a constant mourner; but, perhaps, the cleverest thing in this rather shallow book is the description of George Mandeville's state of mind whenever she is low or a little hysterical:—

"She is sure, if it were possible to bring the dear child back, nothing else would be needed to make her mother supremely happy and content. With a conscience quite serene, she tells her friends of this idolized only daughter—of their devotion to each other, of Rosina's last moments, and how the dear child died in her arms. By degrees she has built up not only an imaginary relation, but an imaginary figure. Rosina, as time goes on, grows more and more like one of George Mandeville's heroines. Some time within the next ten years, who knows but the mother's long patience may be rewarded, and Rosina's thick, straight hair may have begun to curl. Wilbraham anticipated this the first time he heard his wife describe her daughter as a 'lovely Greuze,' with eyes that were hazel in some lights and dark violet in others."

The book is well written, and the reader cannot help regretting that its writer should have taken such a narrow, and one might almost say venomous, view of her heroine. Personally, I have never much cared for "Pioneer writing women," they are apt to be "unlovely in their lives"; but women should be just, even to members of their own sex with whose views and aims in life they disagree, and I think they might realize that such women have done good work in the world and benefitted the cause of temperance and purity, even if they have not always succeeded in making their individual homes those nests of comfort and happiness which every alert wife and mother should aspire to build.

A. M. G.



Letters to the Editor.

(Notes, Queries, &c.)

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not IN ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

IS RE-VACCINATION COMPULSORY?

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I should like to ask, through the columns of your most interesting paper, a question which has recently puzzled many Metropolitan Nurses, who, like myself, have been required by my Hospital authorities to undergo re-vaccination as a precautionary measure during the outbreak of small-pox. Personally, I am not an advocate of, or a believer in, vaccination, and I wish to know whether there is any possible binding on a Nurse to undergo vaccination—*nolens volens*—at the desire of her Hospital officials. It appears to me that this is an important question, and any light that can be thrown upon it will be of value to many Nurses.

ENQUIRER.

[Re-vaccination is not legally compulsory. But statistics and every-day practice prove conclusively that it is re-vaccination that confers safety in adult life from attacks of small-pox. It is beyond all dispute that vaccination has prevented the wholesale epidemics which formerly decimated and disfigured the population. In our judgment, therefore, Nurses should be the last people in the world to object to take any precaution—even if it entailed some discomfort to themselves—which would tend to prevent the diffusion of an infectious disease.—ED.]

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