

longed for a story by Hannah More! "Allegra," the good woman of the novel designed as a happy contrast, is a mere dainty shadow, her personality apparently had great influence upon the two men of the story, but it does not impress the reader much; there is no sentence in which she is described which will dwell in the memory, she is simply intangible. Warre, the principle male character in the novel, is also, to my mind, somewhat immaterial; he lacks vitality and exists merely to endure as a sport of the gods and the victim of Anne Passer, and in spite of the finely phrased tribute to his memory, spoken by Lord Wickenham, is a shadowy, long-suffering being. Truth to tell, he seems to me to be somewhat of a mental coward. His terrible wife overshadows everything else in the book; unfortunately she is alive, absolutely alive, and everything she says from beginning to end sets our teeth on edge, and makes one long to expostulate with Mrs. Cragie for having created such a "Tranhenstein" of a woman, such a horrible specimen of human nature, only I trust such another never existed, but this one does live, and therefore I shall for ever bear a grudge against John Oliver Hobbes for having caused her to exist for me.

A dear, nice, simple old dame read this up-to-date novel last week, and as she laid it down upon the table, she said in her nice old-fashioned way, "I can't think why anybody wants to write about such a nasty woman at all," and there is something to be said for the sense of her remark. But reviewers have to try and be impartial in their choice of books for review, and the skill and power with which this "nasty" woman is described are undeniable, and therefore everybody is reading the book, because cleverness (whatever old-fashioned people may say) is always attractive. The book of course is entirely unsuitable for young people's reading, indeed I am not sure that anybody will be much wiser or better for perusing it, as far as the story is concerned, but its pages are full of plans and smart sayings, that are not merely superficially clever, but have roots beneath their cleverness that strike deep into the realities of life. I should like to see a little book published of the "Witty and wise sayings of John Oliver Hobbes." To my mind her stories are radically uninteresting, her character drawing is either too vague and shadowy, or else disagreeable in its minute dissection of motive; for as Charles Kingsley so wisely said, "Motives are like chemicals, the more you analyse them the more they smell." John Oliver Hobbes is a merciless dissector of motives; in consequence, the scent of her stories as they linger in the memory, is not fragrant; but when all is said and written, her "sayings" are profound and well worth embalming in a book. As examples, I choose a few from the volume before me, although I do not think them quite equal to some that are to be found in her earlier publications.

"The genius of hospitality consists not so much in making people meet, but in helping them to part on good terms." "Poverty never kills the soul. The arch destroyer is dull indolence, which, under the name of Christian contentment, is but a slatternly acceptance of this world's dust and ashes."

This description of Anne Passer is well worth recording:—

"She had a nature of strong impulses, a defective education in weak principles, and that excitable temperament which needs every bodily satisfaction to keep it sane. In

the absence of material aids there is only one intellectual gift which can save either men or women of this type from complete degradation, and that is a desire for romance, for refinement, for the poetic. And Anne was a stranger to this purifying influence . . . Anne had no innate ideal of conduct to make her suffer when she felt beneath it; she lived by impulse; if a good one it was well, if a bad one it was well also. She only felt remorse when an action turned to her disadvantage, or when some adverse judgment from a looker-on wounded her pride. Vanity was all the conscience she possessed."

"Saxon women," said Lord Wickenham, "are very good to their men, but they are brutal to each other."

"I get so tired of explaining life to middle-class intellects! I always feel as though I talked Greek, and they only knew Dutch, and we were trying to sing a French duet!"

"What can it matter what a cad thinks," said Lord Wickenham, "the only people who listen to them are other cads."

It would be very easy to multiply quotations; these are only samples, and by no means the best in the book, but the epigrams and phrases are worth searching for, and besides these the book is well worth reading, in order to make the acquaintance of Lord Wickenham, who is far more attractive than the gods, which by the way ought to have been spelt with a small g, and the other mortals.

A. M. G.

Bookland.

BOOKS TO READ.

"The Tragedy of Fotheringay," by the Hon. Mrs. Maxwell Scott. (London: A. & C. Black.)

"Life and Labour of the People in London." Edited by Charles Booth. (Macmillan & Co.)

"Life of General Sir Edward Bruce Hamley, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.," by Alexander Innes. (Messrs. William Blackwood & Sons.)

"The Holy Estate," by W. H. Wilkins and Captain Thatcher. (Messrs. Hutchinson.)

All the June monthlies are now to hand. In *Nineteenth Century* must be read "England and France on the Niger: the Race for Borgu," by Captain Lugard.

"The Gentle Art of Book Lending: a Suggestion," by George Somes Layard.

In the *Fortnightly Review*, "University Degrees for Women," by an Oxford B.A. "The New Party," by Andrew Reid.

Chapman's Magazine of Fiction. "The Microbe of Pessimism," by an Unknown Writer.

Mrs. Cronwright's baby girl only survived its birth a few hours—how sad! it might have been a second "Olive Schreiner"!

Mr. Clement Scott is preparing an interesting work dealing with Sir Henry Irving's productions at the Lyceum Theatre; the work will be brought out by Messrs. Remington & Co., under the title "From the Bells to King Arthur."

Messrs. Smith & Son have declined to put Mr. George Moore's new work "Celibates," either in their library or on their book stalls. What an advertisement for Mr. George Moore!

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