

A Book of the Week.

THE "STARK MUNRO LETTERS."*

THE "Stark Munro Letters" should prove interesting to readers of the NURSING RECORD, as they relate the experiences of a young doctor trying to make his way in the world against great difficulties. The book can hardly be called a novel, there are so many long pages of theological reflections upon the World, the Flesh and the Devil. Some people will dislike these reflections very much, and wish that the author had left them out altogether, in which case the book would be about a fourth of its present size. But Mr. Conan Doyle has observed how very keenly a young and ardent mind suffers when first it begins to doubt the Thirty-nine Articles of Faith, according to the religion of the Church of England, and it has evidently occurred to him as worth a novelist's while to tell the story of one valiant soul's struggles against the united troubles of Doubt and Poverty. Being a medical man himself, he is well able to judge of the severe trials of conventional faith that are undergone by young medical students. But in spite of his rather tiresome religious dissertations, which he imparts in letters to a long-suffering friend in America, J. Stark Munro reveals himself in these pages as a singularly interesting study of a young medical man, and few will read the record of his many disappointments without sympathy. One of the principal characters in the story is Dr. Cullingworth, a weird, half-mad kind of doctor, full of imagination and extraordinary plans for becoming a millionaire immediately, and who is entirely unscrupulous in the methods that he employs for attaining the object of his desires. The account given of his amazing success at Bradfield is very amusing. He bullies the women patients and roars at the men patients, and establishes a reputation throughout all the surrounding parishes of being eccentrically rude as well as astonishingly clever. J. Stark Munro stays with him as long as his self-respect will stand the situation, but in the end he finds it impossible to endure the low view which his master, Cullingworth, takes of the medical profession, and he parts from him and starts by himself in a villa-residence in a little town, without capital and without introductions. The account of his sorry struggles and the meagre larder that he kept in his portmanteau is worth reading, and when he at last attains the luxury of a servant to wait upon him, and answer the front door bell, the reader has been sufficiently interested in his fortunes to feel quite pleased.

It is difficult to understand why Mr. Conan Doyle ended the book so dismally; after all the agitations and shipwrecks of the early part of his career, the author might have allowed his poor young doctor to enjoy a comfortable old age, but he kills him ruthlessly and inartistically on the last page in italics, written by a friend after the receipt of his last letter!

It is possible that some people will wonder why Mr. Conan Doyle thought it worth while to record the religious difficulties of this rather commonplace and every-day young man, but in a preface to the volume, J. Stark Munro's correspondent out in America states that he has been induced to publish these letters as

they give "so plain an account of some of the troubles which a young man may be called upon to face right away at the outset of his career," and that he feels sure that his dead friend would value the thought "that some other young man, harassed by the needs of this world, and doubts of the next, should have gotten strength by reading how a brother had passed down the valley of shadow before him."

I read the book with some interest, but confess to infinitely preferring the adventures of the redoubtable Sherlock Holmes, for after all, the Stark Munro Letters are only a photographic representation of an average young man's ordinary trials and difficulties, and they possess the defects of photographs—lack of colour and charm.

A. M. G.

Bookland.

WHAT TO READ.

"Social England," a record of the progress of the people in religion, laws, learning, arts, industry, commerce, science, literature, and manners from the earliest times to the present day, by various writers, compiled by H. D. Traill, D.C.L. Vol. 4. From the accession of James I. to the death of Anne. (Cassell & Co., Limited, London, Paris, and Melbourne.)

"Reminiscences of Thirty-five Years of My Life," by Sir Joseph Crowe. (London: Murray.)

"Le Journal de la Belle Meunière." Le General Boulanger et son Amie. (Paris: E. Dentu.)

"Sir Quixote: A Romance of Grey Weather," by John Buchan. Demy 12mo, cloth, 2s. 6d. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, Paternoster Square, E.C.)

"Frieze and Fustian: Irish and Lancashire Stories," by M. E. Francis (Mrs. Francis Blundell), author of "A Daughter of the Soil," "In a North Country Village," "The Story of Dan." Cloth, 3s 6d.

"A Hard Woman: A Story in Scenes," by Violet Hunt, author of "The Maiden's Progress." (Chapman & Hall.)

"Susannah," by Mary E. Mann. Price 6s. (London: Henry & Co., 93, St. Martin's Lane, W.C.)

Coming Events.

WE regret that owing to an inadvertence the date of the meeting of the General Council of the Royal British Nurses' Association was given as being that of a meeting of the Registration Board.

October 18th.—Meeting of the General Council of the Royal British Nurses' Association, at the Offices, 17, Old Cavendish Street, W., 5 p.m.

Meeting of the Provisional Committee of the National Council of Women, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W., 11 a.m.

October 19th.—Nursing Exhibition, 12, Buckingham Street, Strand.

October 21st to 25th.—The Annual Conference of the National Union of Women Workers at Nottingham.

October 24th.—Matrons' Council. Meeting of Executive Committee, 2.30 p.m. Meeting of Council, 3 p.m. First Sessional Conference, at the Medical Society, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, 8.30 p.m. Paper by Miss Isla Stewart, Matron of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, on "A Uniform Curriculum of Education for Nurses." Tea and Coffee.

* The "Stark Munro Letters," edited and arranged by A. Conan Doyle, author of "Sherlock Holmes," &c., &c. 6s. (Longman.)

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