

this method of advertisement it is the surest way of obtaining a wide circulation for a book; but mothers should sedulously avoid leaving the volume within reach of their young people, for I am sure that no expanding mind could benefit by reading the history of "Jude the Obscure." The impression that its perusal has left upon myself is a most painful one. I felt as if I had been watching a trap full of rats, writhing and struggling in the grasp of iron teeth. The utter hopelessness of the book from the very first page to the last is appalling, and one wonders how any man has dared to paint life for us in such a fearfully lurid light. If men, women and children were really so God and man forsaken from their birth, then their only rational act would be suicide.

The story briefly told is as follows: Jude, a little orphan boy, brought up by an unsympathetic and hard-hearted aunt, is full of aspirations. The ambition of his life is to work his way to Christminster (Oxford), and there, by self-denial and application, steep himself in classic and mediæval lore. Unfortunately Jude has a very weak side to his nature as far as women are concerned, and early in his youth this mental Samson meets with a Delilah called Arabella, the daughter of a pork-butcher, who, by certain false representations, artfully contrives to make him marry her. During their short life together Mr. Hardy revolts and disgusts his readers by giving them a gory description of a pig-killing operation on a snowy night. Little wonder that Jude could not endure his pork-butcher wife, and after painful recriminations, they part. She goes out to Australia with her parents, and Jude betakes himself to Christminster, where his affections are captured by his cousin, "Susannah Florence Mary Bridehead." His connection with her is even more disastrous to his career than his first repulsive marriage. The character of Sue is cleverly conceived, and in the description of her sensitive aspen-leaf nature Mr. Hardy displays his art at its highest level, for there is nothing in his previous works more truly alive than this frail bundle of nerves, affections and impulses. The book relates how Jude and Arabella, Sue and her schoolmaster husband, Phillotson, all played general post with matrimony. After Sue had lived for some time with Jude, and refused to marry him for all sorts of absurd reasons, she returns home one evening to find that Jude's little son by his first wife, miserable and weary of life, as Destiny has ordained he has to live it, has murdered her two children and cut his own throat. Truly a wretched and a sordid tragedy, in describing which Mr. Hardy has not shown his usual skill, for somehow, terrible as it is, there is something in the description of the little corpses scattered about the room which few people will read without a grim smile. After this holocaust of babies Sue's conscience becomes more restive, and strange to say, she insists on going back to her first husband and re-marrying him. Then Jude, left to himself, drinks hard, and Arabella, whose second husband has died in the meantime, plies him with brandy and forces him to re-marry her. Finally Jude dies alone and neglected in a lodging while Arabella is out pleasuring on the river. Such is the horrible compound which Mr. Hardy has given to the world as the eighth volume of his Wessex Novels.

The admirers of his former stories cannot but regret that he has seen fit to prostitute his genius to such low uses. In "Tess," in spite of much that was painful, and much that every thoughtful woman must regret, there were yet great redeeming qualities, but I cannot

see in "Jude the Obscure" that (with the exception, perhaps, of a few paragraphs in which Sue's mental and physical peculiarities are very powerfully described) there is anything in Jude's terrible story to repay anyone for the disagreeable task of reading it.

A. M. G.

Review.

A WELSH IDYLL.*

SIR WALTER SCOTT had a well-known theory that in order to make a book successful it should have a title which did not convey its meaning, but this is only a minor reason why "Llanartro" should succeed. Mrs. Reynolds terms it a Welsh Idyll, and the description is appropriate. The story is one of a class comparatively rarely met with nowadays, but which some thirty years ago was deservedly most popular. It is transparently simple; there is no plot, no stratagems, no murders, and only one accident. On the other hand, it is fluent, it is grammatical, and in many places there are flashes of poetic fancy of no mean merit. In short, the book stands sharply out from the great majority of the novels of the present day. The heroine, a successful student at the Royal Academy, goes to Wales for a holiday, and sits in the road, sketching the scenery, where she is found and accosted by a London doctor, also on a holiday. And the consequent love story flows on placidly until the second hero, a college friend of the first, a poet and wealthy landowner, appears on the scene. Then the rivalry of the two friends for the artist's love and how it is finally won, is narrated in a manner which chiefly rivets attention from its unaffected style. The story rises to a higher level towards the end, when the doctor discovers his friend's love for the artist and how she returns it; and finally the mental struggle through which he passes, when his friend's life hangs in the balance, and the manner of the recovery of the latter through the self-sacrifice of the doctor is excellently depicted. We will not spoil the interest with which we hope many of our readers will peruse the story by describing it at greater length. The book is pervaded throughout by a refinement and poetic fancy which marks the authoress as one who feels what she writes, and as one, therefore, who may be expected to do even better work in future.

Bookland.

WHAT TO READ.

"The Father of the Forest, and other Poems," by William Watson. (London: John Lane.)

"The New Floreat," by the author of "Stephen Remarx." "Social Enigmas," by "J. Braithwaite." (London: Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co.)

"Studies in the France of Voltaire and Rousseau," by Frederika Macdonald, author of "The Iliad of the East," &c.

"The Two First Centuries of Florentine History: The Republic and Parties at the Time of Dante," Vol. II., by Professor Pasquale Villari, author of "The Life of Savonarola," &c., translated by Linda Villari.

"Toxin," by Ouida. Vol. I. of "The Century Library." (T. Fisher Unwin.)

"The White Wampum," by E. Pauline Johnson. (London: John Lane.)

Coming Events.

November 18th.—The Duke of Cambridge will preside at a Banquet in aid of the Building Fund of the Richmond Royal Hospital, at the Star and Garter, Richmond.

*"Llanartro," by Mrs. Fred Reynolds. (London: Gay & Bird.)

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