to the works themselves its object will be more than attained.

Mr. Gissing, in the manner of most great novelists, confines himself, to a great extent, to a certain side of human nature, which he analyses with relentless force. To him the sorrows of men, and more especially women, appeal with an irresistible fascination; he lays bare the lives of those who are life's failures, those who strive but to fail—who win but to ultimately lose.

It is amongst that great middle class—"purblind and hideous," which, with all its merits, has, by its black prejudices and conventionalities, done so much to check the intellectual development of the nation—that his plots are most often laid, and perhaps this is the chief cause of his want of success amongst the subscribers to the circulating libraries.

The novel which has suggested this paper is a picture drawn, with all the characteristics of Mr. Gissing's manner, of the emancipation of a mind of considerable originality from the prison-house of a Puritanism as fearful as any to be found in a Lancashire manufacturing town. In the early part of this book there is a scene between this woman (in her Puritan days) and her brother, the black sheep of the family, which is likely to remain for long in the mind of the reader. The former has denounced in no measured terms the evil living of the latter, and his reply I shall give myself the pleasure of quoting, not alone because so admirable in itself, but because it is in a sense illustrative of Mr. Gissing's own attitude towards that state of thought and feeling against which it is directed.

"'And what right have you to judge me?' he says. 'Of course I defend myself, and as scornfully as you like, when I am despised and condemned by one who knows as little of me as the first stranger I pass on the road. Cannot you come forward with a face like a sister's, and leave my faults for my own conscience? *You* judge me! What do you, with your nun's experiences, your heart chilled, your paltry view of the world through a chapel window, know of a man whose passions boil in him like the fire in yonder mountain? I should subdue my passions? Excellent text for a copy-book in a girls' school! I should be another man than I am; I should re-mould myself; I should cool my brain with doctrine. With a bullet if you like; say that and you will tell the truth. But with the truth you have nothing to do; too long ago you were taught that you must never face that. Do you deal truthfully with yourself, as I with my own heart? I wonder, I wonder!'"

The story of Miriam Bush's emancipation is not alone the motive of this novel; there is also running side by side of it a tale of a still more pathetic nature, that of a woman already in theory free, with all the aspirations towards the higher life, who, her ideals vanished, her love burnt out, her life wrecked, is doomed to an existence of loneliness and misery until the summons of death—the one friend who never fails even the wretched. The story, it must be admitted, is a depressing one, though illuminated at times by many bright touches of humour; but what strikes one especially, as in most of Mr. Gissing's novels, is the admirable manner in which it is constructed.

There are many novelists who can portray the emotion of human nature with great force and skill, but who often fail to interest us in the story itself because that story has been made subservient to the analysis of the feelings and motives of the characters—still more often to the theories which they may wish to propound. With Mr. Gissing it is not so; he has a story to tell, and tells it with a clearness which never fails to interest us, while his characters are marshalled upon the stage with such a knowledge of the writer's art that one feels that they are there—well, just because they cannot help it.

I have run on so far with my notes upon "The Emancipated" that I have left myself but small space to speak of Mr. Gissing's other novels, and must be content with little but a mere recital of their names. My favourite of all must, I think, always be "Thyrza," one of the most pathetic stories I know of hopeless love in the life of a workgirl.

In many readers it is extremely difficult to rouse any interest in the lives of those in a state of society below their own, and it must be admitted that the average novelist, writing with little or no knowledge of the conditions under which the poor live, is to a great extent responsible for this feeling. Mr. Gissing, however, knows of what he is writing, and the result is, that even the most unimaginative and unsympathetic must be moved almost to tears by the sufferings in which an unkind fate enveloped a nature as beautiful as it is natural.

"New Grub Street" and "The Odd Women" each deal with types familiar enough in these days, the former with that of the starved authors who, at the British Museum, compile from older works books which nobody will ever read, while the latter deals with the women who have never found any to love them, and who "exist" by the means of second-rate journalism and type-writing on half-a-crown a day. Both are books to make one think—may it be hoped that they have each sounded the warning note?

Mr. Gissing's other works must be passed merely by name—"Demos," "In the Year of Jubilee," "Denzil Quarrier," and "Eve's Ransom." They all have the same characteristics, and perhaps with the exception of the last all repay a perusal. "Eve's Ransom," however, shows the special danger that a novelist may run who essays but to portray one side of life, for here the note of sadness is so predominant that one feels that everything of the story has been sacrificed to it. The story, in fact, fails to interest, and one may hope that the next novel Mr. Gissing gives us may again show his former skill.

I have, I think, said enough in the space at my command to show to those of my readers who are at present unacquainted with the works of this novelist what a pleasure lies before them. To many they will make no appeal, the note of sadness is too pronounced; and certainly they should be read at intervals, for after all is said, life is not only sorrow, and it is no good thing for human nature to contemplate its own shadow too long.

A. M. G.

Bookland.

WHAT TO READ.

"The Story of Florence Nightingale," written by Mr. W. J. Wintle in the "Splendid Lives Series" of "improving" biographies, and published by the Sunday School Union, London.

"English Essays." With an Introduction by J. H. Lobban, M.A., formerly Assistant Professor of English Literature in Aberdeen University. (London: Blackie and Son).

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