

A Book of the Week.

"A FIGHT WITH FATE."*

MANY years ago Mrs. Alexander invented a heroine. she was a winsome creature, bright and cheerful, and full of brave self-reliance, and with a wholesome sense of fun. I think if I remember right (for being on the Continent I have not the book to refer to) that her first name was Maggie and she flitted through the pages of an engaging novel entitled "The Wooing O't." She found so much favour with the public that since her first appearance in fiction she has undergone many re-births in many novels, and now re-appears as Beatrice in "A Fight with Fate." After all she is welcome, for Mrs. Alexander's heroine is full of good qualities, and she is essentially a lady, from her hat down to her dainty shoes, and in every novel in which she makes her appearance never fails to be a typical, bright, merry, English maiden, pure-minded, and with that little sense of personal dignity which distinguishes her pre-eminently from the morbid, hysterical young women that figure as the women characters in so much of the fiction that is written for circulating libraries now a days.

It is impossible to read Mrs. Alexander's books without feeling interested. They are bright, and the attention is sustained from chapter to chapter in a pleasant, enlivening manner. Truth to tell, the plots of the various novels have a rather provoking similarity—the rich, vulgar-minded patroness, the newly discovered uncle, and the above-described heroine figure more or less in all of them. From the first chapter, we never feel any anxiety about the heroine; somehow in spite of her trials we feel sure she will marry the hero, inherit the fortune, and live happy ever afterwards, and we are not disappointed. The over-critical reviewer will say that the characters in Mrs. Alexander's stories are too typical; human nature is compounded of many intricate components, and her characters are not quite human, for in real life a woman is not always set in one mould, bound to be moved and set in motion by one set of ideas only. But after all it is captious to find too much fault with such agreeable summer holiday reading as "A Fight with Fate." Beatrice is a delightful girl, and her healthy attitudes of mind towards her selfish mistress, Mrs. Garston, is admirably depicted. She is so lovable a character that the reader will feel nothing but pleasure when the inevitable millionaire uncle turns up and when she marries the inevitable peer.

Mrs. Alexander has a very pleasant way of relating small details of social life. In all her novels she has a method essentially her own of prattling agreeably about toilettes, tea-parties, picnics, walks and drives. Though she may not be an original thinker, yet there is great merit in being able to write about commonplace things in a manner that is well-bred, attractive, and not wearisome. To do this *well*, means that our author must possess the gifts of humour, perception, and a pleasant, flowing style. Mrs. Alexander's novels are to be especially recommended for old and invalid people and for anyone else who does not like being perplexed and annoyed over their fictional reading. On the other hand, readers who enjoy robust mental exercise, and who prefer more realistic pictures of life, will not, perhaps, be quite so appreciative of her books.

A. M. G.

* "A Fight with Fate," by Mrs. Alexander.

Review.

IN "Aids to Obstetrics," Mr. Samuel Hall has given medical students an admirable and ready means of refreshing the mind and memory previous to an examination in Midwifery. The book—though not specialised in any way to the needs of the Nurse—would be a very useful addition to her maternity library, embodying, as it does, the full Anatomy of the Pelvis, and an excellent outline somewhat tabulated, of the possible dangers and fatalities of pregnancy, the course of complicated and natural labours, with an excellent Lecture on Obstetric Operations and the Puerperal State and its Diseases. The publishers are Baillière, Tindall & Cox: the price of the book is not stated.

Bookland.

SIR LEWIS MORRIS has hardly ever written anything more graceful than the "Modern Idyll," which forms the principal part of his new book of poems. It is the story of the secret marriage of a man and a woman, the man going out to the Crimean War, being dangerously wounded, but nursed back to life by his young wife, who joined the ranks of Nurses of the sick in that historic war. She was impelled to go to the war by a letter from her husband, which says he

"Would give his health
And scatheless limbs, if only he might feel,
Paying the price of sickness or of wounds,
The touch of her soft hand, and see her stoop
To kiss him as he lay."

A terrible blood-stain on the letter tells her he is wounded, and she goes out, only to lose her own life in saving his. It is a delightful little poem, and specially interesting to Nurses.

By the death of William Morris England loses a poet, an artist, and a fine type of man. There is little question that had it not been for what are called his "Socialistic views," he would have been Poet Laureate. His beautiful wall-papers are, perhaps, better known by the average person than his beautiful poems. One critic speaking of the influence for good that Morris always exercised, said: "He sought to put into all the phases of domestic decoration all the phases of domestic virtue." But he did more, for he made domestic virtue, which has always been regarded as rather a dull, tame sort of dreary thing, into a poem and an idyll.

The proceeds from Edna Lyall's new book, "The Autobiography of a Truth," recently published by the firm of Longmans, Green & Co., will be devoted to the relief fund for the Armenians, who are the subjects of the story itself. This is a noteworthy instance of an author contributing something more substantial than sympathy and exhortation.

Miss Mabel Hawtreys book on "The Co-Education of the Sexes," is very interesting, and she follows a train of reasoning deduced from her starting point that "education cannot be confined to the cultivation of the intellect merely, but must include the training of the physical and moral powers."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)