

A Book of the Week.

"THE WHEELS OF CHANCE."*

Mr. WELLS has already extracted much praise from literary critics by his ingenious phantasy, "The Time Machine." In that little shilling paper book he showed that he not only possessed original and weird ideas that were all his own, but that he was capable of expounding those ideas in a forcible and attractive manner. It was prophesied of him that he would become the "Jules Verne" of English literature.

"The Wonderful Visit" (of an angel from another sphere into the household of a conventionally-minded British clergyman) was also full of promise, though in the telling of the story Mr. Wells was not so uniformly successful as in his previous book. After these two publications he wrote a gruesome, semi-scientific sketch, entitled "The Island of Dr. Moreau." I never read this story, having been warned against it, but the reviews gave one the general impression that it disgusted many people, and pleased no one, and rather harmed than enhanced Mr. Wells' reputation as an author worthy of note.

This writer, however, proving of what a versatile talent he is possessed, has now given us an artistic and highly entertaining sketch of quite another type. "The Wheels of Chance" is a most engaging story, and I heartily recommend it to all our readers. It is a wholesome, pleasant, bicycling tale—very humorous, and genuinely funny. It is admirably illustrated, and would make a charming Christmas present for anyone to give or receive. The hero, Mr. Hoopdriver, was a draper's assistant in the "Emporium" of Messrs. Antropus & Co., of Putney, who spent nearly all the week days of the year leaning across the counter of the shop, serving customers with "huckaback, blankets, dimity, cretonne, linen, and calico." Nearly all the year he smirked and bowed and bawled out "Sayn" to the shop-walker, but not quite—for ten precious days in the summer he was allowed a holiday, and thus, in order that he might obtain as much enjoyment as possible out of those ten precious days, Mr. Hoopdriver learnt to bicycle.

The illustrations show him spinning down long country roads, sitting outside wayside inns, and tinkering at his machine by the side of ditches and hedges. No reader can fail to enter into the worthy draper's enjoyment of the open road, the country air, and the unwonted sense of freedom, for "on the first morning of the ten the holiday has no past, and ten days seem as good as infinity." But Mr. Hoopdriver meets with romantic adventure. The "Wheels of Chance" bring him along the same path as that of an oppressed, and distressed damsel, who has been persuaded into leaving an uncongenial home by a betraying man, who had promised to help her to "live her own life," and who merely had the wicked intention of ruining, and subsequently deserting the over-trusting maiden. How the valiant Hoopdriver championed the lady, how he rescued her from the villain, and how he escorted her in her flight along the country roads, of the wonderful journey they made

through the sweet-scented lanes, the curious must discover from the book themselves. It is not only well worth reading, but it is also worth buying and preserving for future re-perusal.

After I had finished reading this book, I felt that perhaps no one could appreciate the delicacy of its fun so well as that arch humourist, Mr. Anstey, author of "Vice Versa," "Voces Populi," "Lyre and Lancet," and of many other delectable and artistic comic writings. A review of this book by Mr. Anstey would indeed be well worth reading, and I only wish I possessed his power of pen to make my readers perceive the special merit of this book, which consists in the subtle method by which Mr. Wells first describes his hero Hoopdriver as a knock-kneed, weak-chested, cockney draper, and then constantly allows us to suspect that under his uneducated and ill-clad exterior he possesses the heart of a gentleman of the highest quality. The reverence with which he treats Jessie Milton (never even suspecting the young, inexperienced girl of intending any harm), and the pluck and generous endurance with which he helped her through all her adventures, fulfils one's ideal of a genuine knight of romance.

It is a testimony to the skill of the book to record that one reader, at any rate, rejoiced heartily when she read that the maiden Jessie proved herself worthy of him by discovering that beneath his cockney speech, and common clothes, lay hid the qualities that made the poor shopman a golden-hearted gentleman by nature—if not by birth and education. Throughout the whole volume, Mr. Wells tells his pleasant story with much delicacy and refinement, and does not, strange to say, spoil the whole dainty tale by a commonplace conventional ending.

A. M. G.

Reviews.

A "NURSE'S DIARY."—The "Nurse's Diary" for 1897, issued by Messrs. Burroughs, Wellcome & Co., is similar to the charming little volume of last year, but it comprises some additions and improvements. The hints on Nursing and aid to memory of incubation periods of infectious diseases are very valuable to a Nurse, who is not apt always to carry such information "in her head." As might be expected from a book emanating from this firm, the section on Foods and Feeding is specially valuable, giving, as it does, a description of the various methods in which Messrs. Burroughs' special invalid and infant foods should be used. For a *vade mecum* as to the peptonising of various diets this little book is thorough and complete.

Bookland.

SONG.*

WHAT boat is this that bears
My soul on an ocean, fanned
By new arriving airs
From an undiscovered land?
Is this Love's magic boat, and these
The waves of his unsounded seas?

* "The Wheels of Chance," by H. G. Wells, author of "The Wonderful Visit," "The Time Machine," &c. With 40 illustrations by J. Ayton Symington. 6s. (Dent & Co., 1896.)

* From "The Praise of Life," by Laurence Binyon. (London: Elkin Mathews. The Shilling Garland.)

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