

A Book of the Week.

"THE WAY OF MARRIAGE."*

THIS is a collection of stories by the delightful author of "The Maiden's Progress." The idea which unites them is that they all attempt to show something of the manner in which unlikely matches come about. How often we say, and hear others say, "What could possibly have induced a girl with all those chances to throw herself away in that inexplicable way?" or, "What a clever man like that could see in that silly, little vulgar—," and so on.

Violet Hunt attempts, with varying success, to find the key to some of these mysteries. Her book is interesting, for it is all on the subject which is the making or marring of women's lives, and of men's too; but none of the stories come near to the level of brilliancy attained by her in longer and more sustained work. Terse though she is, I do not consider her a mistress of the short story, and for this reason: that the interest of her writing lies in her studies of character; and her method of character-drawing is, like that of a greater than herself—Jane Austen—obtained by the frequently repeated delicate touch, and not by one bold sweep of colour that makes the short story.

Here and there through "The Way of Marriage" there is a saying in her most incisive manner, as, for example, "The woman dressed like a Russian Princess, with at least twenty pasts wreathed in her hair."

One of the stories in the collection was tolerably famous last year, when it appeared as one of the weird stories in the Christmas number of *Chapman's Magazine*. It relates how a wife, through her intense love for her husband, recalls him to life from the dead, only to find that the restored life is merely physical; the spiritual life has escaped her. For more than six years she lives with this soulless man, till at last she gives up the contest, and no sooner does her will release him than he fades out of existence. Frankfort Moore has exploited the same idea in the "Secret of the Court." I do not remember which of the two stories appeared first.

The two best of the collection are "The Marriage of Edward Norreys," and "The Marriage of Quentin Archer."

The first of these sketches out very vividly the frame of mind of a good sort of man, who has been playing "tame cat" to a married woman, and has meanwhile fallen in love with her young, blooming, and unsophisticated step-daughter. One wonders how he and his mother-in-law got on together in after years.

In "Quentin Archer" one gets a very amusing glimpse of the unconscious selfishness of people who wonder why a girl who lives at home should want to be married.

"Little Annie looks on her quite as a mother," wails poor Mary's mother and tyrant, speaking of the little orphan niece whom it is Mary's portion to tend.

"Yes; so good for Mary: satisfies the maternal instinct in her," agrees Mary's married sister.

And poor Mary's own defence of her own desire to go to the man she loves is most pathetic.

"The Way of Marriage," by Violet Hunt. One vol. (Chapman and Hall.)

"Quietly at home? Ah! yes," she said. "Why didn't you stop quietly at home, Letitia? Why does nobody stop quietly at home? Because they are alive—they want to live. I have stopped quietly at home for nearly twelve years. I was eighteen when I came back from school, and I have been here ever since. I am getting old; I am not so pretty as I was; I found a grey hair the other day! I have lived here and seen no one for almost twelve years. I have read to mother, and played with little Annie, and looked after the servants, and paid the weekly books, day after day for twelve years, like a machine! It is very well, but it is not life! Do you think it a life to satisfy a woman?" G. M. R.

Bookland.

WHAT TO READ.

"The Yoke of Empire." Sketches of the Queen's Prime Ministers, by Reginald B. Brett. With photogravure portraits of Her Majesty the Queen, the Prince Consort, Peel, Melbourne, Palmerston, Disraeli, and Gladstone.

"Life of Michael Angelo," by Herman Grimm. Translated by Fanny Elizabeth Bunnnett. (Dent.)

"The Arctic Night," by Roger Pocock. (Chapman and Hall.)

"Ghostly Tales," by the Countess of Munster.

Coming Events.

January 8th.—Princess Louise, Marchioness of Lorne, will be present at the Christmas entertainment to be given to the sick children at the Victoria Hospital for Children.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital Christmas Entertainment for the Resident Staff, 7 p.m.

Quarterly Meeting of the General Council of the Royal British Nurses' Association, 17, Old Cavendish Street, W., 5 p.m.

January 9th.—Society of Trained Masseuses (General Meeting), 12, Buckingham Street, Strand, at 7.30 p.m.

January 12th.—Invalid Cookery Class, Royal British Nurses' Association, 17, Old Cavendish Street. Seventh lesson.—Restorative soup, boiled sole, melted butter, sponge cake, lemon jelly, linseed tea, arrowroot.

January 14th.—St. John's House Debating Society, 7 p.m. Paper: "How can Private Nurses keep in touch with Modern Methods," by Miss Margaret Breay, M.R.B.N.A.

January 15th.—Midwives' Conference, 12, Buckingham Street, Strand, 7.45 p.m.

January 21st.—Conference Matron's Council, "The Organisation of Nurses' Training School. Alumnae Associations," by Mrs. Isabel Hunter Robb, late Superintendent Johns Hopkins Training School for Nurses, Baltimore, U.S.A., at the Medical Societies Rooms, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, 8.30 p.m.

January 22nd.—Second Sessional Lecture, Royal British Nurses' Association, 17, Old Cavendish Street, "On the Nursing of cases presenting symptoms of Mental Disease," by Professor E. W. White, M.B. Lond., 8 p.m.

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