

ITEMS OF INTEREST.

THE infant daughter of the Duke and Duchess of York, who was born at Sandringham on April 25th, was christened in the church there by the Archbishop of York. She was named Victoria Alexandra Alice Mary.

We quote from the *Times* the following letter received by the Duke of Westminster from Colonel Le Mesurier, C.B., who has recently visited Thessaly:—

“Athens, May 28th, 1897.

MY LORD DUKE,—The distress in Greece is terrible. At least 100,000 fugitives need the barest necessaries of life. The stampedes from Larissa and Arta, so fully described by the English Press correspondents, have culminated in a general exodus of the Greeks in Thessaly, and in that part of Epirus occupied by the Turkish army. I have just returned from a week's cruise on board a relief steamer laden with flour and biscuits, which we distributed amongst the fugitive groups scattered along the coast and in the islands. We visited a dozen places and relieved 50,000—chiefly women and children. At Trikeri 2,500 were entirely destitute, and many naked, depending upon grass and heather for subsistence and covering. In Eubœa there were 20,000 fugitives. Nearly all the men and able-bodied youths are with the army. I counted 50 sailing boats which were engaged transporting fugitives with all their belongings from one side to the other of the Gulf of Volo. At Mizra the sudden withdrawal of Colonel Smolenski's division and the absence of the Turkish cavalry caused widespread alarm. We took on board 300, and a steamer alongside embarked a like number. The foregoing will give your Grace some idea of what is being done, and how much funds are needed. Our cargo cost £1,000, and the food distribution should not be allowed to fail. All the assistance that can be collected is urgently required.

I am, &c.,
CECIL B. LE MESURIER.”

The British Red Cross Society has forwarded to Sir Philip Currie a further sum of £1,000 for the wounded Turks. The Palace has expressed its thanks to Lord Wantage for articles received at the hospital at Yildiz Kiosk.

A Book of the Week.

“THE ROMANCE OF ISABEL, LADY BURTON.”*

I AM so sorry that, owing to its great demand, I have been unable to notice this wonderful book until now. I think I should call it the most noteworthy book of the season.

Most people know that Lady Burton published a life of her husband soon after his death, but many people did not know or hear of the book by Miss

* “The Romance of Isabel, Lady Burton.” (Hutchinson & Co.)

Stisted, which was brought out after Lady Burton's own death, and which was full of insinuations against her. It is of course quite impossible to go into the merits of the controversy within the limits of these few lines, but if we believe that Lady Burton, when she wrote her diary, wrote from day to day a tolerably correct account of what had happened, we cannot escape from the conclusion that, whatever else she may or may not have been, she was, without doubt, a perfect wife, and this to the most difficult of husbands.

Richard Burton was a genius, and genius is erratic. The husband of Isabel Arundell was no exception to this rule. He does not appear to have been unkind to her, but he expected from her, and as a matter of course, services which would have been impossible to most women, and must have been trying even to her fiery spirit. For one who was a Roman Catholic to live at peace, and in close confidence with a man whose sympathies were avowedly Mohammedan, and who wrote books in favour of polygamy, argues the wonderful power of a woman's love. Isabel's love seems to have been of the type which can love on, independently of the judgment. She stood, as George Eliot somewhere says, too close to her husband to see his faults.

With all his brilliancy he must have been a troublesome handful for a Government. One can imagine, reading between the lines, how this unique couple must have come down like a whirlwind upon the British colony at Damascus. They filled their house with a perfect menagerie—horses, a camel, a white donkey, a Persian cat, a St. Bernard dog, two bull terriers, two Yarrowboroughs, a Kurdish pup, three goats, a lamb, a leopard, poultry and pigeons. They toré about the desert at night on horseback, they went to Palmyra without an escort, holding their lives in their hands the while, they lived among the Druses of the Lebanon, and Lady Burton, in addition to doctoring the natives, thrashed with her riding-whip a young man who insulted her.

Picture the horror of the “Protestant missionaries!” Heartily though one admires the intellect and the dare-devil courage of the man, one cannot wonder that a prudent Government removed him to a Consulate where he would have no chance of coquetting with Islam.

Their whole life was one long panorama of brilliant adventure—in South America, in India, in Syria. There is not one dull page in the book, for Lady Burton was possessed of a most vivid imagination, and saw the colour and the meaning of all that befell her. The book is full of incident, of movement, of good stories. Here is one:—

“It was up one of these minarets (of the Mosque at Damascus) that the Duchesse de Persigny ascended, and when prayer was called she refused to come down. The Shayk sent all kinds of messages and entreaties, to whom she replied—*‘Dites au Shayk, que je suis la Duchesse de Persigny, que je me trouve fort bien ici, et que je ne descendrai que quand cela me plaira.’* She did not please for three-quarters of an hour.”

But it is maddening to attempt the slightest description of this book! It is as varied as a kaleidoscope. From the idyllic beginning, with its young girl's romance, with a weird flavour of gipsy prophecy—on through evil report and good report, these two fared together, and, as one lays the volume down, one draws a long breath and says of the wedded pair, “They lived indeed!”

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)