

**A Book of the Week.**

**"A ROSE OF YESTERDAY."\***

It is curious how sometimes the same sort of idea seems to be in the air, as it were, so that two or three writers simultaneously make use of it. The underlying thought, this year of Jubilee, seems to be the lives and loves of the middle-aged. "The Physician" just played at the Criterion, "The Princess and the Butterfly" at the St. James's, a recent novel of Miss Cholmondeley, and this new story of Mr. Crawford, all have the same underlying interest; and the two last-named resemble each other quite curiously. Miss Cholmondeley's book was called "A Devotee." I did not notice it in these pages, because I thought it much below the writer's level. But the main incident was the romantic affection of a young girl for a middle-aged man, who was distinctly bored by her devotion, and felt himself entirely unable to respond to anything so immature and unsuitable. In "A Devotee" the guardian is unwise enough to marry the girl; in Mr. Crawford's book the Colonel knows better. He has always loved the same woman—she married the other man, and is old enough to be the mother of a son of twenty; but she is still handsome, and still the object of Colonel Wimpole's chivalrous devotion.

For my own part, I must confess that advancing years do not alter my point of view as to youth being the time of life for love-affairs. I do not insist upon a hero and heroine in their teens, or even in their twenties; but I have no feeling like that of the late Lord Lytton, who is said always to have made his hero the same age that he himself happened to have reached. There seems something a trifle frosty in the courtship of a man of fifty-seven. Ideas of gout and rheumatism intrude into the mind, and one feels that the span of wintry happiness would necessarily be brief, and the infirmities of age might come harshly upon those who had not been welded into one by a long youth spent together.

However, this disadvantage—which is doubtless no disadvantage to some readers—is the only fault to be found with a very delicate and a very deep study of human motive and human action. Helen's husband is a brute, who has drunk himself into insanity. He is considered incurable, and Wimpole urges her to obtain the divorce which might have been hers years ago had she chosen to apply for it. At this crisis she gets a letter from her husband, who has recovered, is about to be discharged as cured, and writes to implore her forgiveness.

Then the struggle begins. It is not fair to reveal the outcome of it, but it may be said that Helen's idea of her duty, and evidently Mr. Crawford's idea also, differ widely from the popular views concerning the lawfulness of snapping unwelcome ties. There are some passages in the book almost startling in their unlikeness to the prevailing tone.

"We are a cowardly generation, and men shrink from suffering now as their fathers shrank from dishonour in rougher times. The lotus hangs within reach of all, and in

the lives of many it is 'always afternoon,' as for the lotus-eaters. The fruit takes many shapes and names; it is called Divorce, it is called Morphia, it is called Compromise; it is designated in a thousand ways, and justified by ten thousand specious arguments, but it means only one thing—escape from pain. Soft-hearted and weak-nerved people ask why humanity should suffer at all, and they hail every invention, moral or material, which can make life easier for the moment, as a heaven-sent blessing. Why should we be uncomfortable, even for an hour, when a little dose of poison can create a lazy oblivion? That is the drunkard's reasoning, the opium-eater's defence, the invalid's excuse. It is no argument for men who call themselves the world's masters."

Striking thoughts are scattered thickly through the pages.

"Happiness is composite; pain is simple. It may take a hundred things to make a man happy, but it never needs more than one to make him suffer."

"The reason why woman has privileges instead of rights is that all men tacitly acknowledge the future of humanity to be dependent upon her from generation to generation."

G. M. R.

**June 20th, 1897.**

*Bolingbroke*—May many years of happy days befall My gracious sovereign, my most loving liege!

*Northumberland*—Each day still better other's happiness

Until the heavens, envying earth's good hap,  
Add an immortal title to your crown!

SHAKESPEARE.—*Richard II.*, Act. I, Sc. I.

**Bookland.**

**WHAT TO READ.**

"Queen Victoria's Highland Home and Vicinity," by Alexander Inkson M'Connochie.

Chamberlain's Foreign and Colonial Speeches.

"With Plumer in Matabeleland," by Frank W. Sykes.

"An Old Soldier's Memories," by Captain S. H. Jones-Parry.

"The New Africa," by Schulz and Hammar.

"God Save the Queen," by Allen Upward.

"The Fall of a Star," by Sir William Magnay, Bart.

"One Man's View," by Leonard Merrick.

"The Choir Invisible," by James Lane Allen.

**Dramatic Notes.**

**THE OLYMPIC.**

MR. BEN GRETT'S Shakespearian Revivals at the Olympic Theatre deserve far more than a passing consideration at the hands of the critics, and justice—with one or two laudable exceptions, such as those of the *Era* and the *Sunday Times*—has certainly not been done to them! We have, heretofore, adverted to the excellent impression produced by the presentment of "Hamlet," in which the *title-rôle* was sustained by that admirable actor, Mr. Nutcombe Gould, the Ophelia being taken by the charming Miss Lily Hanbury; and in reference thereto we now feel bound to

\* "A Rose of Yesterday," by F. Marion Crawford. (Macmillan.)

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