

would herself make a good Member of Parliament, then let her do the work for which she feels fitted. Personally, we disagree with Mrs. Webb; we believe she would be an excellent representative of her sex in the Lower (or Upper!) House. But, at least, if she does not feel called to this position, let her, in the name of justice, debar other women from occupying the position, only on the ground of incompetence, not on that of sex.

A Committee has been formed, in connection with the National Union of Women Workers, for the establishment of a Central Bureau, for facilitating communication between employers and women workers. It augurs well for the success of the new undertaking that Mrs. Creighton is taking an active part in its organization, and has consented to act as chairman of the Committee. Other well known men and women are also actively interesting themselves in the scheme.

### A Book of the Week.

#### "THE BETH BOOK."

THE long expected Beth Book has arrived at last, and enthralling it is, almost without exception, from the first page to the last.

Some of it is so extremely clever that one longs to read and re-read, to get the memory stored with the true views, the touches of vivid reality, the naturalness, and frequently the genuine beauty of the thought.

It is impossible to resist the conclusion that all the earlier part of the story is strictly auto-biographical. Nobody could invent the first glimpses of memory, the first half-peeps into the sadness of beauty, and the pain of pleasure, which Madam Sarah Grand describes in her baby heroine.

Beth, in her childhood, fascinates the reader utterly, and one mourns truly and deeply for the cruel misunderstanding, the utter lack of moral discipline, or intelligent guidance, which surround the gifted child.

Starving, craving for knowledge, Beth is not allowed to learn, because all the small means her mother possesses are being spent upon the boys: Beth herself being the one only member of all the large family, with intellect to repay the expense of a good education. To my mind, the finest part of the book is Beth in her colt girlhood, in her relations to her mother, to her boy sweethearts, and above all to the perfectly charming great-aunt Victoria Bench.

This dear old lady, with her narrow mind, her large heart, her untrained intellect, her unerring instinct, her love, her self-restraint, her innate refinement and nobility, is a study from the hand of a great artist. Her attitude of dignified bewilderment, before some of Beth's questions, is delightful.

"But what I want to know is, *why* did grandmamma stay with grandpapa if he was such a very bad man?" asked Beth suddenly.

"Because it was her duty," said Aunt Victoria.

"And what was his duty?"

"I think, Beth," said the old lady, "you have done sewing enough for this afternoon. Run out into the garden."

Beth's parents and relations are all admirable portraits, the story showing, so far, very great powers

\*"The Beth Book." By Sarah Grand. (Heinemann.)

of observation. The weak point comes when Beth marries Dan Maclure.

It is too fatally obvious that she does so merely to enable the author to describe her subsequent sufferings; and, granted the one great improbability that such a girl would have allowed herself, unloving, to marry such a man, all that follows is natural enough. It is not inconceivable that circumstances should have occurred to make such a marriage possible; but, as Madam Grand relates it, it seems preposterous, which is a grave artistic defect. The bringing in of characters from her other books is a defect of taste; it is making too sure that everyone who is reading "The Beth Book" has read the "Heavenly Twins," without which, the people so introduced are quite uninteresting and meaningless. The vivisection incident seems dragged in by the heels; altogether, the latter part of the book lacks the spontaneity, the conviction, which carries the reader so eagerly through the first part, destitute though this is, of any kind of plot or story.

Madam Sarah Grand has one dominant idea—the desecration of marriage. "The Beth Book," like "Ideala" and "The Heavenly Twins," is written to illustrate her ideas. Broadly speaking, these ideas are excellent. There can be no doubt that "The Heavenly Twins" did good, in opening the eyes of the good mothers of the type of Mrs. Frayling and Mrs. Beale, who, in their ignorance of the very existence of the social plague spot, could hand over their daughters to defilement worse than death, under the sacred name of Holy Matrimony.

It is to be regretted that an author so well informed on many subjects, should not read a little theology. Some study of the Christian faith would have kept her from such an extraordinarily ignorant statement as that which she makes respecting the Atonement, p. 500, and have prevented her erroneous notions respecting the ultimate scope and function of a Church. But it is a remarkable fact, that anyone who has been misinformed in youth on theological questions, seems always to argue that, therefore, all theology is false, or useless, or obsolete.

But it is ungracious to dwell on such things, as if a writer must needs be equally well informed on all subjects. Madam Sarah Grand has thought deeply and truly on the subjects to which she has given time and study, and her book abounds in that rich suggestiveness which makes a book such delightful reading. Many of them, like the remarks on Beth's cooking, on p. 175, are too long to quote; but I must end with a quotation which seems to me to sound the true note of social reform in its fullest sense:—

"Oh! I'm thankful to hear you say 'men and women,'" Angelica broke in. "That is the right, new spirit! Let us help one another. Any attempt to separate the interests of the sexes, as women here and there, and men generally, would have them separated, is fatal to the welfare of the whole race. The efforts of foolish people to divide the interests of men and women make me writhe—as if we were not utterly bound up in one another, and destined to rise or fall together! This woman movement is towards the perfecting of life, not the disruption of it."

G. M. R.

### Food for the Sick.

WE have received, from Messrs. Spottiswoode & Co., 54, Gracechurch Street, E.C., a copy of "Sick Room Cookery and Hospital Diet," by Maud Earle, Staff

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