

**A Book of the Week.**

**"RODEN'S CORNER."\***

sentence, but I have translated it as literally as I can from the Swahili words used.

I think this very affectionate disposition, and inclination to be led by one person, is likely to make it difficult for African women to work well *in a Hospital*; the different "shifts" in hospital work give them a sense of being under many mistresses, a thing very repugnant to them. But they are very *kind* in illness, and very patient, even young girls being willing to give up sleep and amusement to sit untiringly by a sick person. They have neat handy fingers, and once when I had been very ill, a girl, who had been some time before in our hospital, several times washed me quite in the regular style when by some accident the trained nurse could not do it. Also she did every task of the sick room, even the most disagreeable, with the greatest willingness.

Their defects are that most natives are apt to get tired of doing any one sort of work for many years together, and that, though they are capable of *learning* to do anything *very* well, still you cannot depend on their always taking sufficient pains to do it equally well. It is easier to get a great degree of skill than an equivalent amount of carefulness. But I believe this difficulty is not found in Africans alone. They especially dislike to be spoken sharply to; as a rule they are not "irritable" themselves and cannot bear it in others. Life, *i.e.*, a mere subsistence, is so easy in Zanzibar that it is no use thinking you can get disagreeable work done for ordinary wages. You get it done for nothing if they love you very much; or you may get it done for very high pay. Many difficulties are caused in Zanzibar by people not being able to speak Swahili; it is worth any pains to acquire it, as the want of being able to give some explanation of one's orders is a fruitful source of friction. This cannot be too strongly impressed on nurses coming to Zanzibar.

The early marriages which prevail are a hindrance to any long training at our hospital. Girls have not the stimulus of wishing to acquire a means of earning their own living. It has been suggested that a few should be sent to England for training, but to do this would require very special arrangements and much care. Even Englishwomen find the process of hospital training a great strain on their bodily strength, and I think that African girls have very little stamina and could not stand it. Also, in the winter climate of England, unless the greatest care were taken to keep them out of draughts, to give them warm bedrooms, and to provide them with food suited to them, I think they would breakdown. All this care might be impossible, and at all events would require an amount of consideration which would, of course, be troublesome, and which probably few would be willing to undertake. It seems to me that training could be much more easily given in some of the Indian Hospitals, where there would be no difficulties of climate, &c., to overcome. There is great need for trained native nurses in Africa, especially for some thoroughly trained in midwifery. We have had some sad cases of deaths of native women in confinements, deaths which we think need never have occurred if skilled assistance had been available.

Much, very much, of the future of Africa will depend on the women. As the mothers are, so in a great measure will the children be; and, therefore, the generations to come, the future African nations and African Church, will be better or worse, according to what is done now to help and train African women.

C. D. M. THACKERAY.

Mr Merriman, in his new book, has found a theme which is curiously well suited to his very pronounced style of rather superficial cleverness.

The plot of "Roden's Corner" is both original and ingenious. It is also particularly illustrative of the times we live in.

The group of philanthropists, none of them business men, who embark on a scheme to lessen the deadliness of a certain dangerous manufacture known as malgamite, are so delightfully indifferent to the probable economic results of their proceedings! To lengthen the lives of a hundred or so of those pitiful creatures, the malgamite workers, they blythely overthrow the paper trade, and so take the bread from the mouths of thousands of factory hands. Of course, the moving spirits in this "corner" in the paper trade, know perfectly well what they are about, and the philanthropic members of the Society are merely cats-paws in the hands of one of the most unscrupulous villains in fiction.

There are smart people and smart sayings in this book, all through, which make it very amusing reading. But, if one may venture a criticism upon one who has so unmistakably scored as a first favourite with the public as Mr. Merriman, I would say that in this book the characterization is laboured, and that the proceedings of some of the personages of the story, strain our powers of credulity to the utmost. That Tony Cornish, after the attempt to murder him by Von Holzen, a deliberate, cold-blooded attempt which left no room for doubt, should still adventure himself alone, after dark, in desolate parts of the Hague, and on the absolutely solitary dunes, seems too absurd to be believed, especially as upon his, (Tony's) life, rested the only possible hope of unmasking the scoundrels.

Mr. Seton Merriman also remains, as heretofore, absolutely outside of his women characters. We are told that Tony Cornish fell in love with Dorothy Roden; we are not given the smallest help to feel that this was inevitable, as we should feel with regard to all love affairs. We simply take the author's word for it that so it was, and as a consequence, the two people do not interest us in the least.

Major White, too, grows monotonous, his lack of vocabulary is overdone; surely no woman could be happy with a stuck pig, even though he had the Victoria Cross!

Mrs. Vansittart is the male novelist's conventional character, the charming widow of five and thirty, who invites young men to tea, and is maternal; but she does not turn out to be bad, so there is not much to be made out of her.

But, spite of the superficiality of all these people, the book is an admirably finished bit of writing, full of interest, and, as I said before, full of smart things.

A sample of two:—

"Social progress has made it almost a crime to hide one's light under a bushel. Are we not told, in so many words, by the interviewer and the personal paragraphist, that it is every man's duty to set his light upon a candlestick, so that his neighbour may at least try to blow it out?"

"Of the modern fictionists he knew nothing. 'Seems to me they are splitting straws, my dear,' he once said to an

\* "Roden's Corner." By Henry Seton Merriman. Smith Elder.

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