

A Book of the Week.

THE ASSOCIATE HERMITS.*

ANYONE who wants something light and amusing, should get this new instalment of Mr. Stockton's admirable fooling. His humour, as I have said in a former review, is every bit his own, and it is not everybody who can appreciate it, just as there are persons, as Mr. Birrell has observed, who can read the opening paragraph of "Mansfield Park" without a glow of delight and pleasure stealing over them.

The inevitable middle-aged lady, suddenly thrown into curious and unprecedented circumstances, who figures in all Mr. Stockton's books, is not absent from this one. She is here called Mrs. Archibald, and she and her husband are taking a wedding journey by proxy.

This is the central piece of drollery, the deliciously funny circumstance upon which the story finds itself. Kate, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Archibald, is going to be married. She and her husband are going to make their home with her parents for the present. But it transpires that the bride and bridegroom have both the strongest objections to the regulation bridal trip, and the most pronounced inclination to stay at home. The elder couple urge that the younger will prefer each other's undiluted society for a time at least. Quite so, reply the young ones; and that being so, you and mother shall take the trip, and we will stay at home by ourselves.

So said, so done; Mr. and Mrs. Archibald start forth on their travels, on the 6th of June, solemnly pledging themselves not to return until the 6th of July. Before they reach their destination—which, when they start, is uncertain—the party is reinforced by the addition of Miss Margery Dearborn, the child of an old friend, who is wild upon "camping out." They accordingly make their way to a place called "Sadler's." Not being an American, I am unable to say whether this delightful spot is altogether the creation of Mr. Stockton or not; if it does not already exist, there is a great chance for somebody; if it does, then there should be a Perowne and Lunn trip to the United States at once organized, for the express purpose of going there. Sadler has a large hotel close to a trackless forest. In the forest are built camps to suit all requirements, from those who really wish to rough it, to those who want the fun without the bother of primitive existence. Experienced guides are provided, and the new life begins.

The account of poor Mrs. Archibald, during her first night in a log cabin, and her heroic attempts at self-suppression, are simply too funny for anything.

"Are there panthers hereabouts?" she cautiously asks of Phil Matlack, the guide, next morning.

"Matlack looked up at her quickly, 'I expect you heard 'em walkin' about your cabin last night,' said he; 'and not 'only panthers, but most likely a bear or two, and snakes 'rustlin' in the leaves; and for all I knows, 'coons or 'possums climbin' in and out of the window. . . . 'Hardly any family parties goes into camp that some of 'em don't hear wild beasts the first night. But they never come no more. Them kind of wild beasts I call first-nighters, and they're about the worst kind we've got, 'because they really do hurt people by scratchin' and 'clawin' at their nerves; whereas the real wild beasts in

* "The Associate Hermits." By Frank Stockton. Harpers.

"these parts—and they're mighty scarce, and never come 'near camp—dout hurt nobody.'"

Margery's lovers, and the adjacent camp, and the arrival of the Bishop and his subsequent manœuvrings, and Miss Corona Raybold, and the assertion of Mrs. Perkenpine's individuality, are all in Mr. Stockton's best style. G. M. R.

The Song of the Women.

(Lady Dufferin's Fund for medical aid to the women of India.)

How shall she know the worship we would do her?
The walls are high, and she is very far,
How shall the women's message reach 'unto her
Above the tumult of the packed bazar?

Free wind of March, against the lattice blowing,
Bear thou our thanks, lest she depart unknowing.

Go forth across the fields we may not roam in,
Go forth beyond the trees that rim the city
To whatsoever fair place she hath her home in,
Who dowered us with wealth of love and pity.
Out of our shadow pass, and seek her singing—
"I have no gifts but Love alone for bringing."

Say that we be a feeble folk who greet her,
But old in grief, and very wise in tears;
Say that we, being desolate, entreat her
That she forget us not in after years;
For we have seen the light, and it were grievous
To dim that dawning if our lady leave us.

* * * * *
Go forth, O wind, our message on thy wings,
And they shall hear thee pass and bid thee speed,
In reed roofed hut, or white-walled home of kings,
Who have been helped by her in their need.
All spring shall give thee fragrance, and the wheat
Shall be a tasselled floor cloth to thy feet.

Haste, for our hearts are with thee, take no rest!
Loud voiced ambassador, from sea to sea
Proclaim the blessing, manifold, confest,
Of those in darkness by her hand set free,
Then very softly to her presence move
And whisper: "Lady, lo, they know any love!"

RUDYARD KIPLING.
(From Departmental Ditties.)

WHAT TO READ.

- "Khartum Campaign, 1898." By Bennett Burleigh.
"A Diplomatist's Wife in Japan." By Mrs. Hugh Fraser.
"Fields, Factories, and Workshops." By Prince Kropotkin.
"Our Industrial Laws—Working Women in Factories, Shops and Laundries, and How to Help Them." By Mona Wilson. Edited, with a preface, by Mrs. H. J. Tennant.
"Swallow: A Story of the Great Trek." By H. Rider Haggard.
"Two men o' Mendip." By Walter Raymond.
"A Son of Empire." By Morley Roberts.
"The Amazing Lady." By M. Bowles.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)