

## A Book of the Week.

### THE HUMAN INTEREST.\*

Yet another novel in which is exemplified the new non-morality! Miss Hunt shows it in the person of a young woman, married to a solicitor in Newcastle, with cravings after the higher culture, which the said husband entirely fails to satisfy.

Phoebe Elles is a pretty little thing, whose life is one long pose. She may almost be described as an unconscious liar, not in the least appreciating the depths of her own insincerity. One member of the ill-assorted household is an aunt of the husband, a terrible woman whose one virtue is that in which poor Phoebe is so utterly lacking,—sincerity.

Phoebe makes the acquaintance of Egidia, a lady novelist of some fame, who is staying in Newcastle, and whose sympathies are aroused for the poor little starved intellect and eager wistfulness of Phoebe. It is presumably her influence which finally makes Phoebe resolve that her present life is insupportable, and that, like Nora in the "Doll's House," her only course is flight.

She takes her departure, accordingly, and her evil genius directs her steps to a Northumbrian valley, where is a landscape painter, one Rivers, who happens to be just the one man in the world for whom Egidia cares.

Rivers is wholly absorbed in his art, and by way of being a misogynist. The odious Phoebe has hardly seen him before she resolves to make him notice her. With no higher motive than this does she proceed to take up her residence in the same inn, to haunt his steps, to invade his solitude, to intrude herself upon his meal-times, to set the whole of the little village in a perfect buzz of scandal. Then, when the vicar has thought it his duty to remonstrate with the unconscious artist, and to make him thoroughly uncomfortable, she rejoices at last in a scene of passion, in having forced this cold, absorbed being to embrace her, to make her a declaration; and tells him she is a married woman.

To this man, upright, if not religious, yet still living in an atmosphere of religious tradition, such a fact, of course, means the end, though the woman is so entirely without morals, that she hardly sees it in that light.

Meanwhile the formidable aunt has traced her, and her husband decides on divorce proceedings, which are likely enough to ruin the prospects of the artist who is in a fair way to become P.R.A. Not one spark of regret does all this awake in the breast of the detestable little liar. She comes to London, she actually avails herself of Egidia's hospitality, she seeks to still further compromise the luckless Co-respondent by going alone to see him in his rooms. The book breaks off with the sudden death of her husband, putting an end to her marriage tie and the threatened law-suit at the same time. We are left foreboding the awful future for poor Rivers, whose evanescent feeling for her has worn off, as we are allowed to see, but whose code of honour will doubtless condemn him to marry her.

Miss Hunt no doubt, sees clearly the moral issues of her tale. She wishes with no exaggeration, with no bias against her heroine in the mind of the reader, to impress upon one the awfulness, the worthlessness, and the mischievousness of the selfish, godless woman

\* By Violet Hunt. Methuen.

who lives only to feed her egotism with a life of personal excitement and interest, who, like the daughter of the horse-leech, cries aloud to life to "Give, give!"—but who herself gives nothing, nothing to anyone else!

Phoebe is described as entirely irreligious. So was Lady Newhaven in "Red Pottage."

But Violet Hunt realises a sequence of cause and effect in these facts—the lack of religion, the lack of moral fibre—which Miss Cholmondeley did not seem to appreciate, or at least failed to emphasise.

G. M. R.

## A Visit to the Convent.

Sister Teresa, walking in the sun,  
Clothed in her coarse brown habit, has a grace  
Her own entirely; e'en although her face  
By a long sable veil is hid from one.  
But yesterday, for once in life's long run,  
She raised the veil, and showed me for a space,  
Smiling—serene—herself; when I could trace  
My former friend indeed, and not the nun.  
The years are quickly bridged by Memory's glance,  
And I could see in glittering display  
The stage—and in the mazes of the dance  
Fair dimpled Nan in lace and satins gay:  
No life austere can change, no cloud disguise  
The sunshine glancing in sweet Nancy's eyes.

E. B.

—From the "Westminster Gazette."

### WHAT TO READ.

- "Paolo and Francesca." A Tragedy in Four Acts. By Stephen Phillips.
- "At the Wind's Will." By Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton.
- "The Drama of Yesterday and To-day." By Clement Scott.
- "Via Crucis." By F. Marion Crawford.
- "An Obscure Apostle." By Madame Orzeszko (the Georges Sand of Poland).
- "Shams." By . . . . . ? A Brilliant Satirical Society Novel.
- "Miss Malevolent." A Realistic Story of London Life.
- "In Connection with the De Willoughby Claim." By Frances Hodgson Burnett.
- "The Life of Madame de Longueville (Ann-Geneviève de Bourbon)." By Mrs. Alfred Cock.

## Coming Events.

14th December.—Hospital Ship *Maine* on view. Cards of admission from Mrs. A. A. Blow, Walsingham House, Piccadilly.

15th December.—The Prince and Princess of Wales attend a Performance at Olympia in aid of the Princess of Wales' Hospital Ship and the *Maine*.

15th December.—Mrs. Langtry appears as a Hospital Nurse in "Comrades in Khaki," at the Garrick Theatre, in aid of *The Daily Telegraph* Shilling Fund.

17th December.—Farewell Dinner to the Surgeons, Nurses, and Officers of the *Maine* at the Carlton Hotel. Tickets £5 5s.

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