

Joan of Arc.

Was there ever a greater heroine than Joan of Arc. We are inclined to think not. At least she has always been our special favourite in history, and therefore it was with the greatest interest that we learned that Mrs. Henry Fawcett would lecture on this fascinating subject at the Passmore Edwards Settlement, Tavistock Place, last Saturday.

Poor Joan, it was her misfortune to care for a Cause (with a big C) and that meant inevitably persecution, jealousy, and unhappiness. Yet surely we need not commiserate her, for in spite of the ingratitude, treachery, and betrayal, leading up to her tragic death at the age of only nineteen, many might well envy this unlettered peasant the reputation which is hers to-day, for she stands out gloriously, in strong contrast to the demoralization and lust of the age in which she lived, a simple village maiden, strong in the conviction of the Divine inspiration of her mission, strong also to do and dare, possessing at seventeen the faculties which qualified her in the barbarous age in which she lived, to hold with distinction the position never held before or since by a woman, that of Commander-in-Chief of the military forces of a great nation, and withal she retained to the end the simplicity and sincerity which were her distinguishing characteristics, and the purity which was hers when in the little village of Domremyshe guarded her father's sheep, so that when the King would have bestowed upon her anything for which she liked to ask, the only gift she could think of as desirable was the exemption from taxation of her native village to which she never returned.

Mrs. Fawcett told her tale as perhaps only she could tell it. She evidently possessed the first qualification for rightly understanding any person, an affection for and appreciation of her heroine, and her wealth of knowledge of the historical facts was patent. And so, as she unfolded the tragic story the attentive faces of her audience—mostly artizan—showed that they were following every word, and that the lecture was concluded all too soon.

The outlines of the story of Joan are familiar to most people, but Mrs. Fawcett added many details, and personal touches, which are not usually related, and we can only hope that this word picture faithfully painted by a loving hand, and related in English which was beyond reproach, will be published in full, so that many people who were not present at the lecture may have the great pleasure of reading it.

One noticeable characteristic of the Maid of Orleans was that she always compelled the belief of her own sex. The happiest moment of her life was perhaps when she crowned the unworthy Charles King at Rheims. After that if she had been content to be flattered and made much of, and had relinquished her purpose of taking Paris, she might have been fêted to the end of her days; but sops to her vanity had no attraction for her. She wanted the kernel not the husks, and she reaped the usual reward of those who have not a price. It is characteristic of the Monarch for whom she laid down her life, that he made no effort to save her, but that twenty-five years after her death he effectually cleared her reputation, not from any tardy remorse, but because it affronted his royal dignity that it should be said he owed his crown to a sorceress.

Books of the Week.**IN CONNECTION WITH THE DE WILLOUGHBY CLAIM.***

Mrs. Burnett's new book is a delightful improvement upon her last both in manner and matter. The scene of this new one is laid in a Southern State of the Union, at the time of the civil war. The author wisely gives us no details of the war itself, they do not concern her story, which deals with the vicissitudes of an old and proud Southern family during the war, and their long and difficult suit for compensation afterwards.

Tom de Willoughby's history is what Lucas Malet once inimitably called the "history of a deviation." He is unlike his family in every possible respect, the divergence being so marked that he finally separates himself completely from them, and becomes a store-keeper in a little village known as Talbots Cross Roads. Here he is immensely popular for his good humour and wit: and here befalls him the adventure of his life.

The village has been more or less exercised over the personality of a curious couple who have come to live in a desolate log cabin in a pine wood near; they shun everyone, will not give their name, will not even exchange a word with the sociable natives. One night Tom is aroused from sleep by the morose man, whom he has already divined to be a gentleman, looks notwithstanding. The man wants a doctor. In his aristocratic days Tom had been a medical student; he at once accompanies the stranger, and finds the young girl *in extremis*. The baby is born, the girl dies. The man seems utterly unable to decide anything for the child's future, or to care about it in any way, and Tom takes the waif to his great loving unfilled heart. The mystery of the little girl's birth is worked out in the ensuing chapters with a good deal of force and pathos, though with more than a suspicion of likeness to the "Scarlet Letter," a model which lesser lights should shrink to imitate. The best thing is the description of the mental agony of the young pure girl betrayed, when she realises that she is to be made to pay nature's awful penalty for her sin. Her brother, the mysterious man who hides her and her shame in the log cabin, is a Calvinist of the gloomiest type. He is convinced that Margery's sin has condemned her to damnation, and he cannot truthfully tell her otherwise. The child dies in torment and in terror of God's vengeance; and the brother writes home to the aged mother that Margery has died of consumption in Italy, died in peace and without pain, in the sunset by an open window.

When Felicia, the orphan girl, grows up, Mrs. Burnett unfortunately falls into her trick of superlatives, and rains beauty and virtue upon her until she ceases to be real to us. A young De Willoughby who is a mixture of Apollo and Sir Galahad is found for her, and the two pass from our view into a flowery paradise of riches, love, and natural beauty, presided over by the self-abnegating and wonderful Tom. There are two negro slaves in the story, both of whom are models of every virtue. Personally, we have the greatest possible sympathy with the "happy ending." We are of those who "never dream, though right be worsted, wrong will triumph," and are sincerely glad when, after

* Frances Hodgson Burnett. F. Warne & Co.

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