

remarkable collection of drawings and models illustrative of insect pests and their depredations. Miss Ormerod's scientific help has ever been available to any applicant at home or abroad without fee or reward. On an average 1,500 letters are received and replied to annually.

The Vicar of Great Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire, has taken a new departure in matters ecclesiastical, for he has nominated his wife as Vicar's Warden for the ensuing year. We know of no rule which makes her incapable of filling the office, and we believe that there are already several lady churchwardens in the country. This is, however, we believe, the first time that a clergyman has appointed his own wife to the office.

El Book of the Week.

"SOPHIA." *

" 'Twas heaven to lie upon a couch, said Gray,
And read new novels on a rainy day."

Had Gray lived in our times, he should have added—read the last new novel by Stanley Weyman.

You take up the volume with a smile at the treat which you know lies before you; you lay it down with a sigh that the pleasure is at an end. The hand that wrote the "Gentleman of France" has lost none of its cunning; but we are growing used to Mr. Weyman's charming style and stirring narrative, and nobody will say very much about this new example of them. Had this book appeared before its author inaugurated his own style of historical romance, it should have made quite a stir.

The scene is laid in the England of 1742. There are no politics; but the social life of the day is sketched by a master hand—a hand that knows to a hair's breadth the art of subordinating its backgrounds, and using them only as a set-off to the interests of the story. Sophia, the heroine, must be frankly set down as the most charming of Mr. Weyman's creations. Her character is nowhere described, but left, as is his custom, to develop itself through incident.

"The soul is known in its due degree
By its action—the thing it does."

Sir Hervey Coke has the discernment to recognise the noble nature of the girl through all the imprudence into which her inexperience betrays her. He is a most thoroughly likeable person, and heartily does one sympathize with him in his desperate venture to save Sophia's reputation.

"Will you then marry and trust that love will follow?" the heroine is asked in the "Belle's Stratagem." And her reply is, "As readily as I would adventure my last guinea and trust that good fortune would follow." Sound sense this; yet Sir Hervey Coke does thus adventure his last guinea, and good fortune does follow the daring experiment.

Only in one point do we quarrel with the author.

The great situation of the story is this. Sophia, a week after her nominal marriage, is travelling down to her husband's house in Sussex under care of his confidential servant, and an escort of two grooms; and having with her that fascinating little person, Lady

Betty Cochrane, her maid, and last but not least, the Coke family diamonds, which her husband has had sent to her by his bankers. The coach is most cleverly waylaid, and the girls trapped, by Hawkesworth, the villain who had come so near to wreck all poor Sophia's chances of happiness. The girls escape across a swollen river with the jewels, but the rascal is close at their heels. They make for a cottage in which a light is burning, only to find that they are trapped. To ensure the escape of Betty with the diamonds which she is guarding as her own life, Sophia deliberately enters the cottage where, as she has been warned, three persons are lying dead of small-pox. There is no finer scene in all Mr. Weyman's writings than this, in the plague-stricken farmhouse.

She had said to Sir Hervey Coke on her wedding day—of Hawkesworth—"I had sooner die than let him touch me." This saying she literally fulfils—confronting him across the horrible bed where lie the sheeted corpses, and daring him to approach. He dare not do it. The intrepid girl saves both herself and her jewels untarnished for the husband she afterwards learns to love so well; and the cause of complaint is, that it is nowhere made clear that her heroism of that night is made known to Sir Hervey or that he gives it the enthusiastic admiration which it merited.

We would fain linger over the working out of the end of the story; over the growth of Sophia's love, and her husband's method of winning it. One lays it down with the sensation of not having had nearly enough, and, like Oliver, one asks for more. G. M. R.

WHAT TO READ.

- "The Opening of the Soudan." Four Special Articles by the Special Correspondent of *The Times* at Omdurman.
- "Besieged by the Boers: A Diary of Life and Events in Kimberley During the Siege." By Dr. Oliver Ashe, Surgeon to Kimberley Hospital.
- "Veldt and Laager." By E. S. Valentine, Novelist.
- "A Kent Squire." By F. W. Hayes.
- "The Minx." By Iota.
- "Hearts Importunate." By Evelyn Dickenson.
- "The Collapse of the Penitent." By Frederick Wedmore.

Coming Events.

April 28th.—The Prince of Wales will receive, on behalf of the British Museum Trustees, the Statue of Professor Huxley, at the Natural History Museum, South Kensington, 1.15.

Lord Rosebery presides at a Complimentary Dinner to Sir William MacCormac and Mr. Treves, to be given at the Reform Club.

April 30th.—Indian Famine Fund: Café Chantant at the Royal Palace Hotel, Kensington.

May 2nd.—The Annual Meeting of the Clapham Maternity Hospital will be held at the Hospital, Jeffrey's Road, Dr. Helen Webb in the chair, 3.30 p.m.

May 5th.—Opening of the Women's Exhibition at Earl's Court.

May 8th.—Concert, on behalf of the Mary Wardell Convalescent Home for Scarlet Fever, at Stafford House, St. James's.

* By Stanley Weyman. (Longmans).

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