

A Book of the Week.

JACK RAYMOND.*

There is no doubt that, with all its faults, "The Gadfly" was a most remarkable book; and this second attempt by the same author, is entitled to the same description. It is a remarkable book. But it is safe to prophesy that it will not be a popular book, nor make a stir among the reading public, though it is strong enough to be exceedingly impressive. The reason why it will fail to make the appeal that it should make, is that it is of that school of thought which represents man entirely as the shuttlecock of circumstances, helpless and hopeless in the toils of an inexorable destiny, against which the noblest struggles are in vain.

There is much that is fascinating in this creed as applied to one's own life. We all love to think how much better we deserve of fate, than fate has as yet seen fit to bestow. We all love to think that, but for unpropitious circumstances, lack of money, lack of education, or—most subtle of all—lack of sympathy, misunderstanding, we might have been greater and better than we are. The fascination lies in the fact that there is much truth in the reflection, "None of us liveth unto himself," and, doubtless, most of us would have been happier and better if everybody had completely done his or her duty by us all our lives. But it is not entirely true. "Man is man, and master of his fate"; and when we see the doctrine writ large in a book, we resent it, it seems gratuitous and cruel, we rise from the perusal of it with a feeling of injury; we know it is not wholly true.

Jack and Molly Raymond are the doubly orphaned children of Dr. John Raymond, who married a foreign actress. Both the parents have disappeared when the tale begins, and Jack and Molly are the care of their father's brother, rector of the fishing village of Porthcarrick, in the West of England. We only hear, in a hazy way, that the mother had a bad reputation; the shadow of this malign heredity clings to Jack, and as he is a very naughty boy, makes it easy to misjudge him. His uncle fails to distinguish between naughtiness, which is merely the result of daring and physical exuberance, and the sins of uncleanness. When scandalous doings at the school Jack attends, are brought to light, it is taken for granted that he is the ringleader. As a matter of fact, he is a quite clean-minded boy. It is upon Molly, the little girl, that the curse of her mother's want of chastity has descended.

The uncle is a demon of cruelty, the very delineation of whose character strikes one as almost an indecency. In his youth he had to fight hard against the temptations of the flesh, and the authoress seems to suggest that he had better have yielded to them, since the pent-up lust in his nature breaks forth in the desire to inflict torture upon the weak or unresisting. All this part of the book is revolting in the extreme.

Jack, at school, falls in with a pretty little boy called Theo Mirskey, whose father was a political exile, and whose mother takes a fancy to Jack, loves him, practically adopts him, and dies, leaving Theo to his charge.

Theo, who has no more conscience than a pea, owing, we are told, to his artist nature, which makes it impossible for him to be bound by the laws which

* By E. L. Voynich. (Heinemann.)

rule the ordinary person, proceeds to seduce the non-moral Molly. Molly is turned out of the Rectory, and Jack receives and maintains both her and her child, without the smallest care as to who little Johnnie's father may have been. The book ends with the death of little Johnnie from diphtheria, and Jack's sudden perception of the dead child's extraordinary likeness to Theo's mother.

Such is the plot of the story. Considered simply as a story it is almost without merit, for it is extremely painful, and not very interesting. The author could not have written for the pure joy of telling such a story, she must have had some object in the background. What that object was, the present reviewer has failed to discover, unless the Wicked Uncle is a real person, and E. L. Voynich owes him a grudge. If this be so, she may congratulate herself upon having paid it off. G. M. R.

BROTHERHOOD.

Fraternal regard! Amid our troubles
And perplexities, when life so beautiful
Appears joyless, 'tis a solace to the mind
To know we have the regard of all whom
We call Brethren. Come weal or woe, by
Patience, perseverance, and strictly following
The path of duty, we may all hope at least
To deserve it. When Brotherly love exists in its
Truest sense, how intense is that inward feeling
One toward another. The hearty handshake,
The genial smile, a kind word, and the joyful
Sound of Brother! In one's ear, tends to allay
Fear and banish thoughts of a despairing nature;
Giving us heart to go onward! Notwithstanding
Our many vicissitudes: Making more smooth
The rugged ways through which we have to pass, in
Whatsoever sphere it hath pleased God to call us.
The true spirit of Fraternity is seen in our
Actions, not in promises; not in our speech, but in deeds;
Deeds of kindness, which may be rendered by all,
Whether rich or poor. The Fatherhood of God!
The Brotherhood of Man! should be our forte, our aim.
—*Indian Medical Record.* JOHN GANT.

What to Read.

"A History of Italian Unity—1814-71." By Bolton King, M.A.

"Italy To-Day." By Bolton King, M.A., and Thomas Okey.

"Diary of a Nurse in South Africa." By Alice Bron. With a portrait of the author. Translated from the French by G. A. Raper.

Coming Events.

June 15th.—Inaugural Meeting of the League of St. John's House Nurses, St. John's House, 2.30 p.m.

June 16th.—Hospital Sunday.

June 17th.—Women-Writers' Dinner at Criterion, 7.45; Mrs. Harrison ("Lucas Malet") in the chair.

June 19th.—Annual Meeting of the supporters of the Clapham Maternity Hospital, at the Hospital, 41, Jeffrey's Road, Clapham. Mrs. Scharlieb, M.D., in the chair, 3.30 p.m.

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