

A Book of the Week.

TANGLED TRINITIES.*

Mr. Woodroffe is a force to be reckoned with in the fiction of to-day. His work stands triumphantly out above the mediocre and the trivial, by virtue of a singular directness, degenerating sometimes in the direction of brutality, and of a strong poetic feeling which knows how to give to each scene its adequate setting.

The text of his discourse—for this is without doubt a novel of the problem type—is the presence, as rector of a parish in Kent, of a man named Steele, with West Indian blood in his veins. His daughter Asta has been brought up in St. Lucia by two old half-caste aunts who are Roman Catholics, but are pledged not to proselytise her. Her old nurse Judith, a full-blooded negress, is a heathen of the heathen, believing in Obi worship and fetiches, and from her Asta has imbibed all she knows. Her father, when she comes to live with him in England, is quite unable to impress upon her mind even the rudiments of Christianity; she is a savage pure and simple, without power of thought or reason, living purely on instinct and impulse.

In her savage way she is beautiful, though, as Colonel Skene says, one could never think of her as a wife.

This curious father and daughter are not popular in the countryside. Here we think Mr. Woodroffe is more than a trifle unjust, for he seems to think that the fact that Mr. Steele and Asta are unappreciated, is a sign of provincial narrow-mindedness. But what could have been done with such a girl? For the writer is careful to show us that Asta is not merely an undeveloped being, but a being of such narrow limits that she resembles a wild animal more than a woman. Love, hate, passion, desire, superstition—these make Asta, and some men would have us believe that these make woman.

Skene, the entirely selfish man, of whose programme marriage forms no part, is a pitiless, an unsparing, but a mortally true picture. Perhaps the scene that cuts deepest, the scene that makes one wince with its un-sheathed brutality, is that in which the anæmic, peevish daughter of Mr. Williams, country clergyman, suddenly bursts forth into an anathema against her bringing up.

"Satisfied! There is nothing to be satisfied about; what the wretch said was only too true. True enough, we are a swindle—you and I and the others—and I have been brought up on lies. It is a lie to insist on it that girls like their lives, and their two-penny accomplishments, and dressmaking. You lie to yourselves and to each other, and you force us to lie too, or be disgraced. You crush all the nature in us, and you try to pretend that it isn't there, but it is. You pretend to each other and to us that we are just what you and our ridiculous bringing up have made us, but we are not quite that, after all. No, I could tell you a good deal. . . . You tell us that men appreciate women for being good, and that's another lie. What about the ballet girls who marry peers? What about the fuss that is made of Tottie Garnier now she is married to Lord Attenmore? Moreover, though you and everyone else know about Mrs. Donnithorn, you have her to your houses, and is there a woman in the place who wouldn't be glad to marry her daughter to Colonel Skene when he drops her? You make it perfectly evident to us that everything of that

* By Daniel Woodroffe. (Heinemann).

sort is tolerated, and even admired, and you try to force us to think that it isn't and to act as if it wasn't.

. . . Another unjust thing you do. You give the brothers money to spend and live their lives with, and put them in the way of happiness, and none to us; and we sit at home making blouses at 5³/₄d. the yard!"

One is tempted to go on and quote more. The strength of the book is awful, and some of it is fearfully true. As for Asta, one feels that her nature was so essentially non-moral, that her lapse from virtue could have little meaning for her. The fact that spoiled her happiness would not be the irregularity of the bond, but that she had not the man she wanted.

G. M. R.

Verses.

"Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new:

That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do;

"For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,

Saw the vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

* * *

"Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd

In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

* * *

"Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,

Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change."

From *Locksley Hall*.

What to Read.

"Josephine, Empress of the French." By Frederick A. Ober.

A life of Josephine, presenting her childhood as well as her brilliant and tragic womanhood, and containing a collection of letters that passed between Josephine and Napoleon.

"Straws in the Wind." By Carlton Dawe.

"The Aristocrats." By Gertrude Atherton.

"Souls of Passage." By Amelia E. Barr.

"By Rock and Pool or An Austral Shore." By Louis Becke.

"In the Palace of the King." By F. Marion Crawford.

"Bagsby's Daughter." By Marie and Bessie Van Vorst.

"In the Ice World of Himalaya." By Fanny Bullock Workman, M.R.A.S., F.R.S.G.S., and William Hunter Workman, M.A., M.D., F.R.G.S.

Coming Events.

THE INTERNATIONAL NURSES' CONGRESS.

September 16th.—Meetings of the National Associated Alumnae, of the Superintendents' Society, of the International Council of Nurses.

September 18th.—Opening of the International Nurses' Congress, Buffalo, U.S.A.

September 21st.—Trained Nurses' Day at the Pan-American Exposition, Buffalo.

Meeting in the Temple of Music.

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