

its criminal conduct of affairs, when he said to a lady canvasser: "A Republican, hey? Well, bein' a woman ye're harmless!"

The Ladies Commission appointed to inquire into the management of the Concentration Camps in South Africa have completed their work, and are now on the way home. They do not see eye to eye with Miss Hobhouse, in their official capacity this could not be expected, but their reports point to inadequacy in many, or all, of the camps, in the following important particulars—

1. The food, even when sufficient in quantity is wanting in variety. That is specially hurtful in the case of young children who are recovering from disease.
2. The supply of tents, though adequate for immediate wants, leaves no reserve, and more hospital tents are wanted. Moreover, there is scarcely any flooring for the tents to prevent people, in the absence of bedsteads, from having to sleep on the ground.
3. Scarcity of fuel. This is not by any means universal, but certain serious cases are pointed out.
4. Inadequate supply of boilers for boiling water, and disinfecting clothing and bedding.
5. Want of fresh clothing, especially underclothing.

The terrible death-rate in the camps is now beginning to decrease, as shown in the following table. The main facts in the new Blue Book on the camps just issued, shows the death-rate as follows:—

1. In the seven months (June to December) 16,321 persons (whites) died in the camps (following the figures in the last Blue Book, which replaced those of the monthly returns).
2. The total number of deaths among children for the same period is 12,265.

A Book of the Week.

THE MATING OF A DOVE.*

"Among the Syringas" completely established the claim of Mrs. Mann to be among the stronger and more serious of our novelists, and it may be said at once that this remarkable book more than bears out her reputation for originality, and, we had almost said, genius.

It is the intense reality, the almost horrible faithfulness to life, which strikes one so forcibly, and, mingled with this a strange charm, a breath of the very unexpectedness of life itself, which forbids her ever to degenerate into the mere horror-monger—ever to write a book like "A Village Tragedy."

This story is quite a quiet one. The action passes in the village of Swilly Fen, where the curate, young, phthisical, and with an income of £150 a year and a house, whose walls are covered with blue mould, opens the ball by marrying Monica Dove, beautiful, penniless, and selfish. For her sake the well meaning young fellow neglects his parish, runs into debt, becomes nothing on earth but her slave, while she entertains anybody who will come to the house, and runs about in company with any young man she can

* By Mary E. Mann. Fisher Unwin.

pick up. The heroine of the story is her sister Amy, and seldom has a more original yet more obviously true portrait been given to the world.

Poor Amy! Her unselfishness, her hopeless untidiness, her mixture of docility and tenacity, of ignorance and luminous knowledge, of inability to take a hint, mingled with an intuition little short of marvellous in some cases, these make up an image which follows us about, which haunts our thoughts long after the book is done. Like the life-like portrait of the neglected girl in "Among the Syringas," this portrait of Amy is a most wonderful achievement.

It is also with an insight little short of marvellous, that the author makes Amy fall in love with George Grand, the taciturn, chivalrous village carpenter. She naturally would do so, not because she is not refined, but because she is elementary—a child of the woods and the meadows, a lover of dumb creatures and children—one who could never even dress like other women, to whom the usages of society are but irksome restrictions. In the village life of sheer simplicity, with the good man who loved her, Amy would have found true happiness. The scene in which she takes leave of George, her family having represented to her that she ought to marry Dr. Lamb, is of a delicacy and a force so surprising that it is to be wished that it were possible to transcribe it here.

The book is well written, with a deliberate plainness in which every sentence tells. The opening scene in which Monica and the Reverend Michael criticize their wedding presents, is of an extraordinary truth to nature, to some nature that is. One would imagine that the writer had really overheard every word of a similar conversation.

Nothing could be better than the characters of the two sisters, and altogether the impression left by the painful story is not one of pain, but of admiration for a remarkable achievement, and a sympathy with Amy, which almost amounts to heart-ache.

Not that one can truthfully feel that Amy could ever have been a satisfactory wife and companion for an English gentleman of the present day, but that one reflects bitterly, angrily, upon the narrowness of a scheme of things which should deny to her every avenue of happiness. Why should she not be happy, poor, neglected, love-hungry child? The author seems to allow us a glimmer of hope that ultimately she may have attained the only life that one feels would be possible for her, and with this we are fain to be content.

G. M. R.

What to Read.

- "The Portion of Labour." By Mary E. Wilkins.
- "The Usurper." By W. J. Locke.
- "The Beleaguered Forest." By Elia Peattie.
- "The Land of the Blue Gown." By Mrs Archibald Little.
- "The Mating of a Dove." By Mary E. Mann.
- "Where Honour Leads." By Marion Francis.

Coming Events.

Thursday, January 30th.—Annual Meeting of the Matrons' Council, Matron's House, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, 4 p.m.

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