

A Book of the Week.

THE HOLE IN THE WALL.*

Mr. Morrison has gone back to his earlier methods in this darkly-drawn story. Here is the full-blooded East-End in the days of Ratcliff Highway, and here are actors suitable to such a stage, drawn with remorseless strength and uncompromising candour.

And yet the book, though continually it horrifies, does not repel, except perhaps in the appalling description of the blinding of Dan Ogle by the fiend-like George—blinding with quicklime. There is an undercurrent of true feeling in it; the saving grace of humanity, among a community of wild beasts.

But, indeed, it is to offer an affront to wild beasts to compare them to such devils as Dan Ogle and Blind George, and Henry Viney. Beasts tear each other to pieces, but not with words of friendship on their lips; beasts devour their prey, but without a lie upon their tongues.

Into this world of rapine and foulness and unspeakable cruelty and degradation comes little Stephen, hand in hand with Captain Nat. Captain Nat was once skipper of a vessel not destined by her owners to reach port. Captain Nat carried out his orders, but with the loss of one man, who had got at the rum and could not be saved. Now Captain Nat's own son, little Stephen's father, is mate aboard the brig *Juno*, owned by Viney and Marr, and also destined never to reach port. This man, Nathaniel Kemp the younger, is the one man aboard the fated brig who sees what is up, and resists to his utmost the captain's intention. Therefore, when at last the captain succeeds and the *Juno* founders, the first mate is conveniently lost.

It is murder, by the law of England, and Captain Nat has a letter from his son that would hang Viney, and other evidence besides; but he dare not use it because of that past of his own, which would be brought up against him. Moreover, at his curious wooden inn, built partly on piles over the river—"The Hole in the Wall"—Captain Nat carries on a trade in the purchase of stolen goods, not to mention the smuggling in of tobacco from the ships lying in the river, in which he is assisted by Bill Stag, the purl man.

Into this curious place comes little motherless Stephen, tenderly loved by the old strong man, used to live among the worst men in the world and effectually to take his own part among them. The design of the story is to show how the little child's simplicity and unquestioning love and faith shed a new light for his grandfather upon the dark places where he treads, and which grow to seem too dark for the steps of a little child.

Here is the description of the first way in which this simplicity knocks at the kindly door of the rough old smuggler's heart:—

"I considered again the matter of my prayers with Grandfather Nat, to his obvious perplexity, by candle-light. For I was urgent to know if I must now leave my mother out, and if I might not put my little dead brother in; being very anxious to include them both. My grandfather's first opinion was that it was not the usual thing; which opinion he expressed with hesitation, and a curious look of the eyes which I wondered at. But I argued that God could bless them just as well in heaven

* By Arthur Morrison. Methuen.

as here; and Grandfather Nat admitted that no doubt there was something in that. Whereupon I desired to know if they would hear if I said in my prayers that I was quite safe with him at the Hole in the Wall; or if I should rather ask God to tell them. And at that my grandfather stood up and turned away, with a rub and a pat on my head, towards his own bed, telling me to say what I pleased, and not to forget Grandfather Nat.

"So that now, having said what I pleased, and having well remembered Grandfather Nat, and slept and woke, and dozed and woke again, I took solace from his authority, and whispered many things to my little dead brother, whom I could never play with: of the little ship in the glass case, and the pictures, and of how I was going to the London Dock to-morrow; and so at last fell asleep soundly till morning."

G. M. R.

The Nation-Builders.

These do not wear
Trappings of state, nor gird upon their side
Resistless steel, nor any symbol bear
To show they wrought a nation's life and pride.

These do not crave
Fame's voice, for their high task is far above
Her wavering tone, soon muffled by the grave;
These, in the royal consciousness of love,

Ask but to gaze
On their great work, and, seeing it is good,
Put graciously aside all meed of praise,
Content in God's best gift—pure motherhood.

CLINTON DANGERFIELD in the *Century*.

What to Read.

"Report of the Tuberculosis Committee of the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland."

"The Struggle for Persia." By Captain Donald Stuart.

"The Snow Baby." By Josephine Diebitsch Peary. The true story of Commander and Mrs. Peary's little daughter, the only white child ever born so far north.

"The Success of Mark Wyngate." By Una L. Silberrad.

"Paul Kelper." By Jerome K. Jerome.

"The Priest and the Princess." By R. L. Dixon.

"A Son of Gad." By J. A. Steuart.

"Open Doors for Women Workers." (Central Bureau for the Employment of Women.)

Coming Events.

October 11th.—Hospital Saturday Fund's Twentieth Annual Special Collection in aid of the Medical Charities of London.

October 13th.—A Non-Party Women's Protest Meeting against the Education Bill on account of the Disqualification of Women being a Three-fold Injustice:—

1. Towards Women;
2. Towards Children;
3. Towards the Electorate.

St. James's Hall, 8 p.m.

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