

A Book of the Week.

THE THOUSAND EUGENIAS.*

Mrs. Sidgwick is an author to whom one always turns with delight. She has no problem to set before us, no gospel to publish, no special vice to satirise; her style is undisguisedly light, but it has the rare and inestimable gift of charm. The simple directness of it, and the little vivid real life touches, make all her books not only pleasing, but really worth reading.

"The Thousand Eugenias" contains several short stories, but the first, which gives the title to the book, occupies 207 pages of the total 340, and is of a more sensational character than most of this writer's work. A good title to this story would have been "The Cook Paramount." Amabel Ferrars is a governess in the family of Mrs. Hunter, of Bayswater; and Mr. Sheringham, the rich young stock-broker, who has been with difficulty beguiled to the house, in the interests of the eldest daughter, has the amazing temerity to admire the little governess instead. . . . Mrs. Hunter, in a scene which one cannot help regarding as a little overdrawn, dismisses the girl without notice, and with a month's salary only, telling her she need not apply to her for a reference. Amabel, alone in the world, completely without friends in London, is at her wits' end to know what to do or where to go. To her rescue comes Mrs. Pugsley, the cook, quite one of the most delightful characters of fiction. The difference has struck Mrs. Sidgwick—the enormous gulf of difference between the young, gently-born girl who is a drug in the market and the indispensable cook who rules the house. The cook is perfectly aware—as most of her class curiously enough are aware—that Amabel Ferrars is a gentlewoman and that her employer is not.

"Mrs. 'Unter is not a lady," said the cook, with the queer discrimination of her class in such matters. "You are. Don't you fret, Miss. I'll go round to the office I patronise to-morrow, and I'll tell 'em if they don't find you something soft within a week they won't 'ave me on their books again, or any of my friends."

In the depths of Amabel's despair she gets a telegram from a hitherto silent uncle, a certain Michael Ferrars, who wires from Paris to tell her to come to him. She goes off at once, the cook, well aware of her own value, accompanying her to Victoria in calm defiance of "Mrs. 'Unter," and finds that this uncle is making a fortune in a certain "Eugenia" mine. He gives Amabel a thousand shares in this mine. Most people nowadays know enough of the Stock Exchange to understand what "bearer" shares are. Almost immediately there is a "slump" in "Eugenias," and Mr. Ferrars departs for Mexico, leaving Amabel in Paris, with no acquaintance but a couple of shady adventurers named Varasdin. Sheringham soon appears on the scene, the delightful cook at Mrs. 'Unter's having furnished him with Amabel's address. Here occurs the main improbability of the story. Any sensible business man—and Sheringham is both clever and sensible—would have insisted upon the girl depositing her shares with a bank, or otherwise putting them in safety, instead of placing them in a little purse-bag at her waist, since in a few weeks' time from her uncle's departure the value of "Eugenias"

is so enormously increased that she is carrying about with her a fortune of fifty thousand pounds. Naturally this is too much for the cupidity of the Varasdins, and a chapter of very well-told horrors follows, in the course of which the unhappy Amabel disappears for a time. Sheringham, in his frantic search for her, again appeals to the cook.

"Look here!" he says, "if Miss Ferrars wanted you in a hurry over in Paris, would you come?"

The cook pondered a little over her reply before she gave it.

"I might," she said in the end. "*I have a sister who obliges.*"

The utter bewilderment of the astute Sheringham over this cryptic saying makes excellent reading.

All comes right in the end, and the tale grips the reader's attention from first to last.

G. M. R.

Verses.

*"Nous n'irons plus au bois,
Les lauriers sont coupés."*

Then come away! The woods are cut—
There is no beauty now:
No frail flower on trembling stem;
No swinging bough in sunset glow.

The ships that started fresh and fair
Come home bestripp'd of sail and mast:
The blue-bell ghosts just here and there
Bespeak of Springtime glory past.

Then come away! we will not spoil
The memory of what has been,
But onward patiently will toil
To other woods still fresh and green.

—M., *Westminster Gazette.*

What to Read.

"The Life and Letters of the Right Honourable Friedrich Max Müller." Edited by his Wife.

"State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand." By William Pember Reeves.

"The Anglo-Saxon: a Study in Evolution." By George E. Boxall.

"China and the Chinese." By Herbert Allen Giles, LL.D.

"The New America: a Study of the Imperial Republic." By Beckles Willson.

Coming Events.

December 3rd.—Princess Henry of Battenberg opens a sale, at the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, of surplus goods from the Imperial Coronation Bazaar.

December 6th.—League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses. The Winter Social Gathering will be held in the Medical School Library, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, 4.30 to 6.30.

December 8th.—Meeting at St. Andrew's House to discuss State Registration of Trained Nurses, by the kind permission of Miss Edith Debenham. Tea and coffee, 8.30 p.m.

* By Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick. Edward Arnold.

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