

principles" for a municipal constitution for Johannesburg, which the Town Council has submitted to Lord Milner. From the account of these given by the *Standard* correspondent, we learn that there is to be female suffrage; one property, one vote, irrespective of value above £100; joint ownership to confer the franchise upon as many owners as there are units of qualifying value; the educational test to be ability to read and write in English or Dutch; non-residence not to disqualify a voter.

A Book of the Week.

THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD.*

What is one to say about Mr. Barrie's new book? It has that quality which may endear it to the reader, but cannot fail to stroke the critic's fur the wrong way; you cannot classify it!

We dearly love to run our pin through our author, and label him for the enterprising public—"this is in the style of Stanley Weyman, this is after Mr. Henry James, and this is a problem novel!" But for what conceivable public is this jumble of nursery tales and sugary romance? If you offer it to your grown-up, there must be many chapters which he will have to skip; and the same if you try it on your small boy.

The frontispiece is a wholly fascinating map of Kensington Gardens (to which all perambulators lead). This is a map which marks all the things that you do really want to know—if you are about six years old. The child who has perused the whole of the chapters dealing with this fascinating subject has very little of real importance left to learn about Kensington Gardens.

The present reviewer, having experimented upon a six-year-old critic, in sailor suit, is in a position to maintain that the entire botanic and zoological description of the Gardens here given is of a wholly satisfactory and correct description; and that the histories of such celebrities as Cecco Hewlett, Peter Pan, Miss Mabel Gray, and Maimie Mannering leave nothing to be desired in such important respects as a detailed account of what happened afterwards—a point upon which no self-respecting writer can be too careful.

But this same critic could in no wise have been persuaded to sit through a reading of the first few chapters—those in which the nursery governess and the artist make love and quarrel and are reconciled.

The narrator is a middle-aged bachelor, who from the window of his club watches that pathetic courtship, and in a mysterious way stands sponsor to the improvident and sanguine pair. There is a great deal in the book that is very charming, and a good deal that might perhaps be fairly set down as perilously near the slough of false sentiment.

Ah! But he can do the real thing too. Listen to this:—

"The only ghosts, I believe, who creep into this world are dead young mothers, returned to see how their children fare. There is no other inducement great enough to bring the departed back. They glide into the acquainted room when, day and night, their jailers are in the grip, and whisper, 'How is it with you, my child?' but always, lest a

strange face should frighten him, they whisper it so low that he may not hear. They bend over him to see that he sleeps peacefully, and replace his sweet arm beneath the coverlet, and they open the drawers to count how many little vests he has. They love to do these things."

And again—

"For the Kensington Gardens, you must know, are full of short cuts, familiar to all who play there; and the shortest leads from the baby in long clothes to the little boy of three riding on the fence. It is called the Mothers' Tragedy."

The book must be allowed to be an extravaganza. Let the reader cheerfully concede as much, and then try how she likes it. The degree of her love for children will largely influence her; but not altogether.

Books sometimes impress one as having been written to sell, and sometimes as having been written to impress the critics. But nobody can doubt that Mr. Barrie wrote this book to please himself. It will probably please a good many other people as well—"kiddies and grown-ups too."

G. M. R.

Christmas Morn.

This is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of heaven's Eternal King
Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That He our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

See how from far upon the Eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet;
Oh! run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the Angel quire,
From out His secret altar touch'd with hallow'd fire.

What to Read.

- "A History of the American People." By Woodrow Wilson, Ph.D., Litt.D., LL.D.
- "Literature and Life." New Essays. By W. D. Howells.
- "Madame de Pompadour." By H. Noel Williams.
- "Wayfarers in Italy." By Katherine Hooker.
- "Angelot." A Tale of the First Empire. By Eleanor C. Price.
- "The Blue Flower." By Dr. Henry Van Dyke.

Coming Events.

December 29th.—St. Mary's Hospital for Sick Children, Plaistow. Children's Entertainment. 3 p.m.

December 30th.—The Hospital for Women, Soho Square. Entertainment for the patients in the wards. 4.30 p.m.

Paddington Green Children's Hospital. Christmas Entertainment. 3.30 p.m.

Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street. Christmas Entertainment. 3 p.m.

December 31st.—London Homoeopathic Hospital. Annual Christmas Tree Entertainment. 4 p.m.

* By J. M. Barrie. Hodder and Stoughton.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)