

## A Book of the Week.

### THE RED HOUSE.\*

"This quarrel was very serious, because it was about my shaving-brush and Chloe's handkerchief-case. There was a cupboard with a window. Chloe called it my dressing-room, and at first I humoured her pretty fancy about it, and pretended that I really could see to shave in a mirror that faced the window, although my shoulders, as I stood, cut off all light. But even then I used really to shave at Chloe's glass after she had gone down to make the tea and boil the eggs; only I kept my shaving things in the embroidered vestments which my wife's affection provided and her fingers worked, and these lived in the 'dressing-room.' But the subterfuge presently seemed unworthy, and I found myself, in the ardour of a truthful nature, leaving my soapy shaving-brush on her dressing-table. Chloe would call this untidiness, and, worse, urge that I had a dressing-room. Then I used to put the brush away. This had happened more than once.

"On this most memorable morning I had set up the pretty ivory shaving-brush, clean and pleasant, with its crown of white lather, among her hair-brushes. Chloe came up just then to ask me whether I would have two eggs for breakfast or three. Her entrance startled me. I cut myself, slightly but infuriatingly, and knocked the brush down. It fell on Chloe's handkerchief-case, pink satin, painted with roses and Cupids, a wedding present. Chloe snatched the pink thing up—"

But for what Chloe said, and what her husband said, we refer readers to the following pages of this delicious extravaganza.

Mrs. Nesbit is known to all of us—that is, all who are properly constituted—as the author of children's stories in the "Strand"—stories whose playful mixture of romance and realism, and a very deep and real knowledge of child-life and character, make the author notable among the caterers for childish palates.

The same charm of naturalness and playfulness and keen observation, most artistically thrown in, as it were, runs through the present sketch.

If it is hard to believe in the possibility of two grown-up people being so completely ignorant and silly as Chloe and her husband, we forgive them because they are also so impossibly nice.

They have married, apparently, on nothing at all, and are living in a minute suburban villa when the story opens. But Len's uncle leaves him two hundred a year and the Red House. The Red House is far too large to live in, and is found to be impossible to let, by reason of the sum necessary to be expended on it for repairs. Thereupon the two settle to camp out in portions of the house, and proceed to do so to their own great enjoyment, and that of the reader also. But it is hard to believe that there was nobody to explain to them that there were two cottages on the estate which might be let; also, since it is stated that the deceased uncle had himself occupied the Red House, one wonders what had become of his effects, and why he had not kept the place in habitable repair. However, to quarrel over details shows a carping spirit, when we have to do with an author who can give us such joy as is obtained by the first interview between Chloe and the vicar's wife, who

\* By E. Nesbit. Methuen.

arrives to call when the mistress of the house, in bare feet and a blue pinafore, is washing the china in the front hall with the door wide open. With much that the vicar's wife then said we own ourselves in sympathy. Chloe's proceedings did not argue a well-balanced mind; and then the vicar's wife could not know how much that was estimable lay behind the apparently idiotic nature of her proceedings. But she deserved the snub she got; and the delight of the reader in hearing it administered is almost as great as was Len's own as he hung over the staircase listening.

G. M. R.

## Women and Local Government.

A memorial has been sent to Mr. Walter Long on behalf of the introduction of a Bill to amend the Constitution of County and Borough Councils so as to enable women, married and single, to be elected to and to serve on these Councils.

The memorial is signed by the Earl and Countess of Aberdeen, by prominent men and women from all quarters of the country, and by the representatives of various women's political associations.

There are many matters which come under the supervision of County Councils in dealing with which the co-operation of women is essential. The census taken in 1894 shows that there were at that date 31,960 female lunatics in the lunatic asylums controlled by County Councils. Yet, although men who are councillors have borne witness to their need of women colleagues, who could interest themselves in the female sides of our huge asylums to the advantage of both patients and women attendants, there is not even a Committee of Lady Visitors in any county.

In the industrial schools under County Councils there are girls as well as boys, and the boys, too, would be the better for a woman's eye and care. In London, baby farms are under the County Council, and hence it follows that a vast proportion of the baby farms in this land are not under the Guardians of the Poor, but under a Council consisting of men only. Yet the supervision of women is obviously needed for baby farms!

## What to Read.

"Resurrection." By Tolstoy; translated by Louise Maud.

"Famishing London: a Study of the Unemployed and Unemployable." By F. A. McKenzie.

"George Canning and His Times: a Political Study." By J. A. R. Marriott, M.A.

"The Two Vanrevells." By Booth Tarkington.

"The World's Work" for March. Edited by Henry Norman, M.P.

## Coming Events.

March 9th.—Meeting of the Board of Education of Bedford College for Women to consider the desirability of instituting a Course in Hospital Economics, 5.30 p.m.

Meetings to discuss State Registration of Nurses:—  
March 19th.—Royal United Hospital, Bath, 3.30.

March 26th.—The Pioneer Club, 5, Grafton Street, W., 8.15.

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