

A Book of the Week.

LADY ROSE'S DAUGHTER.*

In some respects Mrs. Humphry Ward stands quite alone among the women writers of the day. She is an author who made a brilliant—even a phenomenal—start off, and did not allow this fact to paralyse her further efforts. "Robert Elsmere," remarkable though it was, was full of faults; and they were the kind of faults which encourage one much more than does the shallow and superficial perfection of much modern work. They sprang from a mass of material—more than one new to the task could arrange with perfect mastery. Ever since the writer has been improving. From the hopelessly wide field of ethics, she turned to politics; then wrote a book which showed with vivid realism a particular danger of the Roman faith. Now she has come to know that one human document is quite enough ingredient for a successful novel, when handled by such a mistress as she has become; and in "Eleanor" and "Lady Rose's Daughter" she has given us character studies which are unrivalled in the gallery of any novelist.

The first six chapters of the novel before us might serve as a model to any young person ambitious of achieving distinction in the regions of the "character novel." We are introduced to all the factors in the situation; and Mrs. Humphry Ward has adopted a method once used with great success by Mr. Henry James. She shows us the situation and the actors, through the medium of the view taken of it all by a clever, elderly man who has been absent from London for a term of years.

Sir Wilfred Bury goes to see his old friend, Lady Henry Delafield, and finds her guests being received by a most seductive young person in black—her companion, Miss Julie Lebreton. Miss Julie is French in style and education, and English by birth; she is, in fact, as Lady Henry hastens to inform Sir Wilfred, the child of an elopement which was a well-known society scandal; she is "Lady Rose's daughter." The old woman, having brought the girl forward, and insisted upon her taking the place which she holds in her household, is now torn and distracted by jealousy, and calls her an intriguer and a schemer—with a great deal of justice, as it seems to Sir Wilfred. Then he goes on, to call upon the charming little Duchess of Crowborough, and finds himself at once in the enemy's camp. Evelyn, Duchess, and her great ally, Mr. Jacob Delafield, belong to Julie, body and soul, and are furious in their denunciations of Lady Henry's cruelty and tyranny. Julie is an injured angel, Julie is unhappy and charming and lovely, Julie is the beloved of all, and Lady Henry's house would be deserted did she send Julie away. Sir Wilfred walks home with the fascinating enigma who is the cause of all these tears; and is much strengthened in his belief that she is a born *intrigante*—anything but sincere. In that opinion events serve more or less to confirm him; but the belief of Julie's own friends in her remains unshaken. The talent with which the thing is done; the different lights cast upon Julie's personality by her various defenders and detractors; the intricacy of the girl's own character; the struggle in her of the rebellion against law which she inherits from both parents; and the "blood trained up along nine cen-

turies" to believe in the value of a woman's honour—all these things have never been more marvellously conveyed than in these delightful pages.

Some reviewers have called Jacob Delafield a prig. This seems only to show what different kinds of people we mean when we talk about prigs and priggishness. Jacob is a real, living man; a man who stands out almost as clearly as Julie herself. The man who overcomes by sheer strength, yet depends wholly for his happiness upon the woman he has conquered. The book is in three parts; of which the first is the most striking, the second the most able, the third the most subtle. One reviewer called the third part "anti-climax." Herein, again, may be seen what different things we mean when using the same word.

G. M. R.

His Majesty the Baby.

His eyes of clear and cloudless brown,
His hair a soft and silky down,
His face the sweetest, all must own:

You recognise him, maybe?

We know but one such words could suit,
But one whose will is past dispute,

Whose sovereign law is absolute:

His Majesty the Baby!

No mightier monarch e'er was known,
His right divine we gladly own,
For it is based on love alone:

A right which knows no maybe.

A sceptre this we gladly kiss,

And own our saddest moment this:

When for the briefest space we miss

His Majesty the Baby.

—Chambers's Journal.

What to Read.

"The Black Prince." By Maurice Baring.

"The Life of Bret Harte." By T. Edgar Pemberton.

"Charlotte Mary Yonge: Her Life and Letters." By Christabel Coleridge.

"The Circle." By Katherine Cecil Thurston.

"The Light Behind." By the author of "One Poor Scruple."

"The Diverted Village." By Grace Rhys.

"The Banner of Blue." By S. R. Crockett.

"Lovey Mary." By the author of "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch."

"Lady Rose's Daughter." By Mrs. Humphry Ward.

Coming Events.

March 23rd.—Meeting at Mansion House, Lord Mayor presiding, in aid of Building Fund of North-Eastern Hospital for Children, Hackney Road.

March 26th.—"That it is desirable that Trained Nurses should be Registered by the State." Debate opened by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick. Chair: Mrs. Collier. Pioneer Club, 5, Grafton Street. 8.15.

March 27th.—Meeting at the Mansion House in aid of the Hospital for Women, Soho Square, Lord Mayor presiding. 3.

* By Mrs. Humphry Ward. Smith, Elder and Co.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)