

the up-to-date woman is too busy to utilise one arm as a skirt-catcher. Human beings cannot be elegantly if inappropriately dressed, and the short skirt is more appropriate, and therefore in better taste, than a train in the street.

Amongst the subscribers for the stock of the Martha Washington Hotel, New York, which is exclusively for women, are trained nurses who, it is also anticipated, will use the hotel, which, when completed, will accommodate 500 permanent and 150 transient guests.

The wife of a farmer near Shrewsbury, who for some months had been in a low mental condition, recently told her husband that she was in the habit of swallowing deleterious and dangerous articles. She was taken to the infirmary, where an operation was performed. In her stomach were found needles, ordinary pins, safety-pins, glass, a button-hook, two nails three inches long, and other articles numbering 122 altogether.

A Book of the Week.

THE STAR DREAMER.*

The book before us is a romance.

Of late, the romance has been out of fashion among us. We have wished for a naked realism—brutal, if the fact was brutal, but, at any rate, if beautiful, only beautiful by the way. Romance we had come to associate with unreality, with false sentiment, with an artificial kind of rule which demanded happy marriage in the last chapter, and was, therefore, very unlike our own experience.

But we reckoned without our host. Romance may be pushed in the corner for a time, while we occupy ourselves with other things, such as politics, social reform, Stock Exchange business, Bridge, the detection of crime, sex questions, or a new religion. But Romance is quite undying. It is the last lingering strain of the song of the Eden spirits, haunting the ears of those pushed out from the golden gates, debased, attenuated, put to strange usages, but never to be killed, even by the tyranny of the harem, or the reign of brute force.

It is always inevitable that Romance should return. Turn her out of doors, she will come in at the window. In the last resort, the relations between a man and a woman are the perennially-absorbing human interest, the universal attraction. Divest the sexual relations of their poetry and tenderness, and you get back to something such as the poet describes—

"Behold how woman first was wooed :
Forth leapt the savage from his lair
And felled her, and to nuptials rude
He dragged her, bleeding, by the hair."

Therefore we may be certain that, however much we strive to oust Romance, she will behave much as does the heroine in Mr. Jerome's "Stage-land"—she will go out by one door, change her dress, and, entering by another, will be suffered to remain unrecognised.

For the return of genuine romance we have to thank Agnes and Egerton Castle. Their style gives

* By Agnes and Egerton Castle. Constable.

just that air of ample, leisurely conviction which romance demands. They move through the spacious chambers of old mansions, through the tended gardens of a bygone age, with an air of mystery, a wonderful suggestion of there being "such suites to explore, such alcoves to importune," that the reader follows with much the same breathless interest which he or she would really feel if actually introduced to the domains of Bindon Cheveral, and actually meeting, or eluding, the beady eye of Margery Nutmeg, the sly, demure housekeeper, in the dark corridors, or seeing the white-haired, fitting form of the "simpler," hovering over his "retorts and alembics"—words of poignant though unknown significance.

We will own that the introduction which opens the book had a somewhat direful flavour of one of Andrew Lang's "Novel Openings." We have Bindon Cheveral described from the days of the Georges backward, and half expect to be introduced, in the portrait gallery, to "old Sir Ralph, who fell at Senlac, at which time the Norman school of portrait painters may be supposed to have been at its height."

But the body of the book itself is almost wholly free from such conventionalisms, and its descriptive passages are of a most excellent quality, drawing the soul towards the dark night, the woods, the stars, the early summer dawn, the garden, the dairy, the farmyard, the banqueting hall, the beauty of woman, or of the night, or of the morn, with equal ease and force.

There is one person in the story who awakens a quite indescribable affection and delight. One hardly knows why. It is the triumph of the novelist's skill to make one in love with a personality. It is the Rector, and his power to charm can only be likened to that of Jane Austen's characters; than which praise could hardly go further.

G. M. R.

What to Read.

"Songs of Womanhood." By Laurence Alma-Tadema.

"The Letters of Mdlle. de Lespinasse; With Notes on Her Life and Character, and an Introduction by Sainte-Beuve."

"Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, 1474-1539. A Study of the Renaissance." By Julia Cartwright (Mrs. Ady).

"The Pipes of Pan: from the Book of Myths." By Bliss Carman.

"America at Work." By John Foster Fraser.

"The Star Dreamer." By Agnes and Egerton Castle.

"Park Lane." By Percy White.

Coming Events.

May 4th.—The Duke of Cambridge, President of the London Hospital, attends the dinner given by the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House in aid of the quinquennial appeal.

May 8th.—Meeting of the General Council of the Matrons' Council, Miss Isla Stewart presiding, 20, Hanover Square, London, W., 11 a.m.

Society for State Registration of Nurses. First Annual Meeting, 20, Hanover Square, Miss Louisa Stevenson presiding, 12 noon.

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