

## Book of the Week.

### THE FIRST CLAIM.\*

One cannot help thinking that such a book as "The First Claim" should do more to show the evils of leaving your husband, your home, and your duty, than a dozen sermons could possibly do.

The author of "Cut Laurels" has that wonderful gift, a most convincing style. There is a reality, almost bitter, in every line she writes. She is more akin to Mrs. Mann in the themes which inspire her than to any other writer of the present day; but she writes more slowly than that prolific author, and so does herself more justice.

In the story of poor Valerie's life, every sentence is weighed, every touch tells. Valerie was young, very pretty, motherless, neglected, a social nobody, in the care—or lack of care—of a vulgar stepsister. One cannot wonder that when, at eighteen, she was proposed to by Sir James Palmer, the county eligible, with a deerpark and other accessories, she succumbed to the temptation. But Sir James was fifty and flabby; he was also far, far too demonstrative. He had no real desire to make Valerie happy, but he had a most certain expectation that she should make him happy. She was toy, plaything, darling; and day by day she hated him more definitely. There was another thorn in her tender side. A most autocratic mother-in-law ruled jointly with Sir James. She, Valerie was but nominally mistress of the house. She dared scarcely give an order to her own servants. She was not even allowed to dismiss an odious nurse, for slapping her baby girl, Gwenny.

She had never had any training, religious or moral, she was docile and loving and might have been made a fine woman. As things were, she succumbed to the intense delight of being loved by Charlie Osborne, young, handsome, strong, eager.

Poor Charlie! He was a thoroughly good, straight-living young fellow, but it was hardly likely that he should be able to resist the pleading of the woman he loved, when she implored him to take her away from a life that was killing her.

So Valerie ran away and left Gwenny, and in a short time Sir James gave Gwenny a step-mother.

Charlie duly married Valerie, and their behaviour was so circumspect that after five years the Colonel's wife called, and they found themselves in active process of being white-washed. And it was at that juncture that Valerie, going to London, met in the train her spiteful step-sister Polly, who had chosen to consider that Charlie Osborne was in love with her, and so hated Valerie with all the strength of which such a nature was capable.

And Polly, seeking for a weapon to wound, found one all ready to her hand. She told Valerie that Gwenny was ill-treated by her step-mother.

That is really the starting point of the story. It is a very harrowing story; we warn readers who are lovers of children that it is a most painful story. We have the struggle, the conflicting duties, the starved maternity awaking in Valerie, the anguish of

jealousy on the part of poor Charlie. We have the impish child, such a child as this writer knows how to draw, spoilt, untruthful, cowardly—piercing the mother's heart with the thought of her abandonment and betrayal. The outcome of it shall not here be told. It is a tragedy such as must be more frequent than people believe, in these days of divorce!

G. M. R.

## Bookland.

In order to bring themselves into direct touch with the members of the St. Andrew's Ambulance Corps, the Association Students of Ambulance and those interested in Red Cross and Ambulance work in general, the St. Andrew's Ambulance Association are issuing a monthly magazine which will be their official organ. This magazine will contain reports and orders connected with the Association and corps, will record the progress of the various sections, report the competitions, inspections, displays, etc., and deal with Red Cross and ambulance matters generally, including the ambulance departments of volunteers, police, railways, tramways, public works, boys brigades, etc. Special articles will be contributed on first-aid and kindred subjects, and the magazine will be illustrated as opportunity offers.

## Coming Events.

October 31st.—Annual meeting Central Society for Women's Suffrage, Caxton Hall, Westminster. 3 p.m.

November 1st.—St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, W. Presentation of a Testimonial to Miss Medill, the retiring Matron. 5.30 p.m.

November 3rd.—Registered Nurses Society At Home. 431, Oxford Street, W. 4.0—6.0.

November 5th.—Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland. Examination for Nursing Certificate.

November 6th.—North London or University College Hospital. Opening of New Building by H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, K.G. 3 p.m.

November 13th.—In aid of the Hospital for Women, Soho Square, a Sale of Men, Women, and Children's Clothing, suitable for gilds, etc., and many other useful articles, will be held at 20, Portland Place, W., the residence of Sir Marcus and Lady Samuel. Entrance, 1s. Open from 2 o'clock to 6.30. Tea and coffee.

November 22nd, 23rd, and 24th.—Provisional Committee National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland Conference Practically Illustrated on the Nursing of Tuberculosis, Maternity, and Mental Nursing: St. George's Hall, Mount Street, London, W. 10.0 a.m. to 10.30 p.m.

## A Word for the Week.

I have lived to know that the great secret of human happiness is this: Never suffer your energies to stagnate.—Adam Clark.

\* By M. Hamilton. (Methuen.)

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