

Book of the Week.

PAUL.*

Mr. Benson's new book is in many ways superior to the "Angel of Pain." It is a highly finished, carefully thought-out book; and, if it shows no sign of inspiration, it likewise shows very little sign of pot-boiling. As in many books lately written, and not only by this author, we depend for our enjoyment much more upon the incidental than upon the essential part of the book.

Sad Aunt Kate, and her joyous sister, Norah's optimistic and exasperating mother, make quite delightful comedy. Mr. Benson can describe an Italian villa, a Cathedral town, or an English country house alike with a fidelity which makes them live; but we own to not considering that Theodore Beckwith, the central character, has been well handled.

Theodore is a man of fragile bodily habit, but immense strength of vitality and of will. He is rather of the type which has been described as the "Tiger fop." He is represented not only as arranging his attire with the most fastidious and aesthetic care, but as passing hours a day at an embroidery frame, working out his own designs in silk and gold. But this same man, sneered at for his effeminacy by the other men of the shooting party, challenges the best shot of them all to a shooting competition, and beats him all to nothing. The man has an intense, uncanny fancy for all that is young, strong, and vigorous. He admires Paul because Paul is the incarnation of the Greek ideal of life and vigour and joy. He loves young children because of their exuberance and their untiring activities. He is devoted to his valet's little boy, and the child reciprocates his devotion.

This man desires Norah for his wife, she being the incarnation of youth and loveliness. We are not told that he loves her, but he asks her to marry him and she accepts him.

One has the feeling that, in such a man, there must have been a sense, somewhere underlying his warped personality, a sense of love which a loving woman might have brought to light. But Norah has accepted him, one does not know why, Mr. Benson does not know why, except that her doing so makes the story; and she makes no effort to love him, to make him love her, or to take the very least interest in him. When he finds out that she is to have a child, the characterisation seems to break down most definitely. Such a man would have gloried more in being the father of a healthy, beautiful son, than in any other earthly experience. But for Mr. Benson's purpose, namely, the purpose of increasing his wife's hatred, he only cackles with glee because his son will do his relatives out of the succession to a Dukedom.

He fiendishly insists upon having Paul as his secretary to live with his wife and himself, knowing them to be in love, that he may gloat over their struggles and their gradual yielding. Neither his wife nor Paul has strength to put an end to so horrible a position.

By E. F. Benson. (Heinemann).

One feels one would like to read a book in which Theodore Beckwith should marry a wife who had a very strong character, and who loved him. Far worse men have been loved and saved by women.

Mr. Benson has a very ungenerous sketch of a lady novelist. He makes her works the delight of the county society, yet he makes her write stories in which the sons and daughters of the entire peerage are lords and ladies. Illiteracy is, I fancy, quite as common to-day among male as among female writers; but any proof reader would correct glaring errors such as those indicated.

Mrs. Atley is a caricature; and so, out of place where the other characters are attempts to draw from life.

G. M. R.

Youth.

The world is a beautiful garden,
All tangled and brilliant and wild!
The world is a beautiful garden,
A garden for you, my sweet child!
The wondrous confusion of splendour,
The blossoms red, golden and blue,
The singing-birds lovely and tender
Are all and are only for you.
In the silver-lined cloudland of fancy,
Where joy-wearied you sink into rest,
Rise the limitless hills of the future;
On their summit, dear child, lies the best.
Dream on in the beautiful dawning
Of the beautiful heights you shall climb,
Drink deep of the dew of the morning,
And trust in the Triumphs of Time.

LINA MOLLETT.

Coming Events.

November 26th.—Irish Nurses' Association. Opening Meeting of the Winter Session. 86, Lower Leeson Street, Dublin. 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

November 29th.—Meeting of Central Midwives' Board, Caxton House, Westminster. 2.45 p.m.

December 8th.—League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses. Winter Social Gathering in the Medical School Library, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, E.C. 4 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

A Word for the Week.

THE SOUL MAKES THE BODY.

So every spirit, as it is more pure,
And hath in it the more of heavenly light.
So it the fairer body doth procure
To habit in, and it more fairly dight,
With cheerful grace and amiable right,
For, of the soul, the body form doth take,
For soul is form, and doth the body make.

SPENSER.

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