

Book of the Week.

THE FIGHTING CHANCE.*

The every-day, humdrum setting of real life without phenomena: the characters of whom we say, "I've met people exactly like that": the description of events coming within the limits of one's own imagination conduce to a very pleasant inner appreciation of a book. It is a question whether for ordinary novel reading it is not a more enjoyable attitude than the outer circle with which one is forced to peruse stories relating to status of society, trains of thought, or extravagant events outside the pale of our experiences.

"The Fighting Chance" belongs essentially to the first order. Arrived at Shotover House with the hero, we fall at once into our places in the house-party assembled there for the shooting. In this atmosphere we remain awhile; perfectly satisfied with our breezy surroundings, deeply engaged in watching the growth of a romance: increasingly agitated lest anyone less charitable than ourselves should discover it. We are well assured that it ought not to be—we are pitifully anxious for its good fortune. For Stephen Seward is, in all things but one, a splendid fellow, and against that one thing he has but a 'fighting chance.' Sylvia Landis is, in all things but one, the very girl for him. Man-like he cannot understand her failing, for it is a very petty one—the love of power and position—not money itself, but all that money stands for, and Stephen is poor. He literally does not credit it, and would marry her in spite of her confession. Woman-like, because she is learning to love him, Sylvia would willingly risk his defect—a deep-seated hereditary tendency to drink—if only the self-loving side of her would permit. From the moment of their meeting they each have an impetus to fight temperament. It is a matter of intense speculation as to what will win.

Simultaneous with her introduction to Seward, is Sylvia's engagement to Howard Quarrier, millionaire, and catch of New York—the very man who can give her to the full her vaunted heart's desire. She respects and admires him, is greatly flattered by his preference, but after their engagement a subtle change works gradually towards her eventual discovery that they are utterly unsympathetic; his personality is positively irritating to her. It is an opportunity Fate makes sport of. Sylvia believes herself incapable of doing without the material benefits. She has to choose between love and power. Her self-judgment decrees that only power can satisfy her. The house-party breaks up. We leave it as disconsolate as any. Back into the world goes Stephen Seward, with nothing but his fighting chance for company. *Cui bono?* It has been well drilled into him that his chances are few—he has already got into an awkward scrape by one night of folly, which costs him his membership at the two best clubs in New York. The brief, tense interlude with Sylvia Landis had looked like an-

chorage at last—but now *cui bono?* He begins fatally to drop out of things, and to be lost sight of. How far, the book is well worth reading to discover. The plot is too intricate to bear dissection; it is elaborately and skilfully worked out with niceties of contrast in characterisation that grip one's fancy. Especially ingenious is the comparison between the two drunkards—the one who, as his friends say, "makes a beast of himself," and is simply revolting, the other who is always a gentleman at the very worst, and wrings pity from one. It is an added charm that the final *dénouement* is as unexpected as it is complete.

E.L.H.

Verse.

Though every nerve be strained
To fine accomplishment,
Full oft the life falls spent
Before the prize is gained,
And in our discontent
At waste so evident,
In doubt and vast discouragement
We wonder what is meant;
But, tracing back, we find
A Power that held the ways—
A Mighty Hand, a Master Mind,
That all the troubled course defined,
And over-ruled the days.
Some call it Fate; some Chance;
Some Giant Circumstance;
And some approaching to the sense
Of God within the circumstance
Do call it Providence.

From *Giant Circumstance*.

Coming Events.

May 6th to 15th.—Sale of Genuine Old Bric-à-Brac received for disposal from ladies in reduced circumstances. The Modern Gallery, 61, New Bond Street, W. 11—7.

May 9th.—Annual Meeting of the East End Mothers' Home, at No. 17, Cavendish Square, by kind permission of the Earl and Countess of Bessborough, 4.30 p.m.

May 10th.—Mr. A. Rolland Rainy, M.P., will deliver an address on the necessity for a Minister of Public Health, before the New Reform Club, at 10, Adelphi Terrace, W.C.

May 14th.—His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales presides at a Dinner at the Hotel Cecil in aid of the National Sanatorium for Workers Suffering from Tuberculosis.

May 14th.—Her Royal Highness Princess Louise Duchess of Argyll will open the new Out-Patient Hall of the London Temperance Hospital.

May 23rd.—Lady Alice Ashley lays the Foundation Stone of the New Nurses' Home at the Royal Hants County Hospital, Winchester, 3 p.m.

May 24th.—Annual Meeting of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, Medical Society's Rooms, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, W., 4 p.m.

* By Robert W. Chambers. (Constable.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)