

Book of the Week.

THE STRONGEST OF ALL THINGS.*

One always looks to Madame Albanesi for a charming story, full of delightful people. She has a happy knack of delineating characters of a most desirable type, of the kind one is pleased to add to one's visiting list. In "The Strongest of All Things" we are not disappointed in this particular; there are, if anything, almost too many beautiful characters for the reader to be able to do justice to them all. It is obviously more difficult for our author to portray a real villain with conviction, but in the presentment of the mysterious Mrs. Warrington she most creditably achieves her end. The woman has a distinct personality, which grips the interest at the outset, and she is kept admirably consistent throughout. Without being dictated to on the subject, our shrinking from, and dislike to Mrs. Warrington begins, and subtly increases, as the story progresses, but the secret of our antipathy is most cleverly hidden until the author chooses to divulge it.

In complete contrast to Mrs. Warrington is the girl Elizabeth. The sternest upbringing makes no imprint of the elder woman's nature upon the lovely delicacy of Elizabeth's mind. It is small wonder that the eminent and delightful physician, Sir Hugo Halson, falls in love with her, and desires to shelter the sweet, emotional girl. But, in a novel, it is impossible that two people so entirely suited to each other should marry and settle down into unclouded bliss. Quickly upon the proposal and rapturous acceptance there falls a shadow, the nature of which is a mystery to the young couple, and most perplexing to the reader. Mrs. Warrington's very eagerness for the marriage, and that it shall take place without undue delay, is ominous; it seems wonderful when nothing happens to prevent the wedding. But with the apparent consummation of their happiness the shadow deepens, Elizabeth being specially conscious of it to the extent of wondering whether she ought to have married Halson after all. How the plot develops it is not fair to divulge; it is sufficient to say that the interest is well maintained. In love with Halson there is a certain Marcia Barshalton, who looms disagreeably on the horizon throughout; a character that is very ably dealt with in that she is never the least melodramatic; her reticence and reserve may be a trifle too much insisted upon, but it is to be felt even without the description. Amongst the delightful people of the book Anna Matterstone, cousin to Halson, and friend to Elizabeth, stands out well. She is very bracingly sincere, of an artistically emotional temperament held well under control.

The story suffers rather from over-elaboration, a tendency to give detail too prominent a place, and allow the reader's imagination too little

* By Madame Albanesi. (Hurst and Blackett.)

scope. It tends to impede the sequence of the plot although the details may be such as throw more light upon the characterisation, and give one a feeling of intimacy with the domestic life of the principals. To some this may not prove a serious flaw in an otherwise exceedingly readable book, in which the writing is excellent, the work thoughtful, and the subject matter most interesting.

E.L.H.

The Spinner.

A beggar blind, she sat upon a stone
 Within the market-place.
 Amid the surging crowd she spun, alone,
 A smile upon her face;
 One paused and spake to her in wondering tone:
 "Why do you smile?" he said.
 "The people jostle and the winds are cold;
 Thy hopeless eyes are blind;
 Thy garments are too meagre far, and old,
 To fend thee from the wind;
 Thou hast no silver in thy purse, nor gold,
 But beggest for thy bread."
 "I am not cold," she said; "my heart is warm,
 I do not feel the blast."
 "But hearken to the raging of the storm!
 The sun is overcast!"
 "I sit and spin," she said, "secure from harm,
 And think upon the Light."
 "I do not see the squalor and the sin,"
 She said, "that flaunt so near;
 Instead, my brooding gaze is turned within,
 And music soft I hear—
 The voices of the stars—and spin and spin
 A garment strangely bright,
 A cloth of gold to wrap my soul within
 When it is night."

C. M. ROBINSON in *Munsey's Magazine*.

Coming Events.

July 27 to August 2.—The Seventy-fifth Annual Meeting of the British Medical Association, Exeter.

July 27.—West Ham and East London Hospital, Stone-Laying Ceremony and 6th Annual At Home, 3 p.m.

July 30. Princess Henry of Battenberg will open new wing, Royal Isle of Wight County Hospital.

August 5 to 10.—International Congress on School Hygiene, University of London.

August 10.—The Annual Pound Day, Home for Mothers and Babies, Wood Street, Woolwich, 4 to 6 p.m.

A Word for the Week.

"The school should come before the vote, and knowledge before power."

ANNIE BESANT.

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