

Book of the Week.

CECILIA KIRKHAM'S SON.*

In a thoroughly interesting and well-told story Mrs. Combe has cleverly interwoven as a leading theme the under-current of sedition in India, which is at the present moment one of the burning questions of the day. Like all stories connected with India, and the life, both native and European, out there, there is a great fascination, and when this is enhanced by a really good plot and clever, distinctive delineation of character one feels that the book is sure to take a grip of the reader.

Cecilia Kirkham and her son are introduced in the first pages of the book. She, a young widow, and he a lad of fifteen, a nice impulsive boy, full of good, generous instincts. "Frankly, Charles Kirkham's father had not been desirable," and from what is told later of Captain Henry Kirkham's career one realises that this is a mild way of putting it.

Cecilia is absolutely loyal to her husband's memory, and never by the slightest hint lets the lad suspect that he was ever anything but a brave and gallant soldier, a splendid shot, unrivalled polo player. From these representations Charles raises up a sort of hero in his heart, a man to be admired and imitated in every way. When his grandfather, on his death, feeling it right to warn him, tries to tell some little of the truth to the fifteen-year-old lad, he cannot believe it. "How could anyone so cheerful as his mother possibly have a broken heart." "In his mind he saw opposing forces, and divided them into sides as in a game. On one side an old man and a woman, on the other his brave, handsome, maligned dead father and himself." It is curious to notice now it is this very unspoken championship of an undeserving object which helps to mould his character and make him the very opposite of the man he fancies he is copying.

His mother, in her absolute love for him, and self-abnegation, does all in her power to spoil him, hiding from him all that is hard in life. He goes into the Army, and out of her small income she makes him an allowance of half, never letting him suspect the truth.

His nature is bright and pleasure loving, and realising that in a home regiment he can have but few amusements with only a hundred a year besides his pay, he transfers into an Indian cavalry regiment. For seven years he never comes home; his mother does not hint at her longing to see him when time after time he spends his leave with shooting parties. Of life in India we have some very graphic and vivid pictures, the description of the camping out, the visits to the Rajah's Palace at Tahlagur, and the entertainments given there, are full of interest and excitement. One of his father's many evil doings follows Charles like a shadow, and he nearly pays for it with his life. The Rajah of the native State, who is supposed to be so loyal a friend to England, proves to be one of the many native princes longing to throw off the hated

yoke. With the introduction of the Babu Nolagee, and his machinations, one is constantly brought in contact with one of the active elements in the seething discontent. One time in England, ostensibly sending out medical comforts to the Zenana Mission, in reality sending out quantities of concealed ammunition and arms. Next we see him in India, playing all the time for his own hand. False to England, and equally false to his ally, the Rajah. Helen Estcourt is a charming conception of a truly lovable girl. Her friendship and honest plain speaking awaken Charles to a sense of the selfishness of the careless, happy life he leads, but it is only when he gets a letter from his uncle, telling him of his mother's serious illness, also the absolute truth about his father, that he realises to the full how blind he has been. Going home at once, he finds his mother dying. His remorse and perfect devotion, the almost too great sacrifice he makes for her, condones for all past thoughtlessness. It is some consolation to the lover of romance that he meets Helen in England, and that she helps him to carry the heavy load of sorrow which falls on him. The end of the book is somewhat abrupt. It is perhaps wise not to pile up emotion, and we may fairly infer that happiness is in store for hero and heroine. E. L. H.

Verse.

Half the happiness in living
Comes from willing-hearted giving,
Comes from sharing all our pleasures,
From dividing all our treasures,
And the other half is loving
First the Lord, then all things living.
So each good child should be sowing
Love seeds while his life is growing;
For all happiness in living
Comes from loving and from giving.

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Coming Events.

June 6th.—Franco-British Charity Bazaar, Canadian Pavilion, White City, Shepherd's Bush.

June 8th.—Viscountess Portman opens the annual Sale of Inmates' Work at the Royal Hospital for Incurables, Putney Heath.

June 8th to July 3rd.—Missionary Exhibition, organised by the Church Missionary Society, Royal Agricultural Hall, Islington, N.

June 11th and 12th.—Sale of Work towards the extinction of the debt, by the Matron and Nursing Staff, Prince of Wales' General Hospital, Tottenham.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

Does man realise that the force which impels woman to ask for her enfranchisement is the irresistible force of evolution? That her action in the matter is the outcome of a mighty effort of the human race to raise itself a step higher in the scale of being?

SARAH GRAND.

*By Mrs. Kenneth Combe. (W. Blackwood.)

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