

A very remarkable letter, instinct with righteousness, has been addressed by "Clara Smith," of Fort Hill, Athlone, the author of "Ireland's Great Future," to every Board of Guardians and to the Governors of every lunatic asylum in Ireland. The letter opens with a protest against the sentence of capital punishment passed on the beautiful and hapless Hannah Ahern, for the murder of her newly-born child at Newcastle West Workhouse in April last. The sentence has been commuted to the no less awful one of penal servitude for life.

The letter continues:—"The sentence is unjust in that the man—who alone could generate life—is not penalised for his recklessness and cruelty in using the great power God entrusted to him without due regard to the welfare of his offspring. Man is responsible to God for the life he passes over to woman; therefore, in God's sight he is the real murderer when he spurns and forsakes the mother and drives her to desperation. Cases of this kind are becoming painfully frequent, and if the gallows is resorted to as a remedy, soon the gallows must be erected for mothers in every county in Ireland. Lunacy statistics prove that the greatest percentage of cases are furnished by women mentally afflicted at child-birth. Women's nervous organisation cannot stand the strain of child-birth under the unnatural conditions which too often prevail in modern life. If this be so in lawful wedlock, how much harder it must be for girls in the position of Hannah Ahern to preserve their mental balances. . . . With the gallows in operation for the mothers of man's unlawful issue, and sanatoriums, asylums, hospitals, and workhouses erected to shelter man's lawful issue, the future of Ireland is assured on lines that must rejoice the heart of Ireland's greatest foe."

"Clara Smith" pleads with the men "who preside over Ireland's sorrow and Ireland's disgrace, her poverty, and her insanity." She discusses a side of life that is not only closed, but double-barred to ordinary discussion; of pure breeding, she states: "If your sheep and cattle were in this grievous state, you would deal with the trouble in a very different way to that adopted towards the human family," and then she speaks plainly of manhood and motherhood—"A new standard of manhood must be raised in Ireland and all life purified and cleansed."

"There will never be peace on earth till there is peace between man and woman. Motherhood is the most sacred duty a woman can undertake; a nation is on the down grade when it is possible on account of man's lawlessness to hang a mother. The brute beast is nourished and cared for during pregnancy. A woman in such a condition should be a nation's pride and glory, and when this is not so the dishonour is man's."

The ardent writer would have men conserve their warmth till they can unite with woman in reverence and the fear of God, so that a healthy stock may enter the land, with God's blessing—a race

that will rule in righteousness. "As a young man marrieth a virgin, so thy sons shall marry them, and as a bridegroom rejoiceth over a bride, so shall thy God rejoice over them," then Ireland will enter on that upward road of progress that will make her great.

A veritable pæan to humanity and patriotism! Let it be taken to heart.

## Book of the Week.

### AN AFFAIR OF DISHONOUR.\*

"Five o'clock by the sundial on the lawn, and the man that had to fight the duel at seven was sound asleep and dreaming."

The duel was arranged between the father of the young girl, whose dishonour he had brought about, and who, at the time this story opens, is unashamedly living with him as his wife.

This profligate young nobleman of the 17th century was a near neighbour of the upright squire he has so grievously wronged. In the encounter the older man is wounded to the death and Sir Oliver returns to the side of the beautiful girl who is besotted with her love for him and totally unaware of the tragedy that has taken place.

"The padlock he knew would be on his tongue, should he try to speak to his woman victim of her father's death. . . . Death in duels must come about . . . and as for the provocation he had given—what foul play had he been guilty of? The girl was eighteen and old enough to know better, as the phrase goes. How had his conduct been unlike that of any other man of fashion and spirit? Besides, who could say his suit would not have been *en tout bien, tout honneur*, if it had not been for his wife—curse her? At least—do him this but justice!—he had honourably promised this Lucinda to make her his wife, if he could rid himself of his other encumbrance."

Owing to the blindness of her passion for him this girl is his willing victim, but the difference between them is well summed up in the following extract:—

"Do not peer into the unholy caverns of his mind—dwell in the garden of hers, wild and disorderly perhaps, but still a garden."

The plot of the story hangs on the successful concealment from Lucinda of the fact of her father's death. For the better carrying out of this purpose they take a day's journey on horse to Kips Manor, another of his estates. "In the fifth week of this strange, lonely residence, in what was to all intents and purposes a wilderness, Lucinda resolved, even should she risk his anger, to speak of this uneasiness of hers to Sir Oliver. "Sweetheart Oliver," said she, "my father writes not." Levity sat ill upon him to-night, and his eyes never met Lucinda's, that were fixed on him there in the moonlight, watching how white he grew.

"O Oliver, tell me the truth. Has a letter come

\* By Williame de Morgan. (William Heinemann, London.)

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