

Book of the Week.

THE OSBORNES.*

A prosperous Sheffield merchant and his family, with all their vulgarities and little weaknesses mercilessly exposed, are the subject of Mr. E. F. Benson's book.

True, at the conclusion he invites us to look below the surface and see the real sterling worth underlying their impossibility, but as throughout the volume he has made them targets for his satire, it is asking rather much of us to believe that Lady Dora is satisfactorily mated with Claude Osborne, albeit he has been educated at Eton and Christchurch. Before their engagement she was able to criticise him as follows:—

"It is coming to a crisis, you see. Mr. Osborne's call on mother is of a formal nature. He is going to ask permission for Claude to pay his addresses to me; he will use those very words. And then I shall have to make up my mind. He thrills me. Isn't it awful? But he does. Thrills! I don't believe any boy was ever so good-looking. And then suddenly, in the midst of my thrill, it all stops with a jerk, just because he says somebody is a very 'handsome lady.' Why shouldn't he say 'handsome lady'? He said he thought mother was such a handsome lady, and I nearly groaned out loud. And then I looked at him again, or something, and I didn't care what he said. . . . Am I in love with him? For heaven's sake, tell me." After the dinner party given by Claude's parents in honour of the engagement, the bride-elect's mother and brother discuss their future connections in a way that is peculiarly Mr. Benson's own, and the summing up by Jim exactly hits them off.

"I find Mr. and Mrs. O. quite delightful," Jim said. "I do really. There isn't one particle of humbug about them, and they have the perfect case and naturalness of good breeding." Lady Anstell tossed her head. "That word again," she said. "You seem to judge everybody by the standard of a certain superficial veneer which you call breeding."

"I know; one can't help it. I grant you lots of well-bred people are rude and greedy, but there is a certain way of being rude and greedy which is all right. I'm rude; I don't get up when you come into the room and open the door for you. Claude—brother Claude—does all these things, and yet he's a cad."

"I consider Claude a perfect gentleman," said Lady Austell. "I know that 'perfect' is exactly what is the matter with him," said Jim, meditatively. "Now Mr. Osborne is a frank cad—and Claude a subtle one. That's why I can't stand him. He simply bristles with good points, but he gives one such shocks. He goes on swimmingly for a time, then says that the carpet is 'tasteful' or 'superior.' Now Mr. Osborne doesn't give one shocks; you know what to expect and you get it all the time."

* By E. F. Benson. (Smith, Elder & Co., London.)

One cannot be surprised that before the first six months of married life had passed Dora could "look undazzled at the materials out of which her romance had been constructed and analyse them. There was his character, which was sterling; his qualities, which were excellent; his kindness, his safeness—his wealth, and his vulgarity.

"The word was coined. Her thought for the first time definitely allowed it to pass into currency, and she had to reckon with it."

Yet in spite of this dangerous frame of mind, a turn of the wand convinces her that it was Claude who said and did all that was symbolised under the title of "handsome lady," and, since it was Claude, it was a thing to be kissed, though laughter came, too."

We confess we cannot understand this attitude to a husband.

The old Osbornes are delightful people, and their accession to the peerage fills them with unaffected joy and pride.

"My lady," he said, across the table to his wife, "this'll interest you. List of honours: Peerages, Edward Osborne, Esq., M.P.

"As if by a conjuring trick, he produced from under the tablecloth an all-round tiara of immense diamonds, which had been previously balanced on his knees."

Il faut s'amuser; therefore read Mr. Benson's latest. H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

November 7th—12th.—Suffrage Week.

November 10th.—Great meeting organised by the Women's Social and Political Union. Chairman, Mrs. Pankhurst. Royal Albert Hall, 8 p.m.

November 12th.—Great united mass meeting of Suffrage Societies. Chairman, Mrs. Fawcett, LL.D. Royal Albert Hall, 7.30 p.m.

November 15th.—Nurses' Missionary League. Lecture: "The Nurse in Relation to Her Patient," by Miss C. M. Ironside, M.B.Lond., 3.15 p.m.

November 19th.—Nurses' Missionary League. Sale of Work, 52, Lower Sloane Street, S.W. 11.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

November 19th.—Meeting of the Central Committee for Registration of Nurses, Council Room, British Medical Association Office, 429, Strand, London. The Right Hon. the Lord Ampthill, G.C.I.E., will preside, 3 p.m.

November 24th.—National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland. Private Conference on "Hygiene in Relation to Rescue Work," Caxton Hall, S.W. Admission by ticket only. 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.; 2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

November 24th.—Association for Promoting the Training and Supply of Midwives. Meeting of the Council, 2, Cromwell Houses (23, Cromwell Road, S.W.), 3 p.m.

November 24th.—Central Midwives' Board, Caxton House, S.W., 2.45 p.m.

December 7th.—Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh. Lecture on "The Nursing of Neurasthenic and Hysterical Patients," by Dr. Edwin Bramwell. All trained nurses cordially invited. Extra-Mural Medical Theatre. 4.30 p.m.

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