

Book of the Week.

THE DOCTOR'S CHRISTMAS EVE.*

This volume is most delightful. It abounds in delicate touches and charming description.

The story opens on the morning of the 24th of December, a quarter of a century ago, upon the vast plateau of Central Kentucky. . . . The whole visible heaven was receiving the incense of Kentucky fires; the whole visible earth was a panorama of the common peace.

Of Elsie, the doctor's little daughter, we are told "that the instant she spoke you recognised the pertness and precocity of an American child—which, when seen at its best or its worst, is without precedent or parallel among the world's children. Her speech was new, her ideas were new, her impertinence was new—except in this country." The boy Harold is something of a dreamer, and finding his father sitting before the fire, and looking gravely into it, he asks:—

"Is somebody very sick?"

The head under the weather-roughened hat nodded silently.

"I wonder how it happens that all the sick are in our neighbourhood?"

A smile flitted across the doctor's mouth.

"The sick are in all neighbourhoods, little wonderer."

"Not all over the world?" asked the boy, enlarging his vision in space.

"All over the world," admitted the doctor.

"Not all the time?" asked the boy. "Isn't there a single minute when everybody is well everywhere?"

"Not a single solitary minute."

The chatter was persistent.

"There ought to be a country where nobody suffers, and there ought to be a time; a large country and a long time."

"There is such a country and there is such a time," said the doctor.

"Then I'll warrant you it's part of the United States," said the boy. "Texas would hold them, wouldn't it? Why don't you doctors send your patients to that country?"

"Perhaps we do, sometimes!" The doctor laughed.

"When I grow up we'll practise together and send twice as many," the boy said, looking into his father's eyes with the flattery of professional imitation.

"So we will! There'll be no trouble about that. Twice as many; perhaps three times. No trouble whatever!"

The tragedy of the doctor's life lies in his love for another man's wife, and in consequence his own loveless marriage.

"In somewhat a darkened corner of the doctor's library hung a framed photograph of his wife in her bridal dress. Once his own photograph had hung beside it. The plaster where the nail had been driven in had either fallen out or had been torn out. He never knew. He knew enough not to ask. As for the photograph there stood a

young bride looking into her future, and trying to conceal from herself what she saw awaiting her—the life of a woman wedded but not loved. And there was recollection in her eyes, too: that the man who had married her, perhaps in the very breath of his wooing, had wished she were another; that at the altar he had perhaps wished he were putting the ring upon another's hand; and that if there were to be children he would always be wishing for them by another mother.

The book is largely retrospective.

"The doctor sat that morning trying to work at the books of the year. The rooms were comfortable; the children were away at the fireside of another man's wife; the servants did not dare disturb him; his horses waited in their stalls; it was the day on which he could begin to reap his golden harvest; a pleasant day for most men; but he could not see the blanks before him, nor remember the names he filled in, nor the figures for value received.

"Because there lay open before him the Book of the Years."

Mr. Allen at times touches the heights, but in a great deal is tiresome, and does not fulfil the interest promised in his opening chapters.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

December 30th.—East London Hospital for Children, Shadwell, E. Christmas Entertainment for the Patients, 3 to 6 p.m.

December 31st.—St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Rochester. Concert and Christmas Tree, 4.30 p.m.

January 1st.—New Year's Day, 1911.

January 2nd.—Metropolitan Hospital, N.E. Children's Christmas Tree. 3 p.m.

January 3rd.—Charing Cross Hospital, entrance King William Street. The Nursing and Resident Staff "At-Home." Music, tea, and coffee. 7.30 to 11.

January 5th.—Alexandra Hospital for Children with Hip Disease, Queen Square, Bloomsbury. Children's Christmas Party, 3.30 to 5.30 p.m.

January 5th.—Nursing Pageant. Members of Committee at 431, Oxford Street, for consultation. 11.30 p.m. to 7 p.m.

January 7th.—The Italian Ambassador opens the extension of the Italian Hospital, Queen Square.

REGISTRATION REUNION.

February 18th, 1911.—A Reunion in support of the Bill for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, under the authority of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland, will take place in the Connaught Rooms, Great Queen Street, London, W.C., 8 p.m. to 12. Reception, 8 p.m.

A Nursing Masque of the Evolution of Trained Nursing will be presented at 8.30 p.m.

Music and Refreshments.

Tickets:—Reserved seats (limited), 10s. 6d. and 7s. 6d.; unreserved, 5s.; Nurses, 3s. 6d.; Performers, 2s. 6d.

Tickets, on and after January 2nd, on sale at 431, Oxford Street, London, W.; at the office BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING (first floor), 11, Adam Street, Strand, W.C.; and from Matrons who offer to have them on sale or return.

* James Lane Allen. (Macmillan and Co.)

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