

OUTSIDE THE GATES.

WOMEN.

The Times, discussing the work of the late Miss Octavia Hill, whose life has enriched the country by the example of a noble woman, says:—"It was her fate to be held in high honour by a public which yet failed to understand the true significance of her work. In this respect she resembles Florence Nightingale, who is still popularly regarded as the perfect type and pattern of the hospital nurse, and as the first lady who devoted herself to that then menial calling. . . . She did a great deal, it is true, to improve nursing; but she was very far from being the first of her class to take up that career. For centuries the religious orders had sent refined and cultured women into the hospitals. What Florence Nightingale did was to organise and reform the whole system of military hospitals on sanitary principles and to set up an entirely new standard. There was nothing sentimental about it, though the aim was humanitarian; it was hard, practical work, based on knowledge and carried out on business lines. Octavia Hill's work, equally inspired by sympathy, was marked by the same qualities. She did not start the housing reform movement. . . . She may be said to have entered the movement on the crest of a wave; but she did not follow the main stream. She struck out a line of her own on different principles, and it was here that she became a pioneer. . . . The essence of it was personal service, which took account not only of the house, but of the human beings who occupied it. She became a landlord, at first in a very small way, and she took the calling seriously. . . . The success was double. The condition of the tenants was greatly improved physically and morally, and at the same time the property paid."

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

HALCYONE.*

One cannot imagine a greater contrast than this latest work of Mrs. Glyn to those which have preceded it. If the former were—as undoubtedly they were—amusing, "Halcyone" can be read from cover to cover without any unpleasant aroma. The ordinary reader would no doubt prefer a heroine that was not quite so saturated with the classics, but when we have surmounted this difficulty, we find a charming girl just as ready to fall in love as any ignoramus. The child lived with her two ancient great aunts of mid-Victorian attitude of mind. The Misses La Sarthe, of La Sarthe Chase, clung to their former glories, although the passing years had greatly impoverished them.

"Miss La Sarthe sat at the head of the table in a green silk dress cut low upon the shoulders

and trimmed with a berthe of blonde lace. Miss Roberta had her thin bones covered with a habit shirt of tulle, because she was altogether a poorer object than her sister and felt the cold badly. Both ladies wore ringlets at the sides of their faces and little caps of ribbon and lace.

"Need I have any more governesses, Aunt Ginevra?" Halcyone said. "There is an old gentleman who has bought the orchard house, and he says he will teach me Greek, and I already know a number of other tiresome things."

This same old gentleman, who she calls "Cheiron," and whose real name was Mr. Carlyon, becomes her "Master" and confidant.

It is through him that she becomes acquainted with John Derringham.

"It was three years since he had left Oxford, and life held out many interesting aspects for him. He was standing for the southern division of his county in the following spring. He was so eloquent in his discourse, and so full of that divine spark of enthusiasm that he was always listened to. . . . He never posed as anything but an aristocrat." We must confess that to our mind he cuts but a sorry figure.

He falls a victim to the charm of Halcyone's early girlhood, though he is staying in the neighbourhood for the purpose of paying his addresses to a wealthy divorcee, Mrs. Cricklander. Halcyone readily accedes to his request for a secret marriage.

"A wave of emotion surged through him, and he looked at her with reverence and worship, and for one second his own part of utter selfishness flashed into his understanding, so that he asked, with almost an anxious note in his deep assured voice:

"You are not afraid, sweetheart, to come away—for all the rest of your life—alone with me?"

"Afraid?" she said; "how should I be afraid, since you are my lord and I am your love? Do we not belong to one another?"

"Oh, my dear," he said, as he folded her to his heart in wild, worshipping passion, "God keep you always safe—here in my arms!"

But the day appointed for the marriage finds John unconscious, and the young bride elect, waiting and watching in vain for her missing lover. Derringham is nursed back to health by Cora Cricklander, and in less than three weeks his engagement to her is announced in the *Morning Post*.

There is nothing particularly original in this story, but we are sufficiently interested in Halcyone to be glad that she is at last made happy with the man she had idealised.

H. H.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

So many gods, so many creeds—
So many roads that wind, and wind,
And yet, the art of being kind
Is all this sad world needs.

—Anon.

* By Elinor Glyn. (Duckworth & Co., London.)

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