

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

THE MATING OF LYDIA.*

This story of Cumbria will take its place fearlessly with the best works of its gifted writer. It is told with characteristic force of description, with a grip of present day thought and with well thought out plot and romance.

The old curio-collector, Mr. Melrose, brings home a young Italian wife to his stately and desolate old Georgian house in Cumberland.

Ere the story begins he had tired of her, and it is difficult to imagine why such a nature as his was attracted late in life towards a woman who would not appear to be of a sort likely to inspire an apparently cold-blooded and certainly parsimonious man.

Netta takes a short cut out of her unhappiness, and in her husband's short absence from home sells a priceless bronze, and with its proceeds returned with her child to her beloved Italy.

It would appear that Melrose mourned the bronze more than he did his wife, and to his dying day never forgave her.

These happenings are but the "prologue of the drama which took place twenty years later."

Lydia Penfold, spinster, aged twenty-four, a struggling artist, lived with her mother and sister in the inspiring surroundings of the Lake District, and it was while sketching in St. John's Vale under the northern slopes of the Helvellyn range that she meets with Faversham. "The gold on Skiddaw was passing into rose, and over the greenish blue of the lower sky webs of crimson cirrus spun themselves. The stream ran fire, and far away the windows of a white farm blazed. Lydia seized a spare sketching-block, and began to note down a few passages." It was at this moment that Faversham appears, and the recapturing for her of a paper taken by a gust of wind serves as an introduction. He asks her of the fine old house he sees in the distance.

She tells him it belongs to Melrose. "He is a legend about here. He goes by the name of the Ogre."

"What's wrong with him?"

"Ask his tenants," she said at last.

"Oh! he's a landlord, and a bad one!"

"She nodded—a sudden sharpness in her grey eyes.

"But that's not the common reason for the name. It's because he shuts himself up—in a house full of treasures. He is a great collector."

Faversham, after bidding her an unwilling adieu, meets with a severe bicycle accident. He is taken to the old collector's house, Threalfall Towers; and Melrose, from being at first furiously angry, becomes infatuated with the young man, chiefly on account of the reason that he possesses a valuable Medusa amethyst. Events from that time follow thick and fast. Faversham accepts

the post of agent to the old man, at a salary of three thousand a year; and practically sells his honour and for the time shuts his eyes to the glaring social evils of the property. Lydia, who in time learns to love him, is also a passionate lover of humanity and justice. She tells him in fine language—

"The great things that make life happy have nothing to do with money. They can be had for so little. If I were to marry you and live on Mr. Melrose's money, everything in life would be poisoned for me. I should always see the faces of dead people—whom I loved. I should hear their voices accusing (she is referring to the deaths in the recent epidemic from insanitary conditions). We should be in slavery—slavery to a bad man—and our souls would die."

"Life at her grindstone" had been busy with Faversham; and in the sifted, sharpened soul laid bare to her, the woman recognised her mate indeed. . . . Dazzled by money and power; and at last delivered from the tyranny of them, as though by some fierce gaol delivering angel, Faversham had found himself; and such a self as could never have been reasonably prophesied for the discontented idler, who, in the May meadows had first set eyes on Lydia Penfold.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

May 13th, 20th, 27th, and June 3rd and 10th.—The Infants' Hospital, Vincent Square, S.W. Lectures on Babies, by Dr. Ralph Vincent. 3.30 p.m.

May 14th.—Irish Nurses Association: Lecture by Dr. Maunsell on "Seemingly Trivial Symptoms, which may indicate Serious Disease."

May 16th.—Q.V.J.I. Bryn-y-Menai Home of Rest for Queen's Nurses. Matinée by the Amateur Stage Club. Royal Court Theatre.

May 19th.—Princess Christian lays the Foundation-stone of the Helena Building of the Royal Free Hospital, 2.45.

May 21st.—Alexandra Hospital for Children with Hip Disease, W.C. Linen and Clothing Fund. Annual Meeting, 3.30. Tea and coffee in the Wards, 4 p.m.

May 22nd.—Meeting Central Midwives Board, Caxton House, S.W.

May 24th.—Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland: Quarterly Meeting, 431, Oxford Street, London, W., 4.30 p.m.

May 26th-31st.—Post-Graduate Week at York Road Hospital, S.E.

A WORD FOR THE WEEK.

Rest is not quitting the busy career;

Rest is of putting of self to the sphere.

'Tis the brook's motion, clear without strife,

Fleeing to ocean, after its life.

'Tis loving and serving the highest and best,

'Tis onward unswerving, and that is true rest.

GOETHE.

*By Mrs. Humphry Ward. London: Smith, Elder & Co.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)