

promise of other lives to come, will be sufficient for those of us, both within the profession and outside of it, who have laboured to bring this Club into being, and to hold it true to its great Christian ideal, as its steadfast purpose, an unalterable vision."

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"DAMARIS."*

It is some long time since we have had a novel from Lucas Malet's pen, and we have awaited the arrival of "Damaris" with some impatience.

It would, perhaps, have been more fitting if the book had been styled "Henrietta," for the whole interest lies in the speculation as to what line of conduct Henrietta Pereira will pursue.

The scene is laid in North-West India, and Lucas Malet does not fail to make the most of its vivid surroundings, and portrays the effect of its environment on European character with convincing skill.

Damaris is the five-year-old daughter and only child of the widowed Commissioner Verity.

The climate had taken its toll of the naturally hyper-sensitive child and left a lovely little bundle of nerves and naughtiness. The imaginative child is generally somewhat overdrawn in fiction, and little Damaris is no exception to the rule. Her devoted English nurse and guardian—Sarah Watson—is a specimen of a solitary, hard-natured, jealous Puritan woman, in whom the wells of tenderness exist only for her nursing and her master.

It was into this circle that Henrietta Pereira was introduced. After many years the unused rooms formerly occupied by Damaris' young mother were swept and garnished for the reception of a guest. Damaris and Mrs. Watson viewed these proceedings with profound distrust.

The woman, as she sat working in the spacious afternoon quiet of the princely oriental house, disapproved of the preparations which she had that morning superintended. "Yet they were ordered by the infallible one. How could he do wrong?"

Damaris, at the sight of her father—notably tall, arrogantly careless of observation—entering the waiting carriage drew herself up, shaking out her muslin skirts and planting her bronze-slipped feet proudly.

"Who's the Commissioner Sahib going to meet, Nannie?" she demanded.

"A lady who you and I don't know, Miss Damaris."

"Don't you like the lady to come?" the child asked.

"It's not my place to like or dislike anyone whom the Commissioner chooses to ask here."

Damaris looked at her observantly. "Never mind, Nannie," she said, with an air of patronage, vastly engaging; "if she's not a nice lady, we'll have her sent away again d'rekly; I'll speak to the Commissioner Sahib."

If Henrietta Pereira was not a "nice lady," she was at least a very attractive one, and little imaginative Damaris at once fell down and worshipped her.

The period of these happenings was the early sixties, and it adds somewhat to the piquancy of the situation that Henrietta's appearance and dress, of course, corresponded. We are bound to add that it was the only early Victorian thing about her so far as we can discover. But, perhaps, after all, human nature does not differ much, whether it be clothed in crinolines or short tailor skirts, or whether it is born in the nineteenth or twentieth century. Henrietta also wore a long curl depending from her left ear.

She and Colonel Verity had been sweethearts in bygone days, before either of them were married, and at the time of this story Henrietta was in possession of a second husband. She is described "as a woman of exquisite surfaces"; and, perhaps, it was owing to the lack of depth in her that she proposed herself for a visit to Colonel Verity. Apparently it was just the playing with fire that attracted her. When the visit was lengthened into weeks, scandal began to be whispered about Colonel Verity and his beautiful guest, but the devotion of little Damaris grew and multiplied.

Lugard, the young subaltern, regarded the situation with a troubled mind. Verity had been his Galahad, and it was with reluctance that he recognised him as a Lancelot.

"The devil's own plague on pretty women!" he said, bitterly, under his breath.

But on a nature like that of Henrietta the flesh pots ever hold the firmest sway, and the importunities of the Commissioner forced a decision. So, in his brief absence from home, she returned to her despised but adoring husband and all the solid comfort that he stood for.

Verity, whose passion was genuine enough, raged after his kind; but little Damaris came near to dying of grief for the loss of her pretty lady.

The dramatic ending to the story strikes us as unreal and overstrained, even allowing for the natural effect that the critical condition of little Damaris would produce upon her father. Human nature does not alter thus suddenly. He swears never again to have any dealings with women, if his little daughter is spared. Although the story is undeniably interesting and the descriptions often fascinating, there is that about it which makes us hesitate to recommend it unreservedly. H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

September 21st.—Meeting Executive Committee Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, 431, Oxford Street, London, W. 4.30 p.m.

September 28th.—Central Committee for the State Registration of Nurses: Meeting Executive Committee, 431, Oxford Street, London, W., 11.30 a.m.; Meeting Central Committee, Council Chamber, British Medical Association, 429, Strand, London, W.C. 2.30 p.m.

*By Lucas Malet. Hutchinson & Co., London.

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