

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"DAISY ASHFORD: HER BOOK."*

Emboldened by the success of "The Young Visitors," Miss Ashford brings more treasures out of the storehouse of her youth, and delights us with this new revelation of her childish genius.

The volume is comprised of short stories, and the first entitled "A Short Story of Love and Marriage," was written at the age of eight years and dictated to her father, who faithfully took it down word for word. By this process something is lost, both in the accurate spelling and in the paragraphing, which, in "The Young Visitors," was original in the extreme; but Daisy's flights of imagination are quite as convincing.

The meeting between Thomas Hendrick (known as Burke) with his true love, Edith Plush, was as follows:—

When he reached Mionge Lane he met his pretty true love skipping along most lady-like and primly. In one hand she carried a Leghorn hat with red and blue ribbon, in the other a silken bag filled with a threepenny bit and two biscuits, and her age was nineteen.

"Well, my pretty bird," she said, as she approached Burke (who, by the way, had a greasy head), "I hope you will like to 'manger' a biscuit with me." I may add she was fond of French. A disagreement which arose on Burke's preferring cracknels, when Edith had provided Osbornes, ended with:

"Well, dry up those moist tears and I will eat one," said Burke. Their short courtship ended in a wedding, when the timid darling lady wore a remarkable costume with a high bustle, her white veil reached down to the top of her stays. White kid gloves, and as the sleeves of her dress were rather short her red, beef-coloured hands showed between. Pretty white velvet boots with grass-green buttons and washed-out red stockings completed her attire. The "strong and bold bridegroom" was similarly unsuitably dressed, and when he arrived at church his bare legs were not much appreciated.

For their honeymoon they went to the south of India and seven hours after they got there they had two twin babies, a boy and a girl, which they called Abraham and Sarah because they were fond of those holy saints.

"Where Love Lies Deepest" was written at the age of twelve and dedicated to her governess.

Beatrice of surpassing loveliness was not sufficiently enamoured of Laurence Cathcart to become engaged to him. She was poor and he was rich and there was an element of pride in her refusal. Laurence urges her to say "Yes," and live in luxury and riches for the rest of her life.

Beatrice soon forgets her woes in an invitation she receives to pay a visit in Paris. Her father consents, and "I suppose," said he, "You would like a pound or two to buy dresses and hats;

I will give you £10; I should advise a blue serge and a yellow hat."

This advice was scouted and the £10 in ready gold from Mr. Langton's scanty purse was invested in a lovely green silk dress trimmed with a delicate shade of rose-pink, and the dainty little hat was of the same picturesque colours. She likewise bought a costly diamond brooch and two silver bangles to make up the £10.

After many vicissitudes Beatrice is accepted as a military hospital nurse and receives a letter from Captain Harsh offering her a post in India, where she can live with other nurses in a comfortable house not far from the battlefield. Here she has a poignant scene with Laurence Cathcart on his death bed.

"The Hangman's Daughter," which was written when Daisy was thirteen, is quite a long and ambitious affair. Mr. Winston accepted the office of hangman at Kenalham, in spite of his nerves being bad, as the payment was good; and, after all, only about two people were hung in the year there.

"The Jealous Governess," written by Daisy's sister at the age of eight, is acknowledged by Daisy herself to be the most amusing in the collection, and we agree with her.

Mr. Hose and his wife were desirous of having a baby of their own.

"I should like to adopt one," said Charlie; "I would like to have one of my own," said Elizabeth; "I don't like adopting babies." However, early the next morning, the doctor arrived with a box under his arm. "Oh! I say, Mrs. Hose," he began, taking off his hat; "I have heard you have been wishing for a baby, so I have brought you one."

"Oh! hurrah," said Mrs. Hose; "Is it a boy or a girl?"

"Well, I don't know," said the doctor, "quite; but I'll leave you to find out and settle matters."

Directly the box was opened a dear little fat baby rolled out on to the eiderdown.

A governess was engaged for this treasure when it was six months' old, in order that it might get used to her before it was time to be taught.

But the tragedy lay in the governess herself wishing to possess a like treasure and having bargained in a distinctly original way with Mrs. Hose's doctor, she receives in due course a similar box from him.

"I hope it's nice," she said, as she cut the string.

Of course it was ugly, as most babies are when they are first born.

But this would not do for Miss Tunick, for she called it "an ugly little beast," and next day she threw it away.

"She was now quite satisfied that she had got rid of it, but she was more angry still when she found the bill inside the box: "Miss Tunick, dr. to Doctor Paulin for one baby delivered as per agreement, £1."

We have no space for comment, but promise our readers many a laugh if they obtain and read the book.

H. H.

* By Daisy Ashford. (Chatto & Windus.)

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