

various personalities with an insight and familiarity with country folk that cannot be mistaken.

Then at last the suspense was ended—the house was at last undoubtedly hers.

Unable to contain her joy, Ann Clapham, stout, elderly, comely, neat and clean, sets forth at once to view her new possession. Mrs. Bell, who occupied the adjoining house, greeted her grimly. "What in the name o' fortune fetched you up so fast?"

"I was that keen to get here," the charwoman acknowledged, half-laughing, half-crying.

"Them as comes up the hill fastest like enough goes down it soonest," she observed. She assumed a patronising tone as if the almshouses were actually in her gift. "Me and Mrs. Bendrigg and Mrs. Cam have been talking it over and we come to the conclusion we couldn't have done better—we've settled as you'll do." She further proceeded to lay down the etiquette for the newcomer's guidance in a manner truly delightful. As oldest tenant she had charge of the keys whenever the houses fell vacant, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that she could bring herself to hand them over.

"I hardly reckoned on you being up so soon," she remarked rather crossly, still retaining the key.

Ann Clapham, however, firmly took possession of her key and as firmly declined Mrs. Bell's company on her tour of inspection.

"She drew a long breath as she slowly opened the door, then slowly she let it out again with a sense of blissful relief. The house smelt a little close through having been shut up. Mrs. Clapham however, smelt the soul of this house and knew that it was all right; it reached out to her a welcoming hand and murmured and crooned to her as she went in. Now she knew for a fact that all life had just been leading up to this.

She had known the old Lancashire business man whose generosity had reared these little homes. He had an understanding soul and knew there must be a parlour as well as a kitchen. He knew a parlour was a kind of private church where you locked up the things that were precious to you and went away happy because they were safe.

He had known that old folks like to see a "bit of life," so he had put the kitchen facing the road; but he had also known that the old have their hours of weary withdrawal from life, so he had set a second window towards the west, where, in the evening time they would look at something so much bigger than life. Leaning back in one of his easy chairs they would sit staring at the colour and light, the shining mystery of evening peace. He liked to think some of them might even pass like that without any nuisance of doctor and sick bed, soothed and content, alone yet not lonely, they might step out of the houses he had built, into those other houses not made with hands. The charwoman's beautiful soul was steeped in this environment and responded in full.

We have no space to tell of the tragedy that ended this day of hopes, fears, and realisation.

Ann Clapham never inhabited her castle of dreams. Her return home that evening was greeted with the news of her darling Tibbie's death. The two children were left desolate, and children find no place in an almshouse.

There are other clever character studies, notably that of Emma. A more unpleasant and uncanny personality it would be hard to describe.

It is long since we have read a book that has given us such sincere pleasure. Ann Clapham is a notable achievement. The making of her delightful acquaintance should not be disregarded.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

June 20th to 25th.—Royal Sanitary Institute. 32nd Congress and Health Exhibition, Folkestone. President, Lord Radnor.

June 25th.—Royal British Nurses' Association. Annual Meeting, 3.30 p.m., 194, Queen's Gate, S. W.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not in ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

NURSE AND BOTTLE.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING,

MADAM,—Will you very kindly publish the following statement, as from one or two sources I learn that misapprehension may have arisen. In some of the press of Saturday, the 11th inst., there appeared the report of a summons, headed "Nurse and Bottle," in which the accused person was said to belong to the West Ham Infirmary, Leytonstone.

I would like to say that the person mentioned is not and never has been connected with the Infirmary of the West Ham Board of Guardians, at Whipps Cross, Leytonstone, now known as Whipps Cross Hospital.

Yours faithfully,

Whipps Cross Hospital, LETITIA S. CLARK.
Leytonstone, E. 11.

[The defence of the nurse referred to, who was fined 20s. at Croydon for throwing a bottle to the danger of the public, was that a party of nurses and attendants returning from Brighton were having a contest as to who should have the last drink from a bottle of stout, and it slipped out of her hand through the window. We are not surprised that Miss Clark wishes to dissociate the nurses at Whipps Cross Hospital from such behaviour.—ED.]

Other letters are unavoidably held over.

PRIZE COMPETITION QUESTIONS.

July 2nd.—What are the appearances of a varicose ulcer which has been (a) neglected, (b) treated properly for a week? What is the usual treatment for a varicose ulcer?

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)