

BOOK OF THE MONTH.

"FROM MAN TO MAN."*

Olive Schreiner needs no recommendation as an author. Those who have read and appreciated (and who would not?) "Dreams" and "The Story of an African Farm," will on no account miss the story under notice this month.

Its appealing beauty, combined as it is with poignant tragedy cannot fail to grip the heart, and satisfy the imagination. Perhaps out of all the chapters in this wonderful book, the Prelude is the most satisfying (we understand it was so to the author).

"The little mother lay in the agony of child-birth. Outside all was still but for the buzzing of the bees, some of which found their way into the half darkened room.

At the back of the house on the kitchen door step, stood Rebekah, the little five-year-old daughter. She wore a short pink cotton dress, with little white knickerbockers buttoned below the knees, and a white kappie that came almost to her waist."

How charming is the picture drawn of the, up to now, only child as she plays alone, with nature for her toys. The little house of flat stones, that she builds for the mice, with moss carpet and corn for the meals.

"Half she expected the mice to come; and half she knew they would not."

Strange things were happening in her home, and Rebekah tired of her play and the intense heat of the African sun, would learn what it all meant.

The shock of the new-born babe in her mother's arms was very severe.

"Kiss it, Rebekah, it is your little sister."

"No, I won't, I don't like it," she said slowly. Rebekah watched her mother and the babe, then walked slowly to the door.

"Please open it for me." The handle was too high for her. The nurse let her out.

She put on her kappie again and went out into the burning sun. She knew she ought not to be out there, she knew it was wicked, but she liked the heat to burn her that morning. She could feel it scorching her arms through her little cotton dress, and she liked it. But by and by the heat overcame her, and she took refuge in the spare room, into which she could easily climb by the low window. Something quite new she found there on the table in the centre of the room. She got a chair and climbed up. On a pillow under a sheet was a little baby. "How fast it was sleeping!" She touched one of its hands, it was very cool though the day was hot.

With difficulty she finds a little fur trimmed cape of her own, and lays it across the baby's feet.

Tenderly she put her face down and kissed the curly black down. Seeing it did not stir, she collected her favourite possessions, a silver thimble, a paper of needles, Queen Victoria's picture, and a stick of chocolate, and arranged them round the dead baby. Then she sat down to watch till the baby woke.

Late in the afternoon old Ayah found her fast asleep. Her reproaches distressed the child.

"Please don't wake it. It's mine. I found it."

"The child is mad," said old Ayah. "How can it be yours? It's your mother's."

"It is mine," said Rebekah slowly, "Mietje found hers in the hut, and Katje found hers behind the Kraal. My mother found hers that cries so in the bedroom. *This one is mine.*"

This woman child with the maternal instinct so early awakened, and yet withal so sweetly childish, would expend her love on nature, and where other children of her age would let imagination play round their dolls, she would make a baby out of the contents of a mimosa pod.

* By OLIVE SCHREINER. (Fisher Unwin.)

"Don't be sorry you came into the world, my baby. I will take care of you."

But the surviving twin girl of her mother, Baby Bertie (whose tragic history forms a large portion of the subsequent story), within a few days wins her way into the little sister mother's heart, who thenceforth loves her with an unspeakable devotion.

Chapter I takes a long leap, and it is already Rebekah's wedding day.

The strange child has grown into a girl whose temperament was bound to remain unsatisfied.

Why did she marry good-looking, ordinary Frank?

On the night before her wedding, she asks herself the eternal why.

"What was she leaving it for? That quiet peaceful life. Placid and peaceful into which the babbling, worried, worrying world crept only once a week through the post bag; a thoughtful life, a life in which suffering was small, and pleasure if grey tinted was calm and constant.

On the other hand there was—well—a vague insatiable hunger. Books, beetles, well-performed duties, she had tried them all, and she was dying of hunger.

The story moves quickly with a wealth of beautiful language and description, through Rebekah's married life, and the birth of her four sons, and the infidelities of her husband, and of Baby Bertie's heart breaking history, which tore at her sister's inmost being.

But through it all Rebekah kept her beautiful soul, and her simple human affections, and continued her converse with nature.

Of Baby Bertie we have no space to write at length. The beautiful innocent, wronged girl, whose life was devastated in one hour of her extreme youth, the secret of which she had never divulged, even to her loving sister, at last dogged her till she was driven to a life of shame.

Olive Schreiner, as we are told in the introduction, did not live to finish this book.

It is a volume to possess. We commend it to our readers, with apologies for such an inadequate notice.

But such elusive and delicate talent cannot be trapped in paragraph or quotation, but must be conned and studied if its savour would be discovered.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

January 12th.—Address by Mrs. Strong, F.B.C.N., on the British College of Nurses, at the Paisley Infirmary.

January 21st.—Meeting of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales, 20, Portland Place, W. 2.30 p.m.

January 25th.—Hearing of Appeal of Town Council of Hastings against the refusal of the General Nursing Council for England and Wales to approve the Corporation's Infectious Diseases Hospital as a complete Training School for Fever Nurses. Ministry of Health, Whitehall, S.W. 3 p.m.

January 28th.—Conference of Nursing and Kindred Organisations convened by the Labour Party to consider its Draft Report on the Nursing Profession. Caxton Hall, Westminster, S.W. 10 a.m.

January 29th.—Meeting of the Council of the British College of Nurses. 431, Oxford Street, London, W. 3 p.m.

February 2nd.—National Council of Nurses of Great Britain. Carnival Dance organised by Mrs. Northwood. Tickets 3s. 6d. Refreshments by Plane Tree Restaurant, Marylebone Hall, Marylebone Road, N.W.1. Dancing 8 to 12 p.m.

February 5th.—Meeting of Executive Committee, National Council of Nurses of Great Britain. 431, Oxford Street, London, W.1. 3 p.m.

July 27th-30th.—International Council of Nurses, Interim Conference, Geneva, Switzerland.

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