

OUR TABLE.

"LETTICE ARNOLD," BY THE AUTHOR OF "TWO OLD MEN'S TALES," "EMILIA WYNDHAM," &c.

This beautiful little story originally appeared in *The Ladies Companion*. Transferred from thence to various leading periodicals, it has by this time been read and praised by many thousands. It has recently been published by itself, and in that form may be procured from any of the booksellers.

"LETTICE ARNOLD," brief though it is, has added much to the previously high reputation of its author. We, for our part, admire it exceedingly, and yet it is by no means faultless. Two defects we venture, though with deference, to notice. The plot, simple as it is, is abruptly and imperfectly concluded. The way in which the unfortunate young minister becomes an inmate of the crusty old general's house, is scarcely natural, to say the least. Such things were common in "the olden time," but now they are quite out of date. In a romance of the last century, the wildest exaggerations are excusable; but in a domestic story of the present day, we ought to have the most refined simplicity. Could not some other means have been devised, to bring about the contemplated *dénouement*, besides the one adopted,—that is to say, turning the pale-browed and intellectual St. Leger into a private chaplain, or, in other words, a household clerk? The other fault is still more serious. The style in which the dialogues are carried on, is very often anything but *conversational*,—varying frequently, indeed upon the *oratorical*. We must admit, however, that Mrs. Marsh's writings are, in this respect, superior to those of most other popular Novelists. The sad mistake of "making little fishes talk like whales," is one into which but few have escaped falling. A plain and simple style of conversation, expressing well and clearly what is fresh and vigorous in the mind, is seldom found. In place of this, we have an artificial and elaborate style, built up of tropes and metaphors instead of thoughts, conveying sound instead of sense. Thus if the little book before us seems on this account defective, it must be remembered, that it only takes its tone from the vast multitude of similar productions, and should not, therefore, be too hastily condemned. But "LETTICE ARNOLD"

is no ordinary work. Its faults are very few, its merits very many. We have called it beautiful, and so it is. Throughout, it breathes a pure and holy Christian feeling. Throughout, it manifests a warm and generous sympathy with affliction and distress, a clear and penetrating judgment, and a practical philosophy. To the philanthropic mind, few things present matter more worthy of serious reflection, than the unfortunate condition of the humble classes in great cities. The wretchedness of the sewing-women, as in their destitution they toil on from day to day and night to night, scarcely supporting life itself, while they embroider gay garments for the rich who dwell in splendid mansions and who pass their lives away, regardless of their duties or their destiny, affords a mournful lesson. We trust the graphic pictures that Mrs. Marsh has drawn for us, will not be profitless. Many a heart, no doubt, will swell with emotion at the story of what the sisters suffered in their miserable garret, the one heroically enduring what she could not avert, the other uselessly repining and unhappy. The picture is a truthful one; thousands are, to-day, worse off than were Lettice and Myra—yet among the wealthy, the educated, the professedly generous, how seldom do we find one like their noble benefactress!

The chapter in which is recorded the little history of "Mrs. Fisher," we think the best in the book. It narrates the vicissitudes of the life of one, who had known sorrow, privation, cruelly hard labor, and the loneliness of utter desolation of the heart;—of one who had, moreover, been extremely beautiful, and experienced those innumerable perils to which such a gift exposes an unprotected girl, struggling for her bread, under the cruellest circumstances of oppressive labor.

In one respect, "LETTICE ARNOLD" is like most other novels. In it, the virtuous are rewarded and the vicious punished. The heroine well deserves *her* happiness; Myra perhaps also deserves the obscure lot into which she enters, but still we cannot help regretting that the latter is so summarily and unsatisfactorily disposed of.

In conclusion, we cannot do otherwise than strongly recommend to our readers, a tale from which we have ourselves derived so much instruction and delight.