

the men were not forgetting that they are the stronger sex, and therefore an example is expected from them worthy to be followed, the other sex would not be in so much danger of overrating her powers in comparison with theirs as she is at present.

Since writing the foregoing I read "Osservatore's" letter and agree with it most heartily only I venture to differ from "Osservatore" in her idea that the Women's National Council tends to take women from home life. Surely a few hours now and again and a few days in the year may be spared by good, earnest mothers and housewives to give others the benefit of their experience as mothers and housewives.

I see many ways of spending spare time, but none spent to such advantage as in these efforts for the raising of our sex.

A. C. M.

Kingston, July 16th, 1895.

THE KORAN OR THE SWORD.

Sir,—I was glad to read the letter of "Mussulman" in your last issue. There is too great a tendency at the present day to think ungenerously of all religions but our own. I have lived a good deal among Mussulmans and I am pretty well versed in the Koran, but neither in the book nor among its believers have I found that horrible alternative "The Koran or the Sword" about which we hear so much. The idea arose from the early wars (all defensive) of the Mahommetans, when, to inspire the soldiers with ardour and fervour, they were told that it was meretorious to kill an infidel. The policy may not be justifiable, but it is explicable, and, considering the times, cannot be regarded as surprising. There are quite as horrible dictates in the Bible, as your correspondent points out, and to his instances I will add one from Psalm 149, viz: "Let the saints . . . let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people," etc.

WM. TRANT.

Regina, N.W.T., 9th July, 1895.

Etchings From a Parsonage Verandah*

SECOND NOTICE.

THIS neat and attractive volume of sketches of Canadian parish life, recently issued by Wm. Briggs, possesses qualities that give promise of admirable work in the future, and of such a character as to recommend it to the perusal of all interested in our rising Canadian literature. These qualities, however, are not on the surface; are, indeed, often concealed by a mass of commonplace narrative, so that a casual examination of the book might not reveal them to the average reader; hence we think no apology necessary for devoting a little more space to an attempt at indicating them.

While nothing could be more unpretentious than the length of these sketches, or the author's mode of handling the characters, the picture of parsonage life produced is a most satisfactory one and promises well for the future labours of Mrs. Graham in this field. Everything has the colour and tone of everyday life. There is no desire for, or effort after, idealization. The characters—many of whom, after filling the eye throughout an entire sketch, reappear again and again—are neither heroes nor villains, spotless saints nor corrupted sinners, but average human beings with hopes and fears, aspirations after virtue and tendencies toward vice. Even the Rev. Solomon Wiseacre, who figures as the husband of the narrator, is very far from sainthood, and is credited with "traces of the carnal mind." The following is a description of one of his encounters with Mrs. Wiseacre:—

"He is my husband. He is just now coming from the post office, bringing home his mail; and, as greedily as a schoolgirl devours chocolates, so eagerly does Solomon devour the news.

"I should as soon think of taking Carlo by the ears when he is gnawing a succulent bone as to ask Solomon for a dollar when he is in the depths of his paper.

"He comes and sits by me, opens his paper, and reads so intently that his mouth falls open and the tip of his tongue appears. His eyes are large and comprehensive—he is getting intoxicated with news.

"Then an imp, a very small one takes possession of me. I say, in a dry voice, 'Solomon, I think you will have to whip Arthur, he told a lie to-day.'

"He moves uneasily in his chair, and jerks his shoulders.

"I ask again, 'Solomon, do you not hear me?'

"Why, in the name of wonder, Catharine, did you not whip him yourself?'

"He always calls me 'Catharine' when he is sad or cross, but 'Katie' when he is in his honeymoon state.

"I thought it was a father's work to whip the boys,' I answer. 'That was the way papa used to do.'

"Now I know—a suspicious twinkle in his eye—'why you are such a wattery, unstable character. Your mother should have handed you over to your father. Desperate diseases need heroic treatment.'

"I snatch his paper from him and throw it on the lawn; his *Guardian* I twist into a knot; his letters I whirl up on the house, where they each stick lovingly to the old, rough shingles, and I return to my chair.

"Solomon goes away with a sad, preoccupied air, which means, 'thorns in the flesh,' 'patience,' 'despair,' and many other Christian states and graces."

The power of justly estimating people, of seeing the weakness as well as the strength of a character—the power, in short, of close observation—is one of the secrets of the author's success in realistic portraiture, and is usually made more effective by her instinct for the selection of characteristic details. It is, moreover, to be found not only in the individual sketches, but permeating the entire work. So one comes to feel at its close that while the volume contains little in the way of profound insight into life, and no great breadth of vision or power of thought, a just and adequate picture of the life represented has been accomplished.

Then, too, the volume contains some really good bits of humorous character work, such, for instance, as the old coloured woman who in the chapter "Under a Cloud" is known as "Auntie Linkum;" or the following description of a drunken man's ideas of deference to the gentler sex:

"Up the street came that strangest of all maniacs—a drunkard! When he drew near he took off his hat, made a low bow, then fell against a tree-box.

"Mornin', ladish."

"We did not speak.

"I all'us s'lute—ladish—when I see 'm,' he said with a thick utterance. 'The Sun's havin' a—ball—to-day, ladish. I'm to take the moon out to supper—hic. Good-bye, ladish—hic. All'us s'lute ladish when I see 'm. Very sorry, 'm sure—hic.' And he staggered on."

But we have yet to speak of the style, which after all is the most satisfactory and promising feature of the Etchings. It is never elaborate or exhaustive. The author has eschewed any attempt at telling all that is to be told about a character or incident, but has, as we elsewhere mentioned, contented herself with choosing characteristic details, thus leaving scope for the imagination of the reader. Sometimes the merest detail or the turn of a sentence serves to add suggestiveness and colour to an entire passage. Equally important is the style of the sentences and paragraphs chosen by Mrs. Graham. There are no long, involved and wearisome periods such as are frequently thrust into the service of fiction. The author is keenly alive to the value and appropriateness of the short sentences in light prose sketches, as will be seen from the following passage which opens the sketch entitled "Only a Child."

"Winter has passed. Another spring is here. I am so glad to put my chair in its old place on the verandah. Nature has finished her house-cleaning. The snows of winter have melted and washed away all her impurities. She has put a fresh carpet of green on the earth; she has planted her flowers and fruits; her choir of birds are chanting and carolling in the trees; the scent of lilacs and apple blossoms is in the air.

"Why am I not happy? Why? There is a little grave in the cemetery; on the head-stone is carved 'Freddie.'

"He died when the snow was deep on the earth. What is there to say of him? Only that we loved him—that he was

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