

CELIBATES.*

A NEW school of fiction seemed to come into existence with the advent of *Dodo*, which, in contradistinction to the psychical school, of which, perhaps, the world is a little weary, might be called the physical. It relates to human beings who possess bodies full of sensations and emotions and the desire for experiments, all of which are deeply and speculatively interesting to themselves, but who may be said to be almost devoid of the counterbalancing spiritual and mental equipment which goes to make up the ordinary human being.

Dodo was one of these abnormal creatures, and Mildred Lawson, the heroine of the first of Mr. George Moore's three sto-

* *Celibates*. By George Moore. Macmillan & Co. \$1.50.

ries, is another. They are women who have none of the great fundamental instincts or passions. They neither love, nor suffer, nor sin except in a cool, experimental way; they have no desire to follow the deeper emotions for themselves, and they toy and trifle with those which they excite in others. With the relentless energy of an octopus Mildred Lawson breaks off her engagement with no better reason than that she has exhausted the little surface thrill of being loved. That her decision embitters and grieves the man who loves her counts for absolutely nothing. She takes to art, experiments on her painting master, enters upon another engagement, and breaks that also. The artist, young and sensitive, does not realize that it is an octopus that has taken possession of him; he dies of the blow. Mildred puts on a becoming black gown, lays a few violets on his coffin, and promptly begins on lover No. 3 in the shades of Fontainebleau. She likes him better than the other two, but it does not prevent her from jilting him all the same, though at intervals she goes back to him in fancy, and (standing before the mirror always) stretches her arms out "fetchingly" and cries to his distant *eidolon*, "Come, my love, my love, and do with me what you will." We leave her trying on her first lover for the second time and appalled at her own incapacity for feeling anything for anybody:

Her nerves were shattered, and life grew terribly distinct in the insomnia of the hot summer night. She threw herself over and over in her burning bed until at last her soul cried out in its lucid misery [*sic*], "Give me a passion for God or man, but give me a passion; I cannot live without one!"

A passion forsooth! As well may a jelly fish demand to be intrusted with one. The heroine of the physical novel is endowed with an appetite; in fact, she is all appetite, and the cry of her life is for something with which to appease it; but of so generous a thing as passion she is as incapable as she is incomprehensive. One can forgive the fiery currents of gentle blood, but when milk and water essays to be poisonous and succeeds what shall be said? Surely there must soon come a reaction from this terrible new sort of sinner.