

would aver, "thirty-seven is a very good age, a very good age indeed—if Lady Matilda would only think so, and would only show that she thinks so. Why, there are plenty of ladies who are quite *passé* by thirty or thirty-five—they are full-grown women, they think sensibly and talk sensibly about their children and servants and domestic affairs—those are the things that ought to interest women of Lady Matilda's time of life. Thirty-seven! I declare, when I am thirty-seven I shan't want to be running the risk of breaking my neck over all the worst fences in the country, or twirling about by moonlight on the ice, as Lady Matilda did last winter. Poor Charlotte never got her skates on, but there was her mother out every evening. She has no more notion of what is befitting her position and dignity than a chambermaid."

The family party at Overton Hall is well depicted, the poor, ugly, honest, simple-hearted Earl, Teddy with his odd make-up of personal beauty, gay temper, and want of mental balance; Matilda loving, soothing, and influencing each in turn; the frank honesty and affection of the brothers and sister for each other. Equally good in another vein are the good-natured, vulgar Tufwalls. Challoner seems to us to have more of the flavor of the melodrama about him than the rest, but the book is entertaining, that first requisite of a novel, and it shows in many respects a distinct advance over Mrs. Walford's previous work.

THE BABY'S GRANDMOTHER.*

WE are inclined to rank Mrs. Walford's latest as her best story. While it contains no single figure which in dignity and worth compares with "Mr. Smith," the rank and file of its *dramatis personæ* and the general movement and liveliness of the story are far in advance of both that and its immediate successors.

The picture of middle-class English society drawn in *Mr. Smith* was a pitiful one. Mothers who angled openly for sons-in-law, girls on the *qui vive* to secure at any price and by any method a husband, a perpetual bare-faced struggle, on one side to capture, on the other to escape—such were represented as the ordinary conditions of life in an ordinary country neighborhood. In *The Baby's Grandmother* the position is happily reversed. Now it is the men who do the wooing, who plot and counter-plot, and invent plans for the securing desirable "partis;" and it is more agreeable to the taste to have them do so.

There is just that element of the unexpected in Lady Matilda's position which adds piquancy to the sketch. There is nothing extraordinary in the existence of a beautiful, vivacious, attractive woman of thirty-seven, nothing strange in the fact that lovers should collect about her, and nothing miraculous in the other fact that she should possess a dull little married daughter of nineteen, and that that daughter should have a baby. Still the situation is unusual, to say the least, and there is much drollery in the contrast between the gay, charming mother, the common-place, half-jealous, old-for-her-age Lotta, and the formal Robert, who disapproves so thoroughly of his mother-in-law and dares not show it.

"It is not her being young and that," he

* *The Baby's Grandmother.* By Mrs. L. B. Walford. Henry Holt & Co. \$1.00.