

IN THIS BUNDLE of short stories we find much of the cheery wisdom of "Ships that Pass in the Night," and some new teachings that are well worth preserving. One of the great charms of Miss Harraden's work is the total absence of *pose*; she does not desire to teach—far less to sermonize; but she is willing to impart to others that philosophy of life which she herself has evidently found so helpful. Modern as she is, she does not rush ahead into unexplored fields; she is contented to shape and adapt life in accordance with actual conditions and surroundings. And it is for this reason that we like her books and enjoy reading them and are benefited thereby. That in some lives the abomination of desolation is unrelieved by a single ray of joy, she sees plainly; if she did not, she would not be a child of our time, and would probably never have written a line. Of such pitiful lives she tells here in two stories, "A London Idyll" and "The Umbrella-Mender"—the latter convincingly true, notwithstanding its weird unconventionality. Happier in subject, lighter in touch, yet with a promise of storm and stress for its eager young heroine, is the longest story in the volume, "At the Green Dragon." The charm of this pastoral, its subtle touches and tender humanity are superb, and the short period of rest in the busy historian's life is shared by the reader who rises from the perusal of the tale, refreshed and encouraged. The story we care for least is "Sorrow and Joy: an Allegory," in which, we think, the author has not been so successful as she might have been. The idea is a fine one, but the treatment is not on the same plane with it throughout. "The Painter and his Picture," on the other hand, which is also an allegory, though it is not called so in the book, is far better. "A Bird of Passage" is a light sketch, aimed at snobbery, which it hits squarely; and "The Clock-maker and his Wife" is a deliciously quaint, old-fashioned story of people who have been happy together without ever discovering the fact.

All these stories, but one, are thoroughly English in atmosphere, and this suggests a speculation upon the effect her visit to America may have upon Miss Harraden's future work. But whether our incurable optimism—which is entirely unjustifiable, according to some—affect her or not, it is probable that her work will improve in quality and breadth of view from year to year. For, notwithstanding her worldly-wisdom and her intimate knowledge of suffering, neither biographical sketches nor portraits are needed to show that she is still a young woman, and that her sympathies will grow broader and deeper as she travels farther on her road through this world of many sorrows and few and scanty pleasures.

* See the *Lounger*, page 494.—EDS. CRITIC.