

of Australia, declares cycling in a skirt to be easy, and says a bifurcated dress is by no means a necessity.

Recent mails bring us the good news that both in Delaware and in New Hampshire (U.S.) the age of consent has been raised to eighteen years.

A Book of the Day.

By L. M. SMITH.

"ZACHARY BROUGH'S VENTURE."

By E. B. BAYLY.

(Jarvold and Sons.)

"Doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost?" asked the Great Teacher. It was the weak, erring, wayward son, too, in the parable, on whom, "while he was yet a great way off," all the love and tenderness were showered; so in the book before us infinite pity and compassion are shown to the one who for years has brought little save misery to those around him, but who yet exercises a magnetic influence over all, and unconsciously makes them his ministers—servants anxious to supply his deepest, truest needs.

Claude Langdale is an artist by nature and profession. His mother died, while he was a mere child, from the effects of excessive drinking. No one tells the lad of his mother's disgrace, and he goes into society totally unaware of the probable weak spot in his own constitution. "He did not know that more than a common danger lurked beneath the secret wish he had often felt to take a little more, when his companions took for granted that every one had had enough." But only too soon is he made conscious of his weakness. A friendly servant gives him a hint of his pre-natal curse. The warning comes too late. Again and again the drink fiend, let loose (paradox though it appear) by the customs and conventionalities of society, holds him as in a vice. After a longer outbreak than common, Claude leaves his friends and courts country solitude to avoid "having" to taste intoxicating drink. In a country village he meets an artist's usual fate, in the form of a beautiful—and, withal, good and true—maiden, who, after due inspection, is received by his friends, and for a time all goes well. A few months after marriage the knowledge of her husband's weakness—a weakness he had thought unnecessary to mention, so certain was he the spell was broken—comes to the young wife, and thenceforward the path is downward. When the story opens Alcie

is dying; her little girl of ten is her sole caretaker, while Claude lies a senseless log. Joseph Gundry, once a boyish admirer of Alcie, but married now and with a large family of his own, recognises the mother by her child, and sees that the last wants are met, in which task he is aided by Zachary Brough. Alcie dies, her last thought and word—"Dearest"—being for the man who has brought her to such straits; and with her dying looks she commits him and her child to the care of Gundry. Joyfully would the latter assume the charge of Alcie—but the drunkard?—he who has cursed the life of his own early love! The good triumphs, and the dying woman reads the answer in his eyes.

Zachary makes his venture thus: Claude, with his little girl, is to live in an unused part of Mr. Brough's own house, to be kept under lock and key, never to go out without an attendant, and to hand over all his earnings into the safe keeping of his benefactor. The broken hearted man shows his remorse and true penitence by accepting the conditions, which specify that the contract may be broken any time at a week's notice.

Then the new life begins. Many a time, when the raging thirst is on him, is Claude tempted to write that notice. Once, when out with faithful Chris. for an early ramble on the hills, the thought flashes across his brain that the sketch in his hand represents money. A moment before he had been absorbed in his work; now the fiend possesses him, and down the slope towards the town he rushes like a maniac. Chris. pursues, and after a hot chase comes up with him, and clasps his strong arms about him like a band of steel. The man wrestles, strikes a blow that well nigh stuns the lad. Then, and not till then, he comes to himself, and arm-in-arm the two go home, "neither of them knowing any moment when Langdale would be off again."

After a year of such intermittent craving and wrestling, human care and love, aided by heavenly influence, win the day. Claude Langdale feels that the spell is broken, and he is a free man.

But the interest of the story does not all centre in the one whose moral and physical salvation are sought. Each character is a study—a distinct creation. There is Mrs. Gundry, a "common-place" woman, but fighting her daily battles. There is good, patient, faithful Chris., with his clumsy body and poetic soul. There are little Alcie, with her womanly care for her father, and her childish spirit breaking forth now and then; and little Joe, the personification of jollity, and with a *penchant* for speaking his mind. There is old Jacob the carter, talking to his horses as to human beings, and signing his name without one letter right—"Gekup."