

A Book of the Week.**OLD FIRES AND PROFITABLE GHOSTS.***

A bundle of stories by "Q" is always to be looked forward to; the present set he calls a book of "revenants," by which he means not only the ghost who revisits old haunts, but also the living man who cannot free his mind from old associations, but lives hovering about a past that is past.

The stories are all interesting, but of very unequal merit. The "ghost stories"—I call them so for want of a better name—are the poorest of the collection. The one called "A Pair of Hands" strikes one as being the most difficult to swallow. A house is haunted by a little girl who died when she was seven years old. She does the house work at night, sweeps the rooms, changes the dead flowers, and washes her hands in real water at a tap in the pantry which she sets running. There seems no reason whatever why she should do any of these things.

"The mystery of Joseph Laquedem" is a deliberate crib from Mr. Kipling's inimitable "Finest Story in the World." It is also a new version of the Wandering Jew, who comes to an end at last in a Cornish village where he discovers the reincarnate soul of the woman he has always loved, in the person of one Julia Constantine, a beautiful half-witted girl, who remembers the time when she was a Roman Princess, and gave her voice for his life in the amphitheatre when he was a Christian martyr—a novel character for the Wandering Jew to appear in! Having found this missing half of himself, he is able to die, and with that end in view ages rapidly, but meets his death after all by violence. The underlying idea of the whole story is confused, and the remembrances of the girl, of the arena and the ship, and other details, are not to be compared with that wonderful picture of the sunlight quivering through the oar hole in the hull of the Roman slave-galley, which was vouchsafed to Charlie, the London clerk, before the Lords of Life and Death bereft him for ever of his superfluous reminiscences. The idea is one which will not bear repetition.

The most powerful stories are "Frozen Margit," and "The Penance of John Emmet."

"Frozen Margit" is washed ashore in the long-boat of a wrecked ship. It is bitter winter weather, and the crew of the boat are all frozen to death; but beautiful Margit, clasped in the arms of her young husband, and wrapped in most of his clothes, has a spark of life remaining. She recovers, but remains frozen wholly as far as her affections are concerned. It is by no means clear whether the author intended to suggest that her body was revived, but her spirit did not return to it, as Miss Violet Hunt did in a most uncanny story which she once published, of which I have forgotten the name. At any rate, her subsequent career is of a most horrifying description, and good for making the flesh creep.

But John Emmet is the gem of the collection. The *Nerbuddha*, a troop ship, is wrecked upon the Cornish rocks—we suppose it is the Manacles that is meant—in weather that is not very bad, and with absolutely no reason that can be ascertained, she is steered right upon the rocks and goes down in twelve minutes. The captain is reported drowned, but in truth he comes

ashore, guarding his secret until he is discovered by the vicar. It was merely one of those awful cases of sheer lapse of sense or memory, which happen once in a while, no one can say why. He had simply omitted to change the vessel's course at the right time. The penance which he sets himself is to save as many lives, in his capacity as coxswain of the lifeboat, as he lost by his terrible carelessness. A hundred and twenty-seven perished in the wreck; John has saved a hundred and fifteen when called to his account. The account of his burial at sea at dead of night by the vicar, is a fine thing, of the kind that "Q" does so well.

G. M. R.

Verses.**LONDON'S LITANY OF THE SAINTS.****THE BLESSED VIRGIN.**

Pray for the women, kicked and burned,
Sold and paid for, outraged, spurned,
Tired and painted, drenched in gin,
Up to their necks in shame and sin.
Star of our shipwreck dolorous!
Pray for dim eyes paying labour's toll,
Pray for each mother's sword-pierced soul,
That watches a child sink low to grave,
Whom a few poor pieces of silver might save,
Mother of Jesus, pray for us.

ST. JOSEPH.

Pray for the men who loaf and lie,
Pray for the men who curse and die,
Pray for the men who sleep in the cold,
Pray for God's image, bought cheap and sold,
Patron of men necessitous!
Pray for the priests of London town,
And the Herods that hunt her innocents down,
And the men that crowd the bar and table
And spurn the girl-mother into the stable,
Joseph of Bethlehem, pray for us!

—From "Litany and other Poems."

By ARTHUR SHEARLY CRIPPS.

What to Read.

- "Songs and Lyrics." By C. H. Wynne.
- "Mediæval Towns, Constantinople." By William Holden Hutton.
- "The Romance of Spain." By Charles W. Wood, F.R.G.S.
- "The Hosts of the Lord." By Flora Annie Steel.
- "Love of Comrades." By Frank Mathew.
- "A Suffolk Courtship." By M. Betham-Edwards.
- "An Englishwoman's Love Letters."
- "The Yellow Man." By Carlton Dawe.
- "Of Royal Blood, a Story of the Secret Service." By William Le Queux.
- "Dr. North and His Friends." By S. Weir Mitchell, M.D.
- "Trinity Bells, a Tale of Old New York." By Amelia E. Barr.
- "The Science of the Emotions." By Bhagaván Dás M.A.

* By Q. Cassell and Co.

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