

## A Book of the Week.

### MY FRIEND PROSPERO.\*

It is with infinite sadness that one arises from the perusal of Mr. Harland's latest. For Mr. Harland is a magician, and in these days of materialism the magicians who can transport us into a realm of faëry are of endless value to the worker. To find that our sorcerer has but one magic, and that the iteration of his single string is growing monotonous, is like discovering that one is losing one's taste for chocolate walnuts, and that caramels no longer avail to dry tears and cause oblivion of sorrow.

The present reviewer would be one of the last to object to a work because, viewed in the light of sober realities, it is unlikely. The work of the magician is to make it seem likely to us who read. He succeeded in the "Cardinal's Snuff-box"; we began to shake our heads over the "Lady Paramount"; and now we lay aside "My Friend Prospero" with a "Vale! vale!" that is of the most tenderly regretful.

We have here again the idle young man, the unknown charmer, and the indispensable Roman Catholic church in the background. We have the garden and the summer; and Italy, and high birth and titles, and an entire absence of desire to know surnames, which is in itself an agreeable novelty. But we have had the same ingredients before, and exactly the same *vol-au-vent* has been evolved from them. Not only so, but the former dishes were better compounded, and more care had been taken with the flavouring.

And yet there are bits of this book which bring back our magician with all his old power to charm. And it is in the character of little Annunziata, the niece of the Paroco, that the old touch is most discernible, turning all to gold.

Annunziata prattles out of her lonely, loving little poet-heart to John Blanchemain, the irresponsible hero, in the boundless hours of his complete leisure, which never seems to be interrupted, even to take a walk.

"'You ask me,' says Annunziata, 'what is death? It is exactly like a transformation scene. At the pantomime, the scene was just like the world. There were trees and houses, and people—common people, like anyone. Then suddenly click! Oh! it was wonderful. Everything was changed. The trees had leaves of gold and silver, and the houses were like fairy palaces, and there were strange lights, red and blue, and there were great garlands of the most beautiful flowers, and the people were like angels, with gems and shining clothes. Well, you understand, at first we had only seen one side of the scene; then click! everything was turned round, and we saw the other side. That is like life and death. Always, while we are alive, we can see only one side of things. But there is the other side, the underside. Never, so long as we are alive, we can never, never see it. But when we die—click! It is a transformation scene. Everything is turned round, and we see the other side. Oh! it will be very different, it will be wonderful. That is what they call death.'"

Little Annunziata's attack of fever breaks upon the endless philandering of the lovers. If Mr. Harland could grapple with this situation he might have redeemed his book. But he winces away from it. It is too real. Probably his artistic instinct is in the right. It would be out of the picture; any and all

\* By Henry Harland. (John Lane.)

reality would. For life is a fairy tale in the Palazzo Sant' Alessina.

Perhaps if some stern friend could remove Mr. Harland from the Italy where he has eaten lotus too long, and despoil him of his personal happiness, and set him, like Adam, in the wilderness, he would write a tale to thrill our hearts; a book of Pity and Death. Certainly Annunziata's parable suggests that he could do this if he tried.

G. M. R.

## The Senses.

I thank Him for my eyes that see  
The wondrous world He made for me;  
Such beauty spread on hill and lea,  
That I might feast perpetually.

I thank Him for my ears that hear  
The lark, that heavenly traveller;  
All the blithe birds when spring is here,  
And winds and waters shrill and clear.

I thank Him for the fragrance shed,  
Airs of delight, on hill and mead;  
Woodruff, sweet-briar, and roses red,  
And wild thyme 'neath the passing tread.

I thank Him for my palate fine,  
Flavours in fruit and meat and wine,  
That bid my hunger sit and dine,  
And praise the Giver most divine.

I thank Him for my feet that run,  
Bear me abroad in wind and sun,  
By woods and fields and waters lone  
That are His mercies every one.

I thank him for my hands so feat.  
"Now write!" He said; and they have writ,  
That know the feel of roses sweet  
And the child's cheek so exquisite.

The Lord of Love their Master is,  
And all their diligence is His;  
Who run to serve him on their knees,  
And do His bidding with great ease.

KATHERINE TYNAN—*Westminster Gazette.*

## What to Read.

"Japan: Aspects and Destinies." By W. Petrie Watson.

"Greater Russia." By Wert Gerrare.

"Corea, the Land of the Morning Calm." By A. Henry Savage Landor.

"Among the Tibetans." By Isabella L. Bishop.

"A Child's Letters to Her Husband." By Helen Watterson Moody.

"Turkish Life in Town and Country." By Lucy M. Garnett.

"The Kingdoms of this World." By Stephen Harding.

## Coming Events.

February 19th.—Meeting of the Parliamentary Bills Committee, Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, 431, Oxford Street. 5 p.m.

March 4th.—Annual Meeting of Royal South Hants Nurses' League, 431, Oxford Street. 3 p.m.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)