

## A Book of the Week.

### A MAGDALEN'S HUSBAND.\*

With this book the author makes a quite extraordinary bid, not perhaps so much for popularity, as for recognition among writers of the higher class. Many of the reviewers have compared his work to that of Thomas Hardy, and one understands the comparison, for the tragedy and the emotion come all from "the mysterious heart of common things." The stage is merely a little village called Harpsfield, the protagonist just a village girl who has "gone wrong."

Martin Potten, one of the gardeners at the Squire's, has married Joan Hurt, well knowing what there is against her character, and Joan has taken his offer to "make an honest woman of her" with humble gratitude. But Martin is in love with the woman he marries, and Joan is wholly unable to respond. She is in the chastened, exalted condition of the great sinner who has repented. Her life is an expiation. She does perfectly all that woman may do by cleanliness, thrift, gentleness, and forbearance to make her husband happy. But the illiterate, inarticulate, undisciplined heart of the man does not understand this. It wants just the very one thing it cannot have.

There is one among Martin's fellow gardeners at the Hall one Zeekel Draicott, who also loves Joan. In the eyes of this man, the strange atmosphere of purity which enfolds this Magdalen is her great charm. He worships her; and he has to bear the daily cross of seeing Martin ill-use his wife in his blind desire to break down something in her which he cannot understand.

Things being thus, there returns to the village the man who was the cause of Joan's fall—the betrayer, Jim Ancomb. And here are the elements of tragedy. Martin, smarting under the effect of that remoteness in Joan which is the thing he hates and fears, and having first tried to drag her down to a level on which he can meet her by endeavouring to excite her jealousy with regard to Sally Catmer, now conceives the fiendish idea of throwing her with Ancomb, to see if by chance he can catch her tripping. It is the presentment of this man Martin's soul which Mr. Brown achieves so triumphantly. In reality, the cry of the rudimentary mind is the same as the page in Browning's song:—

"Give her but the least excuse to love me!"

Having, in the eyes of the village, forgiven what most men would consider an undying stigma, he nevertheless feels her always not only above, but so far above as to be out of reach. His torments are incomprehensible to himself; he suffers without knowing why. It is horrible.

In the working out of the culmination there are, in our judgment, two weak places. And these interwoven in the very fabric. Joan, when turned out in the night by her husband, and intending next morning to return to him, would never, being what she was, have gone to Zeekel's cottage. And Zeekel, being what he was, would never have stabbed a sleeping enemy. These are grave faults of probability. It speaks strongly for Mr. Brown that they interfere so little with our appreciation of the story as a whole.

But the main thing which uplifts this book among its fellows is the very rare adjunct of spirituality

which envelops it. It is written by one who knows that the important things of life are not the material things; and that every man or woman, however undeveloped, is a soul to be saved, a spirit which is capable of rising upon a dead self to higher things. He can realise all this, he can embody it in a story throbbing through and through with reality; and this with no suspicion of preaching. A deed worth the doing. From beginning to end of this notable book there is no single attempt to be clever, not one ornamental paragraph. It is fused, by the spirit of the man who writes, to a clear white heat; a book to remember, to admire, to respect; a book which any woman should thank a man for having written.

G. M. R.

### 'Tis Far From Here.

'Tis far from here, away, beyond  
The red sun's kissing  
I'll go, and build a homestead new,  
And plant a garden where the rue  
And wormwood will be missing.

'Tis far from here, away, beyond  
The white moon's rising  
I'll go, and find me fancies new  
And pleasures sparkling like the dew,  
The old sad griefs despising.

'Tis far from here, away, beyond  
The Nord-light's gleaming  
I'll go to find heart-solace true,  
And as in robe of white and blue  
To wrap me in my dreaming.

L. A. C., in the *Westminster Gazette*.

### What to Read.

"Poems." By St. John Lucas.

"Juniper Hall. A Rendezvous of certain illustrious personages during the French Revolution, including Alexandre D'Arblay and Fanny Burney." By Constance Hill.

"The Magnetic North." By Elizabeth Robins.

"Green Mansions." By W. H. Hudson.

"The Deliverance." By Ellen Glasgow.

### Coming Events.

March 21st.—The Prince and Princess of Wales give their patronage to a Concert in aid of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Æolian Hall, New Bond Street, 8.30.

March 24th.—Executive Committee of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, 431, Oxford Street, W., to elect new members and arrange the Annual Meeting. Tea 4 p.m.; Meeting 4.30 p.m.

March 25th.—A meeting to lay before the Society of Women Journalists the subject of "State Registration of Trained Nurses," 431, Oxford Street, 4 p.m. Tea, 5 p.m.

April 8th.—Conference of Members of Nurses' Leagues and Societies to discuss "Organisation with a view to International Affiliation," by the invitation of Miss Isla Stewart, Vice-President of the International Council of Nurses, 431, Oxford Street. Tea 4 p.m.; Conference 4.30 p.m.

\* By Vincent Brown. (Duckworth and Co.)

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