

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"ON THE FIGHTING LINE."*

In the author's note at the commencement, she tells us that "though the incidents mentioned are not of a military character, the catastrophe of the European War may perhaps, in some measure, be traceable to the social conditions and tendencies analysed in this book." Class barriers, employer and employed, drone and worker, are presented to the reader in this able novel, so prettily disguised, and so acceptably gilded that one forgets to complain that what is asked for in fiction is not—economics.

The book is written in the first person in the form of a diary. The first entry is headed: "London, My Sky Parlour." Minette was merely a typist in the office of the Imperial Alliance, but she happened to be also an idealist—especially so far as the opposite sex was concerned. She idealised Mr. Grainge, the Managing Director, and young Richard Mordaunt, the son of a Sir Richard Mordaunt, another Director. It took her some time to discover the feet of clay. She also idealised the Imperial Alliance itself; all day she enthused about her work, and at night she returned to her Sky Parlour in Battersea and gave herself up to house work and shrewd reflections.

Carol Grainge represents the butterfly order of girl—"she knew that she was the most exquisite creature that could well exist; she knew that everything that could enhance her beauty had been attended to; she knew that her clothes were expensive and perfect; and she couldn't forget her value." Our little idealist may be forgiven, if she sometimes compared her ready-made clothes, and her lunch at cheap restaurants—where she shared a portion of cream with Miss Beckles—to their detriment, with Carol's primrose path. "I used to think there was nothing I would rather be than a business girl. But tonight I cannot help thinking of that girl Carol. I believe I could look pretty if I dressed like her. How exciting it would be to meet a man like Mr. Richard at a dance; how exciting to motor and ride and golf with him—I suppose lots of girls do." She thinks her seventh heaven is attained when Mr. Richard begins to notice and, further, to make love to her. Yet all the time she feels the sense of insecurity and the wide divergence of their paths.

Mr. Richard does not make it clear to us what are his real intentions to Minette. At times he appears an ordinary scoundrel, though on the whole we are led to believe that he intended matrimony to precede the little cottage in the wood. But in any case that ideal arrangement came to naught. He was not the kind of man to lose all for his typist.

Jack Ford, who occupies the next attic to Minette, has cut himself adrift from his family in order to live his own life of journalism. He is

Socialistic in outlook, and extremes meeting he is engaged to the butterfly Carol. The Bohemian existence of attics in Battersea leads to a very pleasant friendship between him and Minette, who in all her struggles for existence turns to him for support and consolation.

Jack is certainly a nice fellow, and we are sincerely glad when he is free of Carol, as he had long discovered that Minette and he are far more suited to each other. He is sound on the woman's movement, and argues that though the curse of femininity has been seen and is being overcome, the curse of masculinity still remains to be shown up. "Oh, its funny to think England is supposed to be a Christian country," said Jack, "When you come to think of it only one model has been given for man and woman; one life as an example; and there we've gone and divided ourselves into manly men, and womanly women till we're all at each other's throats now, tearing each other to pieces trying to keep our peculiar distinctions and qualities and perquisites separate."

H. H.

RELIGIOUS ASPECT OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT.

Three great meetings for men and women to consider "The Religious Aspect of the Women's Movement in its Relation to War and Peace," arranged by the Collegium, a body which exists to discover, by corporate prayer and conference, the Will of God for Modern Life, will be held at the Central Hall, Westminster, on Monday, March 22nd, at 11.0 a.m., 2.30 p.m., and 6 p.m. Tickets for single meetings from 1s. to 7s. 6d.; for the three meetings, 2s. 6d. to 18s.; or with lunch and tea, 4s. 6d. to £1. Enquiries and applications for tickets should be made to the Hon. Secretary, Miss Lucy Gardner, 92, St. George's Square, S.W.

COMING EVENT.

March 12th.—Penal Board, Central Midwives Board, Caxton House, Westminster. 11.30 a.m.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

"The vague wish to be useful is spread far and wide; and there is abundance of opportunity. But no one who has experience of work on Relief Committees and the like, and benevolent enterprise of various sorts, can fail to recognise the vast difference that exists between a vague wish to be useful, and the patience, the regularity, the self-sacrifice, the perseverance that actual usefulness involves. People easily get tired, the 'weary of well-doing' form a large and increasing class. They have always plenty to say for themselves; plenty to say against other people and other methods than their own. They expect to know without learning, to be efficient without preparation. They quietly, half-unconsciously, elude the harder parts of the work. They see no need of accuracy. They are slowly proved useless and they wonder why!"

—From "In the day of Battle,"

THE BISHOP OF STEPNEY.

* By Constance Smedley. G. P. Putnam's Sons, London and New York.

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