

A Book of the Week.

"IN THE TIDEWAY."*

THIS is a story of the Hebrides. The motive is not a new one—the effect of juxtaposition upon two people who have loved each other, and have agreed to be sensible, and marry someone else—with means.

Lady Maud marries Edward Wilson, a millionaire, and a gentlemanly nonentity. Eustace marries an American heiress.

Mr. Wilson has rented a shooting in the Hebrides : a place of a most inaccessible kind, to which the steamer can only ply in the finest weather. Here a large house-party is to be collected—Eustace of course included, since folly is a thing of the past. By reason of bad weather, and other *contretemps*, they land *minus* most of their servants and luggage, including Hooper, Wilson's confidential valet. All next day the wind blows great guns, shooting is impossible, and Wilson betrays singular uneasiness at the absence of Hooper. He goes early to bed, and that night Lady Maud finds him dead drunk upon the bedroom floor. In her horror and repulsion she rushes to call the servants, and encounters—Eustace ; he is made the confidant of the tragedy of her marriage ; and the sequel is not hard to guess. One of the best bits of writing in the book is the scene between Hooper and the wretched Lady Maud.

"He was rather a diffident-looking man ; nervous, too, in his manner. I am sorry to have to trouble your ladyship, but I think Dr. Haddon would wish it, under the circumstances. It is about master, your ladyship."

Her heart gave a great throb. "Your master, Hooper ? Well?"

The diffident man, holding on to the door-knob for support, cleared his throat. "It is a little difficult, my lady . . . I have been considering the matter, and I think Dr. Haddon—"

"Who is Dr. Haddon ?"

"I was not sure if your ladyship knew anything. But master was under Dr. Haddon for a time. It—it is for the liquor habit, my lady. Dr. Haddon is most successful. He was most successful with master. Four years I have been with him since we came back from America, and never till last night—" He coughed slightly, and paused—

Lady Maud sat staring at him.

"You mean that so long as—as you are with Mr. Wilson—" So far she managed, in a cold, hard voice ; then came silence.

"Just so, my lady ; it is a question of influence. I undertake the entire responsibility. There is really no cause for alarm."

"That—that will do, Hooper. You can go." Her one thought was to get rid of this man, this servant, who seemed to have reached out his common hand and touched her very soul."

Mrs. Steel's great gift is for vigorous descriptive narrative : and she makes one feel the wildness and loneliness of Roederay to a wonderful extent. The coast, the Gulf Stream, the wind, the sands, the shadowy Island of the Dead are all wonderful and excellent. But the tale itself is in no respect on a

* "In the Tideway," by Flora Annie Steel. (Constable, Westminster.)

level with her previous achievements. Rick Halmar is unreal, and one feels little sympathy for the Girton girl, who marries a young man whose sole aim in life seems to be to shoot birds. Eustace Gordon commands neither our affection nor our respect. After having been too cowardly, apparently, to face a future of poverty with the woman he loved, he has yet no compunction in urging her to fling name and fame in the mire for his sake, though the question of ways and means would have been still to the fore, as her husband and his wife would instantly have stopped supplies.

The climax is well worked up : but the light little book seems a little overweighted with its tragedy.

However—it is Mrs. Steel, and bears the stamp of her delightful style through and through.

G. M. R.

Bookland.

"DREAMED TRYST."

BELOVED one ! when the shy Dawn flower-sweet,
In her white sleeping gown of mist and pearl,
Sees the great Sun, and from her cloud-hung bed
Slips softly, flushing like a startled girl,
And stands upright on fair rose-coloured feet
While all the golden light is round her shed . . .
'Tis then that yearning severed souls may meet . . .
Slowly the glory widens in the sky . . .
And in the meadows thick with folded flowers
The daisies stir already in their sleep . . .
My soul lay waiting all the long night hours,
But now thy promised presence hovers nigh,
In this still room I seem to hear the sweep
Of thy soul's wings . . . O ! Whither shall we fly ?

(From "Opals," by OLIVE CUSTANCE.)

WHAT TO READ.

- "The Epic of Olympus," by C. R. Low.
- "Life of Napoleon Bonaparte," by Professor William Milligan Sloane, Ph.D., L.H.D.
- "Oxford and its Colleges," by J. Wells, M.A.
- "The Queen's Reign for Children," by W. Clarke Hall.
- "An Altruist," by Ouida.
- "As we Sow," by Christopher Hare.
- "The Mutable Many," by Robert Barr.
- "Bijou," by "Gyp."
- "Father Hilarion," by K. Douglas King.
- "The Larramys," by George Ford.

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