

## A Book of the Week.

## THE VALLEY OF THE GREAT SHADOW.\*

A new book by the author of "Joanna Traill, Spinster," is always welcome, and Mrs. Lee Hamilton never fails to charm. Her present story is a mingling and an elaboration of several stories that have appeared in separate form in the *Strand Magazine*. These episodes are strung together by a slight thread of consecutive narrative, but might almost be regarded as separate studies of character. The scene is a Swiss winter health resort, and of course any book that deals with the subject of invalid hotel life must of necessity challenge comparison with "Ships that Pass in the Night." It would be folly to say that Miss Houldsworth's work is as good as Miss Harraden's. It is so like that the unlikeness is accentuated. But for all that it is very attractive, and in parts infinitely pathetic.

Perhaps the incident that most moves the sympathies is that of Merridew and the Child. Merridew is a doomed man, one who has come to the Mittenthal not to leave it again save by death. In the summer most of the invalids disappear; he is left.

"The other invalid left in the hotel was a woman. They called her the 'Child' in the hotel because she was so little and eager, and so absurdly young for her years. She must have been forty, and she was very poor and quite alone; but she was always gay, and her kind brown eyes always had a laugh in them. Through the summer the man lying helpless, and the Child almost as helpless, found their world in each other. She was ten years older than he, but her eyes were ten years younger than his; and Merridew had never thought about her age at all.

"But it would not do. Two invalids, and both very ill. He had not thought of their ages either, but she had; and it was not right to let him love her. She was poor, too—poorer than he, so poor that she would not be able to afford another winter in the Mittenthal, though she could not live in the lower air. She would soon have to go, and the one romance of her life must end with life. . . . She shook herself firmly while her heart dropped like lead. In all her forty years no one had ever loved her till now. And she must go away and leave love and life.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Child, Child!" said Merridew brokenly.

"The bus was at the door and she had come to say good-bye to him. She held out her hand to him, smiling bravely.

"I wanted to tell you," she said, "to thank you. It has made me so rich. I can't forget ever. You have given me the happiest months of my life."

"The laugh was still in her eyes—a little mirthless breeze that shook the words out in gusts.

"He shook her hand, but all the words that came were 'Child, Child, Child!' over and over again.

"She clung to him, looking into his eyes sunken with weeping. His hopeless face killed her.

"Make the poor souls happy—as you made me. Ah! no, that is quite impossible. But help them, as you help me, to face death smiling."

"Child!" he sobbed, "Child!"

"I thought perhaps—do you mind?—you would kiss me," she said.

\* By Annie E. Houldsworth (Mrs. Lee Hamilton). Heinemann.

His arms clung about her.

"Life might at least have given us love," he said bitterly.

After this taste of the quality of the book most readers will wish to explore further; and they may be assured that the whole of the book is not quite so sad as this specimen. Miss Blake and the Professor are excellently entertaining, and so is the courtship of Jakob and Marie. G. M. R.

## Bookland.

Mr. Sieveking has in his new book surveyed garden-literature from 1300 B.C. One of his prettiest quotations is from an "Egyptian MS." of the "19th Dynasty, B.C. 1300":—

She led me, hand in hand, and we went into her garden to converse together,

There she made me taste of excellent honey.

The rushes of the garden were verdant, and all its bushes flourishing.

There were currant trees and cherries redder than the ruby.

The ripe peaches of the garden resembled bronze.

This was nearly three hundred years before Solomon wrote that song, incomparably the most beautiful of all garden poems—

"A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. . . .

Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits."

## Verse.

They are slaves who dare not speak  
For the fallen and the weak;  
They are slaves who will not choose  
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse.  
Rather than in silence shrink  
From the truth they needs must think;  
They are slaves who dare not be  
In the right with two or three

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

## WHAT TO READ.

"The Relief of Ladysmith." By John Black Atkins.

"Makers of Literature; being Essays on Shelley, Landor, Browning, Byron, Arnold, Coleridge, Lowell, Whittier, and others." By George Edward Woodberry.

"Anima Villis: A Tale of the Great Siberian Steppe." By Marya Rodziewicz.

## Coming Events.

April 24th.—The Lord Mayor presides at the Annual Meeting of the East London Nursing Society, Mansion House. 3 p.m.

May 8th.—Concert, on behalf of the Mary Wardell Convalescent Home for Scarlet Fever, at Stafford House, St. James's.

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