

A Book of the Week.

THE FORSAKEN WAY.*

Though there are two previous bids for fame in the shape of published novels on Mr. Lafargue's title-page, he may fairly be described as a new writer. This story of his should be a genuine stepping stone upon his upward path. It is an original idea, and in some respects the working out is worthy of even high praise.

The time is the twentieth century; and England is in somewhat the state that Mr. Wells also foretells; the population have become almost exclusively city dwellers, and the land has dropped out of cultivation. Where prosperous villages, rich farms, and green pastures smiled, has become a beautiful tangle of desolation. The high roads only are preserved in excellent condition, for the accommodation of the streams of horseless vehicles which move up and down them.

Religion has degenerated into a mystic cult of beauty and altruism, as elusive and as unsatisfying as neo-Platonism; and the scene opens in the Celebratory of the Good Shepherd, in Essex, where dwells a quasi order of monks, men who have vowed their lives to chastity on account of some hereditary taint in the blood, some deformity or weakness which they must not transmit to future generations.

Here has grown up the young Felix, an artist and musician, with the face of an old Christian knight, a Galahad or a Percivale—the darling of the Prior's heart.

The young untried soul is to be sent forth into the world, to carry a message to another hostelry of the same order, well-nigh across the breadth of England. Before he goes he is solemnly warned against the wiles of women by the Prior, and promises with his whole heart not to speak to one unless obliged. So he journeys out upon his bicycle, through the forsaken byways of rural England, and presently comes upon a young lad of about fourteen, whose bicycle had been taken from him by some loose women, who were drinking at an inn. Felix rescues the bicycle, repairs it, and rides on in company with the boy Festus, whose conversation charms him in a manner wholly unaccountable to himself. It is soon manifest to the reader that this delightful fellow-traveller is no boy, but a girl in "rationals"; and the upshot of the adventure, so lightly begun, is eagerly awaited by the reader.

It is an Idyll, simple, and by no means exciting; but the skill with which is revealed the heart of Felix in its unconscious surrender, and the mingling of shyness and audacity on the part of the girl, who is involved in the consequences of her own deception before she is aware, shows really considerable talent. The exact workings out of the romance shall not be divulged, but not the least charming part of the story is the interlude, called the History of Felise, in which it is shown that there is no hereditary taint of insanity in the blood of Felix.

In a manner most unexpected in a writer of the present day, the authoress misses a palpable chance of making the Prior a villain, by suffering him to divulge, and not conceal the dying confession of the man who had passed for Felix's father. By this simple means the lives of the hero and heroine could have been irretrievably blasted, and the craving for tragedy under

* By Philip Lafargue. Hurst and Blackett.

which the modern reader is understood chronically to labour would have been abundantly satisfied.

But Mr. Lafargue has too well understood the subdued yet sprightly key of his story to make any such blunder. He relieves the tension, and leaves us free to believe happiness possible, even in the twentieth century. If he will curtail his temptation to too elaborate description of the thoughts and feelings of his characters, he ought to become a really charming novelist.

G. M. R.

Review.

"LETTERS FROM EAST AFRICA."

Readers of the "Life of Bishop Smythies," by Miss Gertrude Ward, will welcome another book from her pen, and her "Letters from East Africa," published by the Universities Mission to Central Africa, 9, Dartmouth Street, Westminster, price 3s. 6d., are delightful. Those who have had the happiness of living in Africa will read them with a keen delight, and they will assuredly convey to those less fortunate a vivid word picture of this wonderful continent, which to know is to love and of the conditions of European and native life in East Africa. Incidentally also it furnishes a refutation of the theory that highly cultivated and gifted people are "wasted" in Africa. Miss Ward is an accomplished linguist, a musician of no mean order, an experienced nurse, a charming writer. "Why bury your talents in the wilds of Africa," one hears a well-meaning adviser say; "you can use them to better advantage at home." Yet we find her doctor and nurse at an up-country station where no medical man is obtainable, and in the intervals of nursing using her knowledge of German to write the business letters of the mission—for Magila, where she was stationed, is in German territory—maintaining friendly relations with the officials by her knowledge of the language, and teaching the choir. "Doesn't it seem a tragic pity," she bewails "that the African race, so carefully trained and taught in other ways, should be allowed to grow up with so corrupt an idea of music." Now she has used her pen to describe to the world her African life. Let no one, therefore, talk of burying talents in Africa. The united testimony of those who have worked there is that every gift they possess is requisitioned, and that they have constantly to regret their limitations.

But to nurses the chief interest of the book will be the insight which it gives into nursing matters in Africa. Miss Ward's apt description of the English Hospital in Zanzibar is that it is "like the New Gallery without the fountain."

Of her first impressions she writes: "The hospital is not full, and no nurses are off, so I am able to take things very easily, which is a good thing to begin with, when the strangeness of the surroundings is so bewildering. I spent yesterday morning in the native wards, which are about as much unlike St. Thomas's as everthing else in the tropics must be unlike England."

Again, we read, "Yesterday was one of those odd days that come periodically in this hospital. We were quietly proceeding with the daily routine when Miss D. and Miss B. arrived from Mbweni, the former with

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