

Book of the Week.

THE SACRIFICE.*

Mr. Courlander has framed in his book a terrible indictment against the rustic poor of England. He will have us to understand that in rural districts, folk are no better than the beasts. They are ruled by their bodily appetites, they are wholly non-moral, and their spiritual being is entirely undeveloped.

What have we to say in reply? As we read the undoubtedly forceful pages in which the pitiful village tragedy is unfolded, we are left to the humiliating reflection that this is all the centuries have brought!—Civilisation, law, and even Christ,

“ Whose sad Face on the Cross sees naught
but this

After the passion of two thousand years ! ”

Now that the cry of “ Back to the land ” is being raised all round us, are we prepared to say that this kind of existence—this primal beast-like sex appetite—is any better than the sins of the town?

And yet we know that, though, of course, not universally true, Mr. Courlander's picture of village life is widely true of the part of England of which he writes—true, too, of East Anglia, or any other rural district where the mental capacity is low. It is not true of the North, where men have brains, where even those who lead wild lives in the remote moors are thinkers. The people in this tale are not thinkers—there is the whole point, presumably the point which the writer has meant to show. Mora never thinks, she only desires and feels. The same is true of Mark Porey, the sensitive coward who marries her; the same is partially true, but only partially, of the “ great strong brute ” Robert Goland.

The story is quite a common one. Mora yields herself to the wild-beast wooing of Goland. He is at the time, unknown to her, in hiding. One day he is arrested and carried off to London on a charge of causing grievous bodily harm, leaving Mora to face her trouble. In real life, he would have taken the easy way of posting a letter to her—one letter would have secured her faithful waiting; but for the purposes of Mr. Courlander's story, he does not, and Mora marries Mark Porey to hide her shame.

Mark is a poor creature to such an extent as to make it quite easy for the reader to believe that the memory of Goland will not suffer eclipse. Having served his sentence, Goland returns, and Mora and their child go away with him, leaving the ineffective husband weeping in the chimney corner. There is nothing new or striking in the story, the writer has written it, apparently, that he may trace the causes that lead up to such happenings. He finds it—or so it seems to us—in the utter absence of mental food in the lives of the villagers. Mora has nothing to divert her thoughts, nothing to lead her to take a different view of life—the clergy apparently stand entirely apart from the joys and sorrows of their parishioners—Mark has a sort of Salvation Army religion which is of comfort to himself, but leaves his wife wholly uninfluenced.

There is some humour in the chronicle of the evening meetings at the village inn. They serve to

* By Alphonse Courlander (Fisher Unwin).

lighten the melancholy nature of the main story. They make us wish that the author would write of men and women with whom we could be more in sympathy. We do not see the point of his title. Mora did not sacrifice herself for Goland. She merely indulged the cravings of her lower nature; and we cannot see that she was thus any unhappier than she would have been in other circumstances, since her moral standards went no higher than what the village might think of her behaviour. G. M. R.

Coming Events.

February 9th.—The Central Society for Women's Suffrage. President, the Lady Frances Balfour. Procession from Hyde Park Corner, 2 p.m. Nurses wishing to take part in the Procession may assemble at 431, Oxford Street, at 1.30.; Red Cross, three inches square, to be worn on right breast.

February 11th.—Commencement of forty-third course of Lectures and Demonstrations for Sanitary Officers, Parkes Museum, 72, Margaret Street, W. First Lecture on Public Health Acts, and other Statutes relating to Public Health, by Dr. J. Priestley. Particulars of the Course can be had from the offices of the Royal Sanitary Institute.

February 12th.—The Duchess of Albany opens an Exhibition of Pictures in connection with the Lord Mayor's Cripples' Fund, Guildhall Art Gallery.

February 12th.—Examinations in London, Manchester, Newcastle and Bristol, Central Midwives' Board.

February 12th.—Opening of Parliament by His Majesty the King.

February 19th.—Jubilee Year of the London Biblewomen and Nurses' Mission. Meeting in Caxton Hall, Westminster. Chairman, the Earl of Harrowley. 3 p.m.

February 19th.—The Archdeacon of London presides at a festival dinner at the “ Albion,” Aldersgate Street, to celebrate the 150th year of the Royal Maternity Charity.

February 28th.—Special Matinée Performance of “ The Red Lamp,” at His Majesty's Theatre, in aid of St. Mary's Hospital for Women and Children, Plaistow.

A Word for the Week.

No two things differ more than hurry and dispatch. Hurry is the mark of a weak mind, dispatch of a strong one. A weak man in an office is like a squirrel in a cage—is labouring eternally, but to no purpose; like a turnstile, he is in everybody's way, but stops nobody; he talks a great deal, but says very little; looks into everything, but sees into nothing, and has a hundred irons in the fire, but very few of them are hot, and with the few that are he burns his fingers.—*Colton.*

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