

Book of the Week.

THE LOST WORD.*

I shall have to ask pardon from some of our readers for my strong recommendation of this book; because it is not a book for all. By this I by no means intend to suggest that it is not a book for the Young Person: but only that there are some to whom the subject herein treated is a blank.

And, perhaps, after all, they are more especially the ones who should read; and, by chance, become conscious of the other world in which our world is set—of "the alive, the aware" whom we usually most successfully ignore.

It is the book of a mystic—and it seems to me that it will succeed in making most of us reflect upon things we had not previously considered, even if we differ, even violently, from the author's conclusions.

The whole book is the work of a mind profoundly influenced by the idea of the City of God. This is, by the way, the underlying idea of the whole Christian Faith; but there are many who can read, even such a book as the Epistle to the Hebrews, without finding how completely this is true. It is also the root idea of the craft of Freemasonry, of which the author makes deft use.

The story is that of a man who longs to build, in the ugliness of a modern suburb, a Church which shall be an expression of his mind, as the Gothic Cathedrals were the expression of the mind of the old builders, who, knowing that here was no continuing city, looked for the city which had foundations, whose builder and maker was God. The wonder lies in the fact that these, who more than all other mortal men, had the sense of the transience of earth and all things earthly, produced the most durable, the most stable, the most satisfying work the world has ever seen—touching, so far as one can prophesy, man's top-most note in the art of the expression of the spiritual through the material.

Paul Vickery was fortunate in having his millionaire ready at hand with funds for the new Church, and a site only waiting for Paul to marshal his forces thereon. He was further most fortunate in securing the services of such people as Mark Gwent, Jemmy Redway, and Letty Herford. It is, perhaps, in sketching Letty Herford that Miss Underhill's genius shows forth most brilliantly. Letty is a spontaneously artistic little person of the incurably silly order. Her expressions are immoderate, her epithets ill-chosen; she is the kind of person one meets constantly in modern London, hovering about some Church, and making a vocation of attending it, seemingly remaining just as empty, just as chattering and foolish in spite of all. But Letty's death reveals to the selfish Catherine the heights to which pure love may arise. She is a modern Santa Chiara; and one knows that she exists, and that we meet her and despise her, and very likely count her life madness.

*By Evelyn Underhill. (Heinemann.)

It will be seen that Miss Underhill has, at least, hitched her waggon to a star; she has essayed high things; and if she has failed in part, this is due to the vast height of her subject, not to the smallness of her own stature. She has tried to show the clash and conflict of the earthly and heavenly love in the souls of a man and a woman. Both of them grasp the saving rock of the inner vision through the might of the religious Idea.

It is, perhaps, the writer's own cleverness which now and then stands in her way. She pelts Catherine in her unconverted state with so many gibes that she hardly allows us to sympathise with her at all. As in her last book, she stands too much aloof from her characters. The Judge should never undertake either the prosecution nor the defence. But her book scintillates with epigrams—I must quote just one:

"At twenty-two, one doubts the Apostles' Creed; but not one's own power of inventing a substitute." Or again:

"A really noble love hurts too much for the present generation—born under chloroform, and lulled by Spiritual sedatives ever since—to care much about it. I doubt if one woman in fifty could bear even a passion without an anæsthetic; and passion compared with love is like toothache compared with appendicitis."

G.M.R.

Coming Events.

March 8th.—Special meeting of the League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, 4 p.m. Agenda: Sister Surgery will move the following resolution: "That the League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses, having a membership of 590 Certificated Nurses, begs to support the Petition to be presented to the Prime Minister on behalf of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses. The League also urges the advisability of making this a Government measure next Session, considering that the public as well as the Nurses themselves suffer from the lack of a definite and recognised standard of nursing efficiency."

March 12th.—Annual Meeting of the East London Nursing Society at the Mansion House. The Lord Mayor will preside. Speakers, the Earl of Crewe and the Archdeacon of London. 3 p.m.

March 15th.—Meeting of the Guild of Service (for those connected with, or interested in, Poor Law and Kindred Institutions), at the Church House, Westminster. Chairman, the Bishop of Kingston. 3.30 p.m.

March 16th.—Annual Meeting of the Irish Nurses' Association and Soirée, 86, Lower Leeson Street, Dublin.

March 20th.—Conversazione for Nurses at the Church Missionary House, Salisbury Square, Fleet Street, E.C., by invitation of Lady Dodsworth, Lady Seymour, and Mrs. H. E. Fox. 2.30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

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