

## Book of the Week.

### THE BAY OF LILACS.\*

Syrenvik—the picturesque name—which, translated, signifies “The Bay of Lilacs,” was the ancient home of the Ehkenströms, the great people of the district, represented, at the opening of the story, by one grand, but desolate figure, Fröken Regina Ehkenström. The bay is so peaceful, the spot so seemingly out of the world, and off the beaten track, the life so calm and uneventful, it seems impossible that any tragedy should enter there. And yet, from the outset, we are sensible of the fact that there either is, or has been, something radically amiss. It is to be felt in the solitude of little Fröken Hildur, the adopted daughter of the house; in the silence of Amanda, faithful old servant to the Ehkenströms; in the awe overshadowing the whole household; but most of all in the presence of the Fröken Regina, that majestic, icicle of a woman. No love is showered upon the beautiful Hildur, fast approaching womanhood; it is evident that she is frightened of her benefactress; all others who come into contact with the girl adore her, she is the sunshine that steals into the gloomy house, and life courses passionately through her veins. There is, however, one shadow haunting even her existence, a very natural one under the circumstances. She misses, and craves, a mother’s love. At the back of her memory is always the recollection of a being she had called in her babyhood “Pretty Aunt,” the Fröken Regina’s sister—she had “mothered” her, and it was the sorrow of the child’s life that Fröken Antoinette married and went away. “Dear God,” she had prayed hotly, “you have so many angels, you must give me back my pretty Aunt.” But for the tears burning her baby eyes Fröken Regina had nothing but harsh rebuke. Some 15 years later the Countess Antoinette returns to her old home, a widow, broken in health and spirit, and the sense of tragedy deepens. All the time the scene is set in the midst of such great beauty that the contrast is positively painful. The glory of the lilacs, the Finnish sunlight, and those carpets of lilies are a veritable inspiration, it is small wonder that John Graham, author, and Englishman, should revel in the spot he has happened upon in his search for privacy. He lodges with the pastor, a delightful, benevolent being in keeping with his surroundings.

But if John Graham sought peace in that bay of lilacs, he is not destined to find it. He meets the Fröken Hildur, admires her, and remains unscathed. But when he comes face to face with the Countess Antoinette he is stirred to the very depths, he has met his fate. With all the assurance of a man hitherto born to conquer he dreams his dream, and hides his time. Nothing could be stronger than the scene when at last he is tempted to clothe his thoughts with words. The Countess, drawn by his sympathy, makes something of a confidante of him: “Death robbed me of my happiness and left me to face the shadows alone,” she

tells him. “Your sorrow is still so recent,” he replies, “some day”—his eyes became alive with a throb of sudden hope—“you will forget.” The man and woman looked at each other long and silently. “This—this?” she broke forth at length in a dazed manner, and nervously smoothed the folds of her black gown, “you think this has to do with my sorrow? If I could tear off these trappings, that I loathe and despise, I should feel a stronger and better woman.”

Tragedy and mystery everywhere and over all the blue sky, and the smiling sun, but presently the grey dawn of winter, and there the story ends.

E.L.H.

### Verse.

How many voices gaily sing,  
“O happy morn, O happy spring  
Of life!” Meanwhile there comes o’er me  
A softer voice from memory,  
And says, “If loves and hopes have flown  
With years, think, too, what griefs are gone!”

W. S. LANDOR.

### Coming Events.

October 11.—Meeting of the Executive Committee of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W., 4 p.m.

October 12.—Hospital Saturday in London.

October 21 to 25.—Annual Conference of the National Union of Women Workers, Manchester.

October 23.—Conversazione given by the Medical Staff and Lecturers, New Outpatient and Special Departments Block, St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, E.C. Music. 9—12.

October 24.—Central Midwives’ Board, Examination, London, Bristol, Manchester, and Newcastle-on-Tyne.

October 29, 30, and 31.—Bazaar at the Public Baths, Camberwell, in aid of King’s College Hospital Removal Fund. Contributions to the stall being equipped by the Sister Matron, Sisters, and Nurses of the Hospital, in cash or kind, will be gratefully received by Mr. George Heyer, Appeal Secretary, King’s College Hospital, W.C.

November 4.—Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland. Examination for Certificate in Nursing and Attending on the Insane.

November 4.—Fourteenth Annual Meeting Society of Women Journalists, 1, Clifford’s Inn, E.C. 3 p.m.

November 6.—Annual meeting, Central Society for Women’s Suffrage, Council Chamber, Caxton Hall, Westminster, 3 p.m.

### A Word for the Week.

Expediency is men’s wisdom. Doing right is God’s.

GEORGE MEREDITH.

\* By Paul Wainemann. (Methuen.)

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