

## Book of the Week.

### HIS OWN PEOPLE.\*

Mr. Booth Tarkington has presented to us in book form what might more truly be classed amongst short stories, which is perhaps fortunate, since, once begun, the reader feels impelled to follow the fortunes of the hero to the end as quickly as possible.

The picture placed before us is drawn with a firm hand, the outline bold, the colours dashed in vividly. That it is true to life there can be no doubt, and the clever little study might do an immense work could it fall into the hands of the many standing with uncertain feet on that border-land where ignorance and curiosity stretch out to meet so-called, or rather mis-called "life." It is a curious fact that the knowledge of evil rather than the knowledge of good should be summed up in the phrase, "seeing life."

Robert Russ Mellin is an American, brought up and living in a small provincial town where "the young people grew up together, and where he met a dozen friends in half an hour's walk," so that "he often said he liked to be alone with himself." He was a dreamer, a would-be poet, contributing verses to the local paper, but on the strength of hard-earned savings he sought the solitude he desired in foreign travel, finding it first in London—that veritable desert for the would-be hermit. But even this did not satisfy him, and he moved on to Paris. On his way there our author humorously assures us, "a light came into his life." It shone on him by means of one Cooley, a fellow countryman, a young multi-millionaire, "a person of cheery manners and bright waistcoats." Through him the introduction to the Comtesse de Vaurigard is effected, a fascinating young woman regarded by Cooley as a queen. She quickly throws a glamour over Robert Mellin. When he finds himself seated beside her, engaged in what he fancies to be conversational badinage, his mind goes back to the old days at Cranston, Ohio, and he wishes Mary Kramer, his sometime sweetheart, and other friends could see him. Mellin is probably younger in character than in years, for he possesses the vanity of extreme youth, which takes the form of a preference for being thought "wicked" rather than confessing ignorance.

It is in Rome that matters come to a climax, and the slender plot consists of a game of cross purposes and misapprehensions. The so-called Comtesse and her clique mistake Mellin for a millionaire, and he, flattered by them to the top of his bent, accepts them as members of the high-class society with which he has longed to mix; hence the title, "His Own People." As such he adopts them, glorying in the fact that he has attained to such a height.

That the Comtesse and her friends are in reality but a set of card-sharpers dawns on the reader sooner than it does upon Mellin. How he is finally saved by one of themselves, a woman with greater perception and kindlier disposition than the rest,

and how his very ingenuousness proves in a way her own salvation, must be read in Mr. Tarkington's own words to be fully appreciated, because the intrinsic value of the story lies in the humorous-telling of it. The author does not scruple to make such a fool of his hero at the most tragic moments of his life that no one would voluntarily follow Mellin's example in quest of a similar adventure.

E. L. H.

### A FATHER'S LESSON.

When he came home at night the birds were still;  
But he cared naught who walked across the hill.  
The laughter of his baby through the dark  
Made glad his silence like a singing lark.

His was the soul of earthly toil and care  
That sees but shadows round the heavens so fair;  
Yet after supper, in his baby's eyes,  
Smiling, he saw the stars of paradise.

'Twas thus that Nature taught him beauty—now,  
Beside the little grave beneath the bough,  
Weeping o'er violets in the grass, he hears  
The music of the silence and the spheres!

EDWARD WILBUR MASON in the *Munsey*.

## Coming Events.

January 16th.—Meeting of Central Midwives' Board, Caxton House, Westminster, S.W. 2.45 p.m.

January 22nd.—Post Graduate Lectures. "Some Aspects of the Cancer Question," by Mr. C. W. Cathcart, F.R.C.S., Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh. All nurses cordially invited. 5 p.m.

January 23rd.—Miss Hulme (Nurses' Lodge) and Miss Helen Hulme "At-Home," Kensington Town Hall, W. Miss Helen Mar, Short Stories. Mr. Tom Clare, Musical Sketches. Mr. Charles Capper, Whistling Solos. Mr. Reginald Clarke, Pianist. 4 to 6.30 p.m.

January 31st.—Meeting of the Provisional Committee of the National Council of Nurses, "To consider a Draft Constitution for a National Council of Nurses for Great Britain and Ireland." 431, Oxford Street, 3.30 p.m.

## A Word for the Week.

To be blind to the humour of the moment, or to the pathos and the tragedy of the moment, to meet them all with the same engaging smile or the same business-like firmness—oh, it is a performance fit only for lay figures on wheels! God grant we may act to-morrow a little less like stuffed images! No wise thought of the future, no deep scientific ardour for the truth to be learned from these sufferers, no preoccupation with the wider interests of the community, can justify our blindness to the here and now.—Dr. Richard C. Cabot "On Foregrounds and Backgrounds in Work for the Sick."

\* By Booth Tarkington. (John Murray.)

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