

Book of the Week.

SEYMOUR CHARLTON.*

Mr. Maxwell has once more in his last powerfully written novel, dealt with a difficult subject, which is a favourite one with him, *i.e.*, the possibility or otherwise, of a marriage socially unequal, turning out happily for both parties concerned. He takes us through the whole gamut of human emotions, good and bad, dealing subtly and delicately with almost impossible situations. The keynote to the story of Seymour Charlton's life is given early in the book. Belonging to the so-called leisured classes, younger son of an Earl, at the age of 35 he is a dreamer, just beginning to wake from his dream, and realising that a state of idleness is not, and can never be, the intention of life.

"Perhaps Seymour Charlton was passing through a very usual mental phase. He was experiencing that sense of impotence and hopelessness which comes sooner or later to men who make nothing. For years one may evade the odious truth, stifle the inward cravings, but at last one recognises the full measure of the curse that has been laid upon mankind. We must Work."

It is just when Seymour is at the height of his discontent, poor for a man of his position, and totally incapable of increasing his income, that he hears a girl sing at a large dinner, given by a rich City magnate. It's a common enough musical comedy song, but the refrain is arresting. "Life is what we choose to make it, vile or pure."

"We can break the chain of habit, I am sure." Something in the girl's voice and personality catches his attention. Some mysterious sense tells him this girl can help him in his present state of restless discontent. He leaves the room waiting till she comes out, and begins an unconventional acquaintance in a truly unconventional way. This quickly ripens into friendship. She is an innocent, pure-minded girl, daughter of a furniture dealer in King's Road. In years past Mr. Copland had been a prosperous man, trading in the West End. Misfortune had dogged him to the verge of total ruin. Gladys Copland is a governess, increasing her small salary by singing at City dinners. Just as Seymour realises that he loves her and cannot live without her, has decided to be done with the futilities of life, and marry Gladys, his father, the old Earl, dies, and through an unexpected sequence of events, he becomes sixth Earl of Brentwood.

For a time after they are married all goes well, but Seymour is the representative of an old Liberal family, which has always a lead in politics. When after some months, Andover House is thrown open for big political re-unions, not un-naturally Gladys, not being to the manner born, with the best will in the world, is unable to play the part of a great lady. Her husband becomes more and more absorbed in politics. Then he becomes chairman of a large company called the Amalgamated Hotel Trust, induced to do so by financiers he knows, who want the prestige of his name and position to give a shelter to their nefarious proceedings. Finding him so taken up with his own affairs, Gladys is

unwilling to worry him with her troubles, so gradually they drift further and further apart.

Fine fellow as he is in many ways, one cannot claim for Seymour that his conduct is always what it should be, notably the episode with Irene Malcolmson, a friend of his wife's. She is a cleverly, mercilessly drawn character. The fear that he had lost Gladys, brings Seymour suddenly to the realisation that she is still the one woman in the world for him. After a trying time of estrangement she is reconciled to him, luckily before his chairmanship comes to a disastrous end. The Hotel Trust has been engineered by a set of clever rogues, when the full extent of the fraud becomes known, Lord Brentwood gives up the whole of his property, except the fine old historic castle, which he settled on his wife. All else goes to the hammer (from which it is to be presumed there is no entail). Then he turns his mind seriously to real work, becomes his wife's bailiff, improving the Dykefield property.

The book is full of interesting characters, carefully individualised. Sir Gregory Stuart is a cleverly drawn rogue, whilst old Mr. Copland is worthy of Dickens. It is a book to be read with care, full of thought and good writing, both instructive and illuminating. E. L. H.

COMING EVENTS.

October 8th.—Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses. Meeting of the Executive Committee, 431, Oxford Street, London, W., 4 p.m.

October 9th.—The Princess of Wales receives Jubilee Purser at the National Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptic, Queen Square, W.C., 3.15 p.m.

October 14th.—Chelsea Infirmary Nurses' League, Annual Meeting, 4 p.m. The Harvest Festival, 8 p.m.

October 18th.—Royal Hants County Hospital, Winchester. 172nd Anniversary of Foundation. Thanksgiving Service. Preacher, the Lord Bishop of Winchester. 3.30 p.m.

October 18th to 22nd.—Conference, National Union of Women Workers, Portsmouth.

October 22nd.—Meeting Matrons' Council, 3 p.m. Tea 4 p.m. Meeting National Council of Nurses, 4.30 p.m. Presentation to Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, 5.30 p.m., 431, Oxford Street, London, W.

October 25th.—Opening of the Extension of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital by His Majesty the King.

WORDS FOR THE WEEK.

A man's health is as divine a gift as his faith. It is a sacred trust which it is sinful to abuse or neglect.

People seldom improve when they have only themselves to copy.

To give and to lose is nothing; but to lose and to give still is the part of a great mind.

Truth and happiness inhabit a palace, into which none can enter but humble, sincere, and constant lovers.

* By W. B. Maxwell. (Hutchinson.)

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