

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

THE LONELY QUEEN.*

This romance, dealing as it does with the events of four reigns, is a great acquisition to our historical novels.

Elizabeth is the prominent figure throughout, from childhood to the Throne.

The first glimpse we are given of her is as "a child, all red hair and brown frock. Out of the flood of red hair her face was thrust, pale and aquiline." His most gracious Majesty Henry was now at his fourth wife . . . a placid German housewife, Anne of Cleves.

In a scene characteristic of her the little Elizabeth, coming upon the Queen in a room flooded with a sea of piebald colours, velvets and brocades, and cloth of silver and gold, and her Majesty's lap laden with heavy dresses, asks, "Please you, madam—but please you, madam, what is it, what are you doing?"

"I take count of my robes, little love. See, I am going away."

"Going away?" the child repeated in a dull voice, her face pale and drawn. "Please you, madam, why?"

"Ah, do not make a sad face. I will not be sad. The King is very kind. I take with me all my robes and my jewels."

"If I were you I would loathe myself," the child cried. "Oh, I would not let it be. I would keep myself Queen for ever and ever."

The Queen gave a shrug. "Little wild cat," she said.

Elizabeth's wanton character, and her love of intrigue combined, placed her often in grave peril, from which her ready wit found her a way of escape.

"She could amuse herself with any man. Philip was not a man, but a mere incarnate enemy. She set herself to an amour with him, as though it were a game of cards. She was ready to play with everything she had—her young beauty, her loyalty, her sister's right—if she could beat him."

Her betrayal of him to the Queen brings about the end she had in view, and in the final rapture, Mary, worn with torturing pain of body and mind, says to him:

"Philip, I gave you all I had. You have used me to torture me. This is the end. I desire you go. I swear before God you shall give me no more pain. . . . The Queen was sick to death. All Europe knew that, except she who would not let herself know. Death was near, but not so near that she might not blaze out into passion or frenzy. Her body was on the rack of disease. She was tearing at her soul for vain desire of Philip and shame."

When the days were lengthening to summer a message came to Elizabeth at last.

The Queen desired speech of her, and she went, once in her life, at least, not unafraid. For the moment of the madness of despair might send her

* By H. C. Bailey. (Methuen & Co., London.)

to the block, and she had come too near her prize not to fear death with the prize unwon.

In the final pages of the book Champernowne withdraws from Elizabeth's service on account of her intimacy with Montseigneur d'Alençon.

"You'll humble yourself to woo him—you, the Queen of England—and all the trickery and the shame for nothing better than to win peace in your time. To sleep quiet o' nights."

She was strangely calm. Mr. Champernowne at each more vehement word looked or hoped for her wonted roaring anger.

When at last she spoke, it was quietly. "Words, Harry, words. To sleep quiet o' nights. Do I? Well, my conscience hath a stout stomach. And how many be there in England who sleep quiet o' nights through my trickery and shame. . . . Ah, Harry, Harry, you are but a beastly Puritan after all. Go your way and save your soul."

With pure dignity reproachful Mr. Champernowne went out.

She sat staring at her papers, and pulled them to her and took one, and read it again and threw it upon the ground. "She hath a fair son," she muttered, "and I am a barren stock." She started up and flung her arms wide, and her bosom heaved.

It is thus we leave her.

H. H.

A PRAYER.

Grant us the will to fashion as we feel,
Grant us the strength to labour as we know,
Grant us the purpose, ribbed and edged with steel,
To strike the blow.

JOHN DRINKWATER.

COMING EVENTS.

January 1st.—New Year's Day.

January 3rd.—St. John's House, Queen Square, W.C., Nurses' Christmas Party. 5.30 p.m.

January 4th.—At Home given by the Nursing and Resident Staff of Charing Cross Hospital. 7.30—11 p.m.

January 10th.—The Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh. Lecture: "Surgical Emergencies from the Nursing point of view." By Mr. George Chiene, F.R.C.S.E. Extra-mural Medical Theatre. 4.30 p.m. Trained Nurses cordially invited.

January 17th.—Meeting Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland. Business meeting: Address on "The Instruction of Nurses in Some Aspects of Venereal Disease," by Dr. Florence E. Willey; 431, Oxford Street, London, W. Tea, 4 p.m.; meeting, 4.30 p.m.

January 18th.—Open Meeting for Nurses to receive Report from the Nurses Protection Committee, re National Insurance Bill. Miss Mollett will speak on "An Approved Society for Trained Nurses," Morley Hall, 26, George Street, Hanover Square, London, W., 8 p.m.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)