

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

STELLA MARIS.*

We must always welcome anything from the pen of Mr. Locke, so sure are we of an entirely new outlook on life. We cannot in the least guess what any of his charming people will say or do next, and this characteristic of his writing is one of its chief attractions. *Stella Maris* is no exception to this, indeed its originality and spontaneity should make it hold its own among his best works. There is not a superfluous person in the book, or one tiresome one.

Stella Maris—Star of the Sea. That was not her real name. It would have been obvious to anyone who had a bowing acquaintance with the Latin tongue. Her name was *Stella* and she passed her life by the sea, passed it away on the top of a cliff on the South Coast; passed it in one beautiful room that had big windows south and west; passed it in bed, flat on her back, with never an outlook on the outside world, save sea and sky. We meet her at the age of twelve, living to a certain extent the lives of grown-up men and women by means of a charm, a mystery, a personality, essentially gay and frank.

She held a little court of those favoured few who were permitted to visit her. The young men, Herold, the Great High Favourite, John Risca, Great High Belovedest, Lady Blount, her aunt, with whom she lived, Her Most Exquisite Auntship, and her uncle, Sir Oliver Blount, His Great High Excellency, and her trained nurse, Her High and Mightiness.

John Risca and Herold, of little kinship to the child, vie with each other in devotion to her. By universal consent, nothing sordid or sad is permitted in the room that came to be in the eyes of those who loved her a sacred spot. The story of John Risca's life is unknown to her; how in extreme youth he had made a disastrous marriage; how his wife had been sentenced to three years' penal servitude for diabolical cruelty to an orphan servant girl; how he, in reparation, had taken the girl Unity in quixotic fashion, and brought her to his house, and compelled his maiden aunt to live with him and bring her up. All this was a sealed book to *Stella Maris*. In utter ignorance of the world the child grew into the woman, and then the unexpected happened—the spine trouble was cured, and *Stella* was as other maidens. And of course by this time, John and Herold both realise that the devotion for the child had become the love for the woman; but the great High Belovedest was the chosen of her heart—John, with his criminal wife.

And this unthinkable wife finds out *Stella Maris*, and scorches her innocence with cruel knowledge, and blackened the name of her great souled husband, so that she might more cruelly wound; and couples his name disgracefully with Unity.

* By W. J. Locke. (John Lane, London.)

And *Stella*, like many other untried, untempted people, refuses to believe in his honour, fails to realise that the peculiar circumstances of her life had justified his deception; and Herold, who so unselfishly loves them both, is unsuccessful in his mission of reconciliation.

There is great beauty of character in the orphan child, Unity—hopelessly common in her appearance though she was. Her unselfish devotion to John, her knowledge of his hopeless love for *Stella* causes her to shoot the woman who was the barrier between — and to end her own young life in like manner.

Below, deep in the grave lay Unity—Unity, who had taken a human life, and had taken her own for the sake of those she loved. There, in that oak coffin lay all that remained of the common little girl, with the lilies on her bosom.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord."

"*Stella*—young, emotional, inexperienced, overwhelmed by the shattering collapse of her faith, found in the simple words an unquestioned truth." But, after all this sacrifice, she does not marry John, though he again takes his place as her friend. But we advise all who can obtain it to read for themselves this book.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

May 24th.—Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland: Quarterly Meeting, 431, Oxford Street, London, W., 3.30 p.m. Tea 4.30 p.m.

May 26th-31st.—Post-Graduate Week at York Road Hospital, S.E.

May 28th.—Annual General Meeting Asylum Workers' Association, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square. Sir John Jardine, K.C.I.E., M.P., LL.D., President of the Association, in the chair. 3 p.m.

May 29th.—Rural Midwives Association. Tenth Annual Meeting. The Countess of Cawdor will preside. 3 Grosvenor Place, S.W. 3.30 p.m. Tea and coffee 4.30 p.m.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TRAINED NURSES OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

June 3rd.—Reception of Guests in Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin. 8.30 p.m.

June 4th to 6th.—Conference and Exhibition organised by the Irish Nurses' Association, Royal College of Physicians, Dublin.

Questions of interest to be discussed:—Nursing Education, Preliminary, Reciprocal and Post Graduate Training; State Registration; the Nurses' Registration Bill, its effect on the Nursing Profession, including Hours of Work, Remuneration and Privileges; the Law as it affects Trained Nurses; White Plague (tuberculosis); Black Plague (venereal disease); the Appeal of the Insane; Poor Law Nursing; School Nursing; the Training and Professional Ideals of the Masseuse; the Legal Status of the Midwife; a Just Midwives' Act for Ireland.

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