

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"GOD'S PLAYTHINGS."*

This collection of short romances is based on historical facts and personages. They are unique in their way; and, though many of them are gruesome, and all of them sad, they are clothed in vivid and picturesque garb. The book does not take the cynical view that its title would lead us to expect, but rather points to the thwarting of the Divine plan, by undisciplined vanity and luxury. Each of these short sketches relates the death of its subject—sad and harrowing deaths. For the most part, they are the working out of the Eternal decree that what a man soweth he shall reap. James Scott (Duke of Monmouth), the Earl of Strafford, Madame du Barry, the heads of whom fell under axe and guillotine; Sophia Dorothea, of Zell, the repudiated wife of George I., who for thirty-two years was a prisoner of Ahlden, and who died broken-hearted in captivity, whether innocent or guilty none knew; the Duchesse d'Orleans, sister of Charles Stewart, poisoned with chicory water; Lucrezia Borgia, the wanton Spaniard, who, as a sick old woman was temptress still, and whose last moments are so horribly described—these are some of the personages that figure in these pages.

The death of the little son of Edward the Black Prince is a very sympathetic piece of writing, and is a welcome relief from tragedy. "The Prince rested his cheek against the arms of England on the coverlet; he felt that lassitude of a man that feels that life is done. But his little son, sleeping beneath the leopard-strewn coverlet, would redeem his own unfulfilled promise."

"'Oh! dear Lord Christ, and St. George,' he prayed; 'let this be so—let him be a very perfect knight and a great king.'

"The child was awake; the sparkling blue of his eyes was brilliant in his flushed face.

"'When I am well, I shall have a shirt of mail, shall I not?'

"'Ay!' answered the Prince, 'if the armourer can make one so small.'

"The child closed his eyes. 'Why am I sick, Seigneur?' he muttered. 'Did I do wrong?'

"Edward shivered. 'You are not sorely sick?' he demanded. His son put out a hot hand, which the Prince clasped tightly."

"'I feel so tired,' he whispered, with his eyes closed, 'but when I sleep the dragons come and crawl over the bed.' A little later: 'Seigneur,' he gasped, 'let me mount the white horse . . . the great horse; why do you leave me alone?' he complained, 'but I . . . am not . . . afraid—never . . . afraid.'"

Of Madame du Barry, a woman of the people, it is related that among all the noble and ignoble sufferers by the guillotine there is no record of cowardice on the part of any, save only in her case.

* By Marjorie Bowen. Smith, Elder & Co., Waterloo Place, London.

"'What are they keeping us here for?' she asked; 'what is going to happen?'

"A soldier passed them, insolently near; when he had gone, the young man answered: 'they must have told you; you were tried yesterday.'

"She faintly shook her fair head. 'O, no! you could not call it a trial!'

"'Do you not know, Madame, what this means?'

"A spasm of agony contracted her heart.

"'No—no!' she stammered.

"He very gently laid his hand on her wrist.

'We are all condemned to the guillotine,' he said.

'We are waiting for that now—the guillotine.'

"Incomprehension and confusion showed in the blue eyes of Madame du Barry; her mouth fell open. 'They are going to kill me?' she asked."

In sickening detail the terrible work of the guillotine is described, and her "common blood gushed over the other noble blood that stained the oak and iron."

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

January 23rd.—Society for the State Registration of Nurses, Meeting to consider a Resolution to Protest against the denial of freedom of conscience and speech to the Nursing Staff at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, on Legislation affecting their Profession. Life members, and those who have paid their subscriptions, are eligible to attend. 431, Oxford Street, London. 4.30 p.m.

January 29th.—Trained Women Nurses' Friendly Society, Meeting of Committee of Management, 431, Oxford Street, London, W. 5 p.m.

January 29th.—Irish Nurses' Association, 34, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin. Lecture by Dr. Crofton on "The Prevention and Cure of Consumption." 7.30 p.m.

January 31st.—Meeting Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland. Business Meeting 3.30 p.m. Tea 4.30 p.m. Address by Dr. Helen Boyle on Mental Nursing at 5.15 p.m. 431, Oxford Street, London, W.

February 5th.—The League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses Course of Lectures. "Eugenics, what is it?" by Bishop Harman, Esq., F.R.C.S., Medical and Surgical Theatre, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, E.C. Tickets from the Hon. Secretary. 5.30 p.m.

February 10th.—Central Midwives' Board Examinations. London, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester, and Newcastle-on-Tyne.

February 11th and 12th.—The Central Poor Law Conference, Guildhall, London, E.C.

A WORD FOR THE WEEK.

In Life's small things be resolute and great
To keep thy muscle trained; know'st thou
when Fate

Thy measure takes, or when she'll say to thee,
"I find thee worthy; do this deed for me."

—James Russell Lowell.

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