

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

THE VALLEY OF THE MOON.*

What strikes one most in this book is its intense vitality. From cover to cover the problem of humanity glows and burns, the problem, that is, of the working classes out in San Francisco. The problem of over population, scant pay, strikes, and sweating—the problem of the young asking for the right to live rather than to exist—the pathos of life's denial to the toilers, the asking for bread and receiving of stones.

Yet though the book abounds in such things they are not permitted to dominate or depress; on the contrary, a joyous bubbling vein running through the whole proclaims its American origin.

Dainty Saxon and Mary were friends who earned their living by ironing in a laundry.

Saxon finished ahead of Mary, at whose board she paused on the way out.

"Saturday night an' another week gone," Mary said mournfully, her young cheeks pallid and hollowed, her black eyes blue shadowed and tired. "What d'you think you've made, Saxon?"

"Twelve and a quarter" was the answer, not unmixing with pride.

"My! I got to pass it to you," Mary congratulated.

"See you on the nine-forty. We can just fool around till the dancin' begins. A lot of my gentleman friends will be there in the afternoon."

It was at the picnic alluded to, Saxon met Billy for the first time.

Mary clapped her hands at the sight of her friend.

"My!" she cried. "You're a swell! An' them stockins is peaches." She carried out the introduction with nervous carelessness.

"Mr. Roberts—Miss Brown. She's my best friend. Her first name's Saxon; ain't it a scream of a name?"

Saxon thought to herself, "*A boy, a great big man boy.*" She felt rather than perceived the calm and certitude of all the muscular play of him; she felt, too, the promise of easement and rest that was especially grateful and craved for by one who had incessantly for six days and at top speed ironed fancy starch. Never in her life had she been so affected by any man. She wondered to herself, "*Is this the man?*"

Billy was a teamster and prize-fighter, he tells Saxon. "The boss says I'm a wooz on horses. He thinks he likes horses. Honest to God, Saxon, he don't like all his horses as much as I like the last hair on the last tail of the scrubbiest of the bunch. Yet they're his. Wouldn't it jar on you?"

"Wouldn't it?" Saxon laughed appreciatively. "I just love fancy shirt-waists, an' I spend my life ironing some of the beautifulest I've ever seen. It's funny and it ain't fair."

Billy wonders why God lets men own the horses an' buy the women, the nice little girls that ought to be lovin' their own husbands an' havin' children

they're not ashamed of, an' just bein' happy accordin' to their nature.

It was when they were out on a buggy drive behind the boss's horses that Billy said:

"Say, Saxon, what's the matter with you an' me gettin' married? Whoa!" he called to the horses. Then he turned to her with arms around her and lips to lips.

"Oh, Billy, I'll make you a good wife," she sobbed, when the kiss was broken."

Billy's pride and joy in his dainty wife is delightfully told. A fellow likes to hear the other fellows say, "Who's Bill's new skirt? She's a peach, ain't she? Wouldn't I like to win her though," and all that sort of talk.

Delightful, too, is his reception of the wonderful news that they are to have a child.

"Think of it! Ourn! The three of us! The little rascal! I bet he's goin' to be a boy, an' won't I learn 'm to put up his fists an' take care of himself!"

"I thought I was goin' to be happy married," Saxon said; "but I never dreamed it would be like this. She turned her head on his shoulder and kissed his cheek.

"Billy, it isn't happiness, it's heaven."

Sad though it was, for a time their happiness was dimmed and spoilt. Though they lost their dainty home, though Billy in consequence of the strikes took to drink, and became a strange Billy, they recovered it all by leaving the crowded town with all its social evils, and tramped till they found their valley of the moon across the Californian plains.

"Here's where our fun begins," said Billy. "Now we're in Easy Street."

"But you don't own it," objected Saxon.

"Well, you won't be a hundred years old before I do," said Billy.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

March 6th.—Association for Promoting the Training and Supply of Midwives. Annual Meeting, 16, Draycott Place, S.W. The Duchess of Montrose in the Chair. 3.30 p.m.

March 6th.—Association of Approved Societies: Annual Conference, Caxton Hall, S.W. 3 p.m.

March 11th.—Irish Nurses' Association. Lecture: "Sciatica," by Dr. Preston Ball, 34, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin. 7.30 p.m.

March 12th.—Meeting Grand Council of the National Council of Trained Nurses, 431, Oxford Street. 4.30 p.m. Tea.

March 11th, 18th and 25th.—Guy's Hospital Past and Present Nurses' League: Lectures on "The Nursing of Nose and Throat Cases," by Mr. Layton, M.S., Medical School Buildings. 8 p.m.

March 14th.—National Union of Trained Nurses (London Branch): Lecture on Venereal Disease, by Miss Hilda Clark, M.B., B.S. Lond., Royal Society of Medicine, 1, Wimpole Street, London, W. 3.15 p.m.

March 19th.—Central Midwives' Board: Meeting, Caxton House, S.W. 3.30 p.m.

* By Jack London. Mills & Boon, London.

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