

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE WITNESS FOR THE DEFENCE."*

The picture drawn in the commencement of the book, of Henry Thresk and pretty Stella Derrick cantering over the Sussex Downs in no way prepares us for that which follows. Henry missed his happiness—he feared his fate too much, and could not make the great venture. Stella wounded in her love as well as in her pride, bears the smart as best she can.

Eight years after Thresk saw the face of Stella Derrick again; and then it was in a portrait. "It was not the beauty of the girl who had ridden with him, there was more of character now, less, much less of youth and none of the old gaiety."

It is in Bombay that he comes across the portrait, and learns that for some years she has been married and living at Chitipur. From her friend Mrs. Repton he has hints of tragedy in her life that accounts for the alteration in her appearance. Thresk makes up his mind suddenly that though he is due to sail for England in a few days, he will see for himself the conditions of her life.

He carries with him a letter of introduction to her husband, Captain Ballantyne. On reaching their house he was told that his Excellency had gone away on an inspection tour, and seeing a cluster of lights on the plain, he discovered that the Ballantynes were camping there en route for their destination. It was a luxurious marquee, and had the appearance that people were accustomed to make their home in it for months at a time. Even the latest books were to be seen. But it was dark. Here it was he saw for the first time Ballantyne—a big animal-looking man, and here he renews his acquaintance with Stella. In the first five minutes he discovers her terror and dislike of her husband. It was the same fateful evening after Thresk's departure that Ballantyne was discovered shot dead outside his tent. At the inquest, Thresk—a barrister of repute in London—swears falsely in order that Stella should be acquitted.

We next meet Stella again in the old spot in Sussex. She had fled from India leaving Thresk ignorant of her movements.

Her little cottage adjoins the house of an eccentric old gentleman named Hazlewood, and at the first he champions Stella's cause.

"Mr. Hazlewood took his son and led him to the bay window. He pointed across the field to the thatched cottage.

"You know who lives there?"

"No."

"Mrs. Ballantyne."

"Dick put his head on one side and whistled softly. He knew the general tenour of the *cause célèbre*."

We are much disappointed to find that our matchmaking plans with regard to Stella and

Thresk come to nothing. From the first time that Dick and Stella meet, it is quite evident that they are for each other. Difficulties at once arise, as would only be natural in the circumstances. Doubts as to the justice of Stella's acquittal are raised, and the whole circumstances and details of the trial are once more brought to light.

Once more Thresk has to face the woman he has always loved as the betrothed of another man. She confesses to him, what he has always known that she shot Ballantyne, from terror of him. Though, of course, the disclosure of his perjury would mean the ruin of Thresk's legal career, he still urges Stella to confide in her fiancé, and trust to his love to understand.

He tells her, "I take the consequences. I doubt if they would be very heavy. There's a way out of the trouble—the honest way for both of us; to make a clean breast of it together—and together take what follows."

The immensity of the sacrifice he was prepared to make overwhelmed her. He was willing to go with her into the outer darkness laying down all that he had laboured for unsparingly.

"We'll make something of our lives, never fear," he was saying, "But to marry this man not knowing—oh, my dear, I know how you are driven—but it won't do! It won't do."

It is then that she is driven to tell him that she is already married to Dick.

She is fortunate enough to be loved by two noble men, for Dick declares, "I knew very well before I married her."

The book is full of incident and colour, and the plot well thought out and sustained. H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

March 28th.—National Union of Trained Nurses (London Branch). Lecture on "Venereal Disease," by Miss Hilda Clark, M.B., B.S. Lond., Royal Society of Medicine (West Lecture Hall), 1, Wimpole Street, W. 3.15 p.m.

March 31st.—Nurses' Missionary League: A Quiet Day for Prayer and Meditation at Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone. 6 to 8 a.m.; 10 to 12.30; 2.30 to 4.15 p.m.; evening prayer, 7.30 to 8.30 p.m.

April 7th.—Irish Nurses' Association. Lecture: "Operations and Post-operative Nursing," by Dr. William Taylor, 34, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin. 7.30 p.m.

April 8th.—National Union of Trained Nurses: Inaugural Meeting Liverpool Branch, Central Hall, Renshaw Street; the Lady Mayoress to preside. Speakers: Miss A. C. Gibson and Miss Pye. 3 p.m.

April 8th.—National Union Trained Nurses: Lecture, "Nursing Ethics," by Miss Callaghan, Matron, Taunton and Somerset Hospital, St. James' Church House, Canon St., Taunton. 3 p.m.

April 11th to 30th.—Children's Welfare Exhibition, Olympia: The National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland (Nursing Section), in Woman's Kingdom.

* By A. E. W. Mason. Hodder & Stoughton, London, New York.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)