

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE PRICE OF LOVE."*

The theatre of this story is kept within a very small compass, and the actors in it never for a moment forget the parts that they have been set to play; also their stage asides never leave us for a moment in any doubt as to their attitude of mind. Arnold Bennett excels in self-analysis; it is marked in his former works, and is a great characteristic of the "Price of Love."

His descriptive powers are great, and he has the great art of investing the humdrum with interest and even romance; the reader is taken into the inner circle, as it were, and becomes one of the family instead of remaining a mere spectator.

Rachel was Mrs. Maldon's "lady companion," quite a recent comer.

The prominent fact about her at the moment was that she wore an apron—an immense blue pinafore apron. On a plain, middle-aged woman, such a pinafore would have been intolerable to the sensitive eye, but on Rachel it had a piquant and perverse air, because she was young with the incomparable unique charm of comely adolescence; a couple of pages is devoted to Rachel lighting the gas and otherwise setting out the room for the evening in accordance with the old-fashioned notions of her employer. We do not find these details tiresome; on the contrary, they are soothing, and we become much interested in the subject of tapers *versus* matches. The occasion, which opens the tale, proves to be an eventful one. Mrs. Maldon's two nephews are expected to supper. Mr. Batchgrew, her trustee, called, and deposited with the old lady bank-notes to the value of nearly a thousand pounds, which, next day, were to be re-invested.

The bank-notes disappeared in the night, and old Mrs. Maldon practically dies from the shock.

We consider it inartistic that the two nephews each unknown to the other had shared the booty.

Louis, the good-looking, elegant young ne'er-do-well, had on several previous occasions had to leave posts on account of failure to distinguish between mine and thine.

The old lady's loss remains a mystery. Louis proceeds to make love to Rachel, who is nothing loth—nay, eager. She was in love with love, not with Louis, as we are assured.

At her first "At Home," she had whispered to herself, "These are my guests; they all treat me with special deference; I am the hostess; I am Mrs. Fores."

She gradually awakens to the weakness of his character.

Julian, who is the better man of the two, confesses to the newly-married pair his share of the theft. Louis, after a severe bicycle

accident, does likewise. Though Rachel had subconsciously suspected his share in the transaction, his avowal fills her with cold aversion.

"He thought he was dying, and so he confessed," she reflected, with asperity; "he hadn't even the pluck to go through with what he had begun. . . . Ah! if I had committed a crime and once denied it, I would deny it to my last breath, and no torture should drag it out of me." You see our Rachel was quite pagan. The little touches in her manner of nursing him after this are realistic; as she was but amateur, we may forgive her saying that "the bandages must be returned to Mrs. Heath."

She eyed him bitterly in his bandages. Only last night she had been tormented by the fear he might be marked for life. What did it matter if his face were marked for life, or not? He would wash his own hands. Rachel yielded to him in this detail with cynical indifference. She put the towel by the bowl, and left him to balance the bowl and keep the soap off the counterpane as best he could.

"I'm about done with this basin thing," he said, with all possible dignity.

We must not pass over Mrs. Tams, the charwoman, who was by nature a serf.

"Mrs. Tams drew the gate towards herself and, crushed behind it, curtsied. This curtsy, now almost unknown in the Five Towns, consisted in a momentary shortening of the stature by six inches, and by nothing else. Mrs. Tams had acquired it in her native village, where an earl held fast to that which was good."

Surely, underlying Rachel's apparent independence, there was something of the serf also—for she ends by saying of Louis, "He's mine, and I wouldn't have him altered for the world; I am his wife, I am his." H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

October 24th.—Great Patriotic Concert, Royal Albert Hall, for the European War Fund. The Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England, Madame Adelina Patti, the Royal Choral Society, the Queen's Hall Orchestra, the Massed Bands of His Majesty's Brigade of Guards. 3 p.m.

October 26th.—Next examination of Central Midwives Board in London and the Provinces.

October 28th.—Meeting of Leicester and Leicestershire Midwives' Association. G.F.S. Rooms, 5, St. Martin's East, Leicester. 3.15 p.m.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

"Give me Piccadilly."

—A 'bus-driver under fire at Antwerp.

"I do not see the glory in washing up dishes, my friends, I tell you frankly."

"No, but it is there."—*The Isle of Unrest.*

"Though the Master's work may make weary feet, yet it leaves the spirit glad."

"Bye-and-bye is always too late."

* By Arnold Bennett. Methuen & Co., London.

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