

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

## "THE RAGGED-TROUSERED PHILANTHROPIST."\*

This is explained in the preface to be the manuscript of a novel, the work of a Socialistic house-painter, who wrote his book and died.

"With grim humour and pitiless realism, the working man has revealed the lives and hearts, their opinion of their 'betters' ? (the italics are ours), their political views, the attitude towards Socialism. Through the busy din of the hammer and the scraping knife, the clang of the pail, the swish of the whitewash, the yell of the foreman, comes the talk of the men, their jokes and curses, their hopes and terrors, the whimpering of their old people, the cry of their children. In reducing a large mass of manuscript to the limitations of book form, superfluous matter and repetition have been cut away. The rest remains as it came from the pen of Robert Tressall, house-painter and sign-writer, who records his criticism of the present scheme of things, until weary of the struggle, he slipped out of it."

Whether "to suffer the slings and arrows of an outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them," is a question that arises more than once in these pages. As we gather from the preface, it is not pleasant reading that is set forth. Shallow fastidiousness will thrust it aside and have none of it. Its rough, lurid language will shock their eyes. But those who are passionately interested in things human will go bravely under to the sub-stratum of society, and find there much food for reflection.

Frank Owen was the son of a journeyman carpenter who had died of consumption when the boy was only five years old. He had married the daughter of a fellow-workman. "Symptoms of the disease that killed his father began to manifest themselves. The doctor told him to take 'plenty of nourishing food,' and prescribed costly medicines which Owen had not the money to buy. His wife was delicate; and the boy—what hope was there for him? Often, as Owen moodily thought of his circumstances and prospects, he told himself that it would be far better if they could all three die now together.

"Thousands of people like himself dragged out a wretched existence on the very verge of starvation; and for the greater number of people, life was one long struggle against poverty."

The struggle in Owen's case ended in defeat, as it more often does.

One evening he became conscious of a strange sensation, and a few seconds afterwards he was terrified to find his mouth filled with blood. Through the death-like silence of the night, there came from time to time the chimes of a clock of a distant church. So this was the beginning of the

end! And afterwards the other two would be left by themselves at the mercy of the world. His child's boyhood would be passed in carrying loads, dragging carts and running here and there, trying his best to satisfy the brutal tyrants, whose only thought would be to get profit out of him for themselves.

"He resolved this should never be; if he could not stay and protect them it would be kinder and more merciful to take them with him." With these last words, the book abruptly ends. We seem to be taken behind some tragedy, briefly announced in the newspaper, and forced to realise its motive power.

Owen's is not the only history set before us.

Bitterness and hate of hypocrisy run through the pages. It is a fierce protest against the cruelty and injustice of trade systems that force and keep men under, break their hearts, and throw them aside without pity or remorse.

H. H.

## COMING EVENTS.

July 3rd and 10th.—Nurses' Registration Bill. Informal discussion; 20, Upper Wimpole Street, London, W., 8.30 p.m. Matrons and nurses cordially invited.

July 4th.—League of St. Bartholomew's Hospital Nurses. General Meeting, Clinical Lecture Theatre. 2.30 p.m. Social Gathering in the Great Hall, 4 p.m.

July 7th and 8th.—National Association for the Prevention of Consumption and other Forms of Tuberculosis. Sixth Annual Conference. Leeds.

July 9th.—South London Hospital for Women. Garden Party. The Bishop of Kingston and Mrs. Hook receive at Kingston House, 102, South Side, Clapham Common. 3.30 p.m.

July 16th.—Society for State Registration of Trained Nurses. Annual Meeting, Medical Society's Rooms, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, London, W. 4.30 p.m. Tea after the meeting by kind invitation of Mrs. Walter Spencer at 2, Portland Place, London, W.

July 22nd.—Central Midwives' Board. Penal Board, Caxton House, S.W. 2 p.m.

July 23rd.—Central Midwives' Board. Monthly Meeting, Caxton House, S.W. 3.30 p.m.

August 5th.—Central Midwives' Board: Next Written Examination in London. The oral examination follows a few days later.

## WORD FOR THE WEEK.

"Go forward with steadfast hearts and true,  
Go forward on your way;  
God gives you strength to do the duties of  
each day,  
So daily may this thought your heart with  
courage fill:  
I can, because I ought, and by God's help,  
I will. A. R. G.

\* By Robert Tressall. (Grant Richards, London).

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