

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"WHOSE NAME IS LEGION."*

Those of our readers who have any interest in the occult, we guarantee will be deeply absorbed in this work. It is not the first time that this subtle theme has been woven into a romance, for we believe we are right in saying that the talented Benson brothers have more than once dealt with it from the same standpoint. Nevertheless, the conception of "Whose Name is Legion" is powerful, dramatic and enthralling. How far the unseen can be brought into communication with humanity it would be idle for us to conjecture. In a contemporary newspaper of last week, Mr. Andrew Lang is reported to have said, after much investigation, "Some people undoubtedly see spooks"; beyond that he would not go.

At any rate, the moral drawn from the book under consideration is a wholesome one, namely, that there is a "Watcher at the Gate" of the soul, and that those who curiously and wantonly open the gate to pry into forbidden places may find that those "whose name is Legion" will enter in and dwell there. The terrible fate of pretty Miss Blair, we can well believe, might be the result of such practices.

The fact that this work is written from a Roman Catholic point of view does not materially alter its general interest, for we believe that all Christian creeds will agree in condemning such a dangerous practice, and should dire results follow the breaking down of barriers, we think that most thoughtful persons will assent that the casting out of devils must be by spiritual means.

The opening scene is laid in a country house, where there is gathered a house party which is ill-assorted.

Certain of these people are convinced Spiritualists, carrying on their séances in secret. Mrs. Blair, the hostess, is the young widow of a devout Roman Catholic, whose only son is left to the guardianship of Father Benedict. It is therefore with consternation that Mrs. Blair learns of the intention of her stepson and the priest to join the house party. There are others of the party who are in no way mixed up in these dark doings, but pretty Pamela and her cousin Billy are over-persuaded to attend a séance on the ground that the medium had refused to speak till they were present.

The consequences were dire, and Pamela received a shock to her nervous system which it takes her long to recover from. She confides in the priest, who, by virtue of his trusteeship, clears the house of Mrs. Blair and her friends. Pamela is engaged to Ralph Mellish, a man twenty years older than herself, who has a most beautiful home in Africa. Before her terrible experience at

Feddon Hall, Pamela had looked forward with eager anticipation to her new life, but afterwards she had an unreasoning reluctance to go.

Ralph has for his near neighbour a wealthy Arab—Aziz. His long residence in the East, and reasons which his wife cannot fathom (but which are closely connected with her spiritualistic experiences), have given rise to an intimacy between him and his neighbour. This offends Pamela's European instincts. From the first day of her home-coming she feels that there are evil influences at work in the surroundings, and that her husband is in some way dominated by them.

Her uneasiness is replaced by terror when she comes to know that Professor Scudamore, the renowned Spiritualist, who was the conductor in the séance at Feddon Hall, was a guest in the house of Aziz.

The only escape from the horrors that obsessed her seemed to lie in seeking the consolations of religion. To this end she is received into the Roman Communion. Ralph, instead of opposing this, seems relieved that it should be so, and is inclined to listen to Pamela's wish that he should follow in her steps.

She urges him to make the acquaintance of Father Benedict. "Life and death must be simple things to a man like that," said Ralph thoughtfully. "He has probably never been—been into outer darkness. He can have no conception of what it is like. . . . for the soul that is still there."

"I think he would understand," she said, though his words gave her a little chill of fear."

Poor Ralph pays the penalty of his dabbling in occultism, and though he is restored to sanity and wholesome outlook, it is not for long. He dies a tragic death in trying to save his wife from his burning house. Apart from its central interest, the descriptions of Africa and its strange fascination make this a remarkable book.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

October 1st.—Nurses' Missionary League. Valedictory Meetings, University Hall, Gordon Square, W.C. Sessions 9.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m.

October 5th to 7th.—National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland. The Annual Conference and Council Meetings, Central Hall, Westminster, 10.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. Mrs. Creighton, President.

October 5th to 8th.—Gresham Lectures. Four Lectures will be delivered on Typhus Fever, and Cerebro-spinal Meningitis by Professor F. M. Sandwith, M.D., at the Gresham College, Basinghall Street, E.C. Free to the public. 6 p.m.

October 5th.—National Association for Prevention of Infant Mortality. A special course of Lectures on Infant Care.

October 7th.—Central Midwives Board. Monthly meeting. 3.30 p.m.

* By Isabel C. Clarke. Hutchinson & Co., London.

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