

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

'K.'*

We notice this book chiefly for the reason that it is the story of a probationer in an American hospital. We are quite ready to believe that it is no truer to life than similar romances purporting to discuss the prominent features of English hospitals. But a halo of romance and sentiment has and ever will, we believe, centre round the cap and apron of the hospital nurse; and the general public apparently love to have it so, for novels of this description have lately flooded the market. We do not believe that it is customary for honorary surgeons to take new probationers and staff nurses alternately out in automobiles, by moonlight; but it, of course, adds to the zest of a tale.

"K" is, however, a very readable and pretty story, of a light description, and will appeal to a large class of readers, as a relief from the strenuous literature of the present time. "K" was a lodger with Sydney's mother. It was not the custom of Mrs. Page to let lodgings, but, as K. Le Moyne saw it, "genteel poverty was what it meant, and more—the constant drain of disheartened middle-aged women on the youth and courage of the girl beside him." There was a mystery about K. Le Moyne, which is cleared up as the story proceeds, and it was as follows:

He was once Dr. Edwardes, the famous operator, who disappeared from his circle and his hospital. An operation, known as the Edwardes operation, had made him famous. Every care and oversight he had exercised, in order that there could be no possibility of failure. Yet once, and again, and yet again, the lives of patients were risked and lost, on account of an overlooked sponge in the cavity. It broke the surgeon's courage and health, and, of course, ruined his reputation. The explanation of the mystery does not come till the concluding pages.

Carlotta, a nurse, had been dismissed from his hospital, for carelessness in this very particular. Before leaving, she added an extra sponge in the gauze bags that should have contained a dozen apiece, to spite the surgeon who had insisted on her dismissal. The result needs no explanation to the professional mind, except, of course, that the dozens should have been verified in each case. But one must not be too particular, or we should get no tragedies written.

Sydney Page has determined by the time that "K" takes up his quarters in her mother's house, that she will be a nurse, and enters as probationer the local hospital. Here we find Carlotta again, as staff nurse, with her wicked secret still locked in her breast and quite unaware of the close proximity of the man she had ruined. One can now understand that quite an exciting combination of circumstances will arise.

*By Mary Roberts Rinehart. (London: Smith & Elder.)

Sydney is very pretty, and "K," Joe Drummond and Dr. Max Wilson, of the honorary staff, are all in love with her. But Dr. Max appears also to be in love with others at the same time. That is the kind of man he is. Carlotta is a person of considerable ability and not without humour, as her remark on being given double duty will show, "I've always had things pretty hard here," she remarked, briefly. "When I go out, I'll either be competent to run a whole hospital single-handed, or I'll be carried out feet first."

There is a pretty little sketch of Christmas in the hospital. "As much as possible the hospital rested. The house surgeons went about in fresh white ducks, doing few dressings. Over the upper floors where the turkeys were located, spread towards noon the insidious odour of roasting turkeys. Every ward had its vase of holly. In the afternoon, services were held in the chapel downstairs. Wheel chairs made their slow progress along corridors and down elevators. Convalescents, who were able to walk, flapped along in carpet slippers; over everything brooded the after-dinner peace of Christmas afternoon." It has a familiar touch, this description.

Dr. Max is so much in love with Sydney that he becomes engaged to her, which does not appear to have been a necessary consequence in his former affairs. But it was not in his nature to remain true to her or anyone, and we are glad when "K," or, as he then becomes again—Dr. Edwardes—declares his faithful affection, and is rewarded. There is plenty of incident and colour in the story, and though some of the hospital episodes are not impossible, we hope and believe that they are not usual.

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

November 4th.—"The American Child at School," by Miss Clara E. Grant. Royal Sanitary Institute, 90, Buckingham Palace Road, S.W. 6 p.m.

November 6th.—Nurses' Missionary League. Sale of Work, Sloane Gardens House, 52, Lower Sloane Street, London, S.W. 10 a.m.—6 p.m.

November 6th.—Church League for Women's Suffrage. Intercession Service. St. Martin-in-the-Fields. Preacher, the Lord Bishop of London. 3 p.m.

November 12th.—Royal Sanitary Institute. Sessional Meeting, Town Hall, Ripon. Professor Kenwood, M.B., D.P.H., presiding. 10 a.m.

November 15th.—National Food Reform Association. First of a series of demonstration lectures, for social workers, on "War Time Cookery," by Miss Florence Pitty ("The Pudding Lady"). Westminster Health Society's Offices, 60, Greek Street, Soho, W.C. Syllabus and full particulars from N.F.R.A., 178, St. Stephen's House, Westminster.

November 23rd.—Irish Nurses' Association. Lecture on "Bone Diseases," by Mr. MacAuley. 34, St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, 7.30 p.m.

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