

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"BRUNEL'S TOWER."*

Mr. Phillpotts needs no recommendation, his place as a writer of fiction is assured. Those who object to a certain coarseness in some of his works may read "Brunel's Tower" without misgiving, as there is not a trace of such from end to end. Of course, it is West Country—nothing else from his descriptive pen could so delight. The reader acquires information all the way, and is so delivered from the feeling of futility with which one too often lays down a novel.

George Easterbrook, alone in the world, a hundred pounds in his pocket and generous credentials, came West "to find work worthy of his hands, and a position of greater promise and power than life had yet offered."

Coming by chance on a potter's field his constructive and imaginative powers led him at once to discern possibilities for himself in the potter's art, and within eight days of his first visit he acquired a ruin, which under his hands became in time Brunel's Tower, the celebrated pottery works. It is of this art that so much is disclosed, and the fact is emphasised that in this, as indeed every occupation, only those who love their craft can become truly great in it.

The death of half simple Tom Body, the old potter, is pathetically illustrative of the union between workman and craft.

"Joanna brought a bunch of flowers from her garden and set it down beside the sick man. He had a little board before him and a lump of clay where he could still roll marbles. "I'm fond of the clay, yet," he said. "For all the aches and pains it has given me, I shall be terrible sorry to leave it. I'm glad to think the red earth of me will go back to the red earth of the land; but though a painful road, bent and bruised and cracked a bit with the weight of years I'm sorry enough to lay it down. Because when you balances up all the little cleverness we win in this world against what they be likely to demand in heaven it looks nought. If there's cloam there then the angel potters have thrown in heavenly patterns since the beginning; and what chance has a poor, strange man against them?"

"They'll teach you what they know," said Joanna, "and they'll find you ever so quick to learn, Thomas."

"I hope so—I hope so; but sometimes a cruel fear comes over me there won't be no potting at all. It may be all gold and silver and precious stones, all metal work. . . . I'd hate to be a beginner. There's something indecent to my view in a man up over seventy as a beginner." How simply the old man voices the unuttered wistfulness of many a heart. "I think them that like work such as me and you will be allowed to work, for you know very well what eternal life would be to you without work."

* By Eden Phillpotts. William Heinemann, London.

The whole chapter on this subject—"Tom Body and the Unknown," is a gem of its kind. Poor old Tom ends all their essays on theology with—"Potting is potting all the same, and my eternal life won't be a finished thing without it."

The central character of the story is that of Harvey Porter, the runaway reformatory lad. His complex personality is most ably conceived, and keeps one in an alternate state of admiration and dislike. This indeed was the attitude of his master, George Easterbrook, who repressed in himself the strong attraction he felt to the boy. His feeling was put to the test, when Harvey, working on the feelings of the plain grand-daughter of a neighbouring potter, stole the secrets of their special ware in order to benefit the master he worshipped.

"What did you think of me?" Easterbrook thundered at him. "What mean, cowardly trash did you think I was to take your thievings? To work under me here for two years, and judge you were working for a rascal. A poor fool who believed your lies—an innocent, trustful, helpless thing, and an old man. And you're proud of it, you dog—you snake that I took from the gutter only to sting me."

Another incident of the twist in Porter's character, is his cruel disclosure to old Sophia Medway that her decorative work on the pottery ends in its consignment to the dust heap. This again was in his master's interest, notwithstanding she was his master's aunt, whom Easterbrook had so carefully guarded from the knowledge of her failing powers.

Yet those who are well advised enough to read "Brunel's Tower," will perchance hold in esteem the boy who died for his master. H. H.

WOMAN'S SPHERE.

They talk about a woman's sphere
As though it had a limit;
There's not a place in earth or heaven,
There's not a task to mankind given,
There's not a blessing or a woe,
There's not a whispered yes or no,
There's not a life, or death, or birth
That has a feather's weight of worth,
Without a woman in it.

COMING EVENTS.

July 16th.—Lyceum Club. Executive Committee entertain wounded soldiers from Military Hospitals. Tea and entertainment. 3 to 6 p.m.

July 20th.—Central Council for District Nursing in London: Meeting of Council, Conference Hall, Local Government Board Offices, Whitehall, S.W., by kind permission of the President of the Local Government Board. 11 a.m.

July 20th to 23rd.—Roehampton House Hospital, Roehampton Vale. Exhibition of Artificial Limbs.

July 22nd.—Central Midwives Board, Monthly Meeting, Caxton House, Westminster. 3.30 p.m.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

"Let us organize victory; let us not be certain of it."—Lloyd George.

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