

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE PASSIONATE CRIME."*

Do you wish to be lifted above the ordinary and commonplace into the atmosphere of romance, superstition and poignant emotion. Then obtain, read—yes, and possess—"this tale of Faerie," by Mr. Thurston. You will forget utterly your surroundings, however monotonous or mechanical they may be, and you will lose yourself in the wild South land environment, with all its dark shadows, its alluring lights, and its intense humanity, lovable even in its lawlessness. You will feel that strange call for smiles and tears, so subtly blended that you know not which emotion is uppermost, till the last powerful chapters are told, and then you are left without a smile at all.

The secret that old Malachi knew "but he wouldn't tell if God asked him in a little voice, the way ye'd whisper a thing out of a little child," was the reason why the poet Anthony Sorel, who lived all by himself in the wildest Irish mountain land, put a knife through the heart of beautiful Anna Quartermaine who lived in the big house at Ballysartmore. A beautiful spoiled coquette she was. But old Malachi was induced by the potent whiskey to tell that story that he would have denied to all, and "he ushered in his tale in the wind swept cottage in the mountains, with the storm hissing in the thatch, and the rain drops spitting into the great fire."

Anthony was something of a mystic, and after experiences of his young manhood, he sought solitude with the Muse in order that the soul might gain ascendancy over the body. In the nature of such women as Anna Quartermaine, any denial of subjugation to her charms worked like an evil spell. That she was charming and fascinating, and before she met him innocent, is not denied. She consults with her old confessor as to her desire to win this man for herself. Said he: "A man of his kind would be doing well for himself if he went to the other ends of the earth than be meeting ye. Ye have the laws of nature in the bones of ye. Don't ye know that yourself? Isn't this young fellow after saying there is something of God in a man and shure it isn't that in him would be any good to nature at all. The world is no place for him." "You're only thinking for him—you don't think for me at all" said she.

"Faith, I've never met anyone who can do their own thinking better than ye can yeerself. Aren't ye thinking now as hard as yeer brain'll let ye, the way ye can bring him back to ye: I'd trust ye for that," said he. "That young fella has chosen a path no woman has ever let a man walk in yet." His words proved true. Anthony idealised Anna, and strove to keep his love for her the mystic exalted passion he would fain have had it be.

"It was one night when the moonlight lay wide and white across the hills, that Anthony Sorel could see the figure of a peasant woman as she passed away to the moors. Her head was covered with a shawl, as they wear it everywhere in the South. Her feet were bare." The sound of strange singing had ere this reached his ear, and a face, like the face of Anna Quartermaine, had peered in at the window. This had happened just at one of the moments of his highest exaltation, when he had said to old Malachi: "I won't come down from the mountain till I can stand before God and swear I am the master of myself." He follows her out into the darkness, and a powerful description is given of his conversation with the woman, whom he holds to be of the faeries, and who had stolen the form of Anna to tempt him.

"Get back into the night," he cried aloud. "Take your eyes away from me, and your lips that smile, and the songs that you sing. It's not in one hour that I'll go back to the man that I was."

Again she visits him in his lonely cottage, and the pitifulness of it was, that in addition to his struggle against the abandonment of his ideals, was his longing to be worthy of his love for Anna. This faerie woman pressed him hardly with her wiles, and he succumbed. "The faeries had indeed put the stroke of their hand upon him. One hope only he clung to, that in the valley lived the woman of his ideals, with the strength of whose inspirations he might yet cast away the spell of these emotions that had fallen upon him." While the faerie woman slept, he unbound the kerchief around her head, thinking to dispel the haunting likeness.

"He stared and stared again. It was Anna Quartermaine, and all the ideal he had clung to was broken in a thousand pieces at his feet. She quivered as the knife quivered in her breast."

H. H.

COMING EVENTS.

February 17th.—Central Midwives' Board: Penal Board, 11 a.m.; Monthly Meeting, 3.30 p.m. Caxton House, S.W.

February 18th.—Central Midwives' Board: Penal Board, 11 a.m.

February 24th.—The Society State Registration of Trained Nurses. Meeting Executive Committee, 43I, Oxford Street, London, W. 4 p.m.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

He liveth long, who liveth well,
All else is being flung away,
He liveth longest who can tell
Of fine things truly done each day.

Upon the mountain top I stood,
And all the land beneath me lay;
I saw that earth was very good,
But Heaven seemed just as far away.

*By E. Temple Thurston. Chapman & Hall.

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