

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE BARS OF IRON."*

A brawl in a Queensland bar between a drunken bully and a young Englishman—the latter the typical product of an English public school, a handsome lad, yet not wholly English.

A clear throw, contrived with masterly assurance, "the result of deliberate and trained calculation, and the bully pitched on his head on the rough stones of the yard."

"I thought I could do it," said the boy; "I—thought I could!" He pressed forward to look. "I haven't really killed him, have I?" He was passive with the paralysis of a great horror.

His supporter edged him away, and he left the reeking bar branded with the mark of Cain.

We next meet him under very different circumstances, as the grandson and heir of old Sir Beverley, of the Manor.

Sir Beverley had never loved his son through the whole of his brief tempestuous life, but his grandson was the very core of his existence, as everybody knew, despite his strenuous efforts to disguise the fact.

The authoress apparently has forgotten that the age for corporal punishment of young men and growing boys and girls is past, as this story deals largely in this primitive form of correction. For instance, old Sir Beverley more than once lays his whip across the shoulders of young Piers—a man of twenty-five—who, apparently, bears no resentment in consequence; while the amiable vicar whips his young progeny with a complete indifference as to their age and sex. We are at a loss to understand why the individual known to the poor as the "cruelty officer" had nothing to say to this gentleman. Perhaps there was no branch of the excellent society which maintains him in that particular corner of the world.

Young Piers, with his strain of southern blood, was of a passionate, erratic and lovable nature; and always the tragedy of his earlier years dogged his imagination.

At twenty-five his fancy was caught by the attractive "mother's help" at the Vicarage—a young widow some few years his senior.

After much hesitation and doubt as to his stability, she consents to marry him, and the marriage is accomplished without Piers' having revealed to her the secret of his life.

He attempts to tell her on their wedding day, but his courage failed.

"You see, Avery, I am not the sort of chivalrous, impossible knight that little Jeannie thinks me; I'm horribly bad; I sometimes think I've a devil inside me; and I've done things—I've done things—"

She stooped lower to him, divinely tender—her love seeming to spread about him like wings folding him in.

"My dear," she said, softly, "whatever there is of bad in you—remember the best is mine."

* By Ethel M. Dell. Hutchinson & Co., London.

In spite of the difference of temperament, and in spite of his gusts of passion, which at times frightened and repelled her, they were happy in an uncomfortable sort of way, until the knowledge comes to her of Piers' secret. The victim of this unfortunate encounter turns out to be her former husband, who was a ne'er-do-well.

She turns from Piers in shuddering horror, and the way in which he meets with her rebuff is not pleasant reading; but when, however, he comes to a better mind, he agrees to her wish to leave him.

He enlists, is invalided home, and Avery once more takes him back to her love.

The Vicarage party are not a very masterly creation, and the monster of a father is ridiculous and impossible. But the book on the whole makes quite good reading, and we feel sure that it will make a wide appeal to admirers of this class of fiction.

H. H.

"YOU CAN NEVER REPAY THESE MEN."

Mr. Will Crooks, M.P., spoke at the concert held at the Alhambra, in aid of the British Women's Hospital, Star and Garter, Richmond, and showed us our duty to the splendid men fighting and dying for us in this War. Referring to a conversation he had in France with a wounded soldier, Mr. Crooks said:—

"I gathered my feelings up, as it were, and, kneeling down beside the stretcher, I said, 'How do you feel, son?' 'All right,' replied the soldier, 'I think I'll be all right, don't you?' 'I am sure you will be all right,' I said. 'How long is it since you were hurt?' 'Four days,' he replied. 'But I'll be better when I get my clothes off, won't I?' I turned round. I couldn't look the man in the face. I said to myself: 'What have I done that he should give all that life is worth to fight for me?' Is bread a little dearer, are taxes a little higher, tea a little dearer, and trade a little worse? My God, you can never repay these men for what they have done for us."

COMING EVENTS.

March 9th.—National Union of Trained Nurses. Meeting. Miss Beatrice Kent will speak on State Registration, and Miss Atkey on the Voluntary Nursing College Scheme. 2.30 p.m.

March 14th.—The Association for Promoting the Training and Supply of Midwives. Annual meeting at 40, Cadogan Place. 3.30 p.m.

March 16th.—Central Midwives Board. Monthly meeting. 3.30 p.m.

March 18th.—Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses. Meeting Executive Committee to consider the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the proposed Voluntary Nursing College Scheme. 431, Oxford Street, London, W. 4.30 p.m.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)