

PRESENTATION TO THE REV. E. F. RUSSELL.

CHAPLAIN-GENERAL OF THE GUILD OF ST. BARNABAS FOR NURSES.

To come out of the heavy, oppressive atmosphere of a extremely awful war for a time, with its concomitants of horror and hate, into the clear, pure atmosphere of its antitheses—peace and love—is a soul tonic of a most alleviative nature. The key-note of the great gathering at Holborn Hall on Thursday, May 3rd was emblazoned on a scroll framed in flowers, over the platform, and was the inspiration of the hour:—“*Love is the sole interpreter of every lovely thing. This is the burden of his song, well may the poet sing.*” Father Russell—to use his familiar title—has ministered in the parish and church of St. Alban’s, Holborn, for 50 consecutive years. It was to celebrate this rather remarkable occasion and to seal that period of time (as he has now officially resigned) that the presentation was made in the presence of a large number of his many friends. The platform was embowered in flowers, and as a beautiful little red “rambler” was conspicuously abundant, we may suppose it was his favourite flower. Besides Lord Halifax, who presided, those present on the platform were:—The Bishop of London, the Bishop of Stepney, the Archdeacon of London, the Rev. Fr. Hogg, whose services at St. Alban’s have been but seven years less, and to whom Father Russell referred as his “dear friend and colleague,” Canon Newbolt, and others. Not least (in number) evidently, among those who had assembled to do him honour, were the nurses of the Guild of St. Barnabas, of whom there are over 5,000. For as many years as the Guild has existed, namely, 40, he has been their Chaplain-General. No doubt, of the nurses—in their various uniforms—and those in mufti, who were dotted about the hall—some had come from a distance, for by none is Father Russell more honoured probably than by the members of the Guild.

The tone and spirit of the speeches of all those who had come to give honour to whom honour was due, were embodied in the address, which was formally read, and then presented to him in a beautiful illuminated form by the Bishop of London, from which we quote the following words: “It is just when we want them that words fail us, and they could not betray us more signally than when we try to say what you have meant to us during the fifty years of your service at St. Alban’s. How can any words of ours tell what it has been to feel, amid the turmoil of a roaring city, or the stress and storm of ecclesiastic strife, the abiding influence in our midst of a presence so generous and tender, so firm and reassuring, unbroken in its loyalty to the sacramental life, undisturbed in its beauty, unruffled in its holiness, constant in its delicate ministry of grace, unflinching in its store of help, unwavering in the devotion and affection with which it spent itself in the service of others.”

A purse of money was also presented.

Probably the most difficult thing that Father Russell has ever done was to reply in a “summing up” speech, to those addressed to him in all sincerity.

It was most fitting, and we were glad to see the “Guild Mother” present, as we like to call her, following again our American cousins and fellow nurses, who thus suitably name the Superior of their Guild of St. Barnabas. There would have been something wrong with the meeting if Mrs. Gardner had *not* been there! It was at once a pleasure and a privilege to have attended so inspiring a meeting. B. K.

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

SONIA.*

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS.

This remarkable book stands pre-eminent in the fiction of to-day, and we envy those readers for whom yet it is a treat in store. We prophesy that they will not be content till they have turned its pages a second and even a third time. There is so much that is remarkable, so many attractive persons, so many and varied aspects of life, that it is extremely difficult in a short notice to select any passages that will convey anything like an adequate conception of the book as a whole.

Mr. McKenna possesses a rare skill in character portrayal, and each is instinctive with conviction, while anything like exaggeration or burlesque is absent.

It is written in the first person, one George Oakleigh, and he himself stands out as a very desirable person, though the ego is very skilfully kept in subjection. He says:—

“For thirty years I have lived among what the world has loosely agreed to call the ‘Governing Classes.’ This book may have something of historical value in portraying a group of men and women who were at the same time personal friends, and representative of those Governing Classes in politics, journalism, commerce and society.”

The story goes some way back to emphasise the gradual development of various lives illustrating these various different sections of society, to the time when George Oakleigh, the writer, was a monitor in a public school which passes under the name of Melton.

Perhaps this is the most attractive period in the story, though we are by no means sure on this point.

Sonia is the sister of one of the Meltonian elect, and her father is a wealthy middle class man who made his fortune in the brewery business. Lady Dainton represents the society “Climber.”

In the opening chapters Sonia is presented as a charming, spoilt and only daughter of eleven, “with velvety brown eyes, white skin, and dark

* By Stephen McKenna. London: Methuen & Co. 6s. net.

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