

BOOTS CASH CHEMISTS (EASTERN) LTD.

The Ordinary General Meeting of Boots Cash Chemists (Eastern), Ltd., was held last Monday at the Midland Grand Hotel, St. Pancras, Sir Jesse Boot, Bt., J.P. (Chairman and Managing Director), presiding.

The chairman congratulated the shareholders on the result of the year's trading. He said the business was being steadily strengthened, and that some thousands of pounds had been added to the reserve and contingency funds, and the amount carried forward had been increased from £17,372 to £19,279. The rest of the report showed a splendid financial and co-operative success. Amidst cheers, Lady Boot was elected to the vacancy on the board of directors, many well-deserved compliments on the unofficial help she had given in building up the business being received with acclamation; and it was advanced that, as the staff of the company was more and more recruited from women, there should be a woman member of the board. Sound reasoning, sure to be rewarded with success!

BOOK OF THE WEEK.**"THE LOITERING HIGHWAY."***

The title is charmingly descriptive of the River Thames. The story is set in the environment of Blackfriars, and the hero is one Dickie, a splendid young bargee, who is also an embryo artist, who paints, in due course, a wonderful picture that he names "The Loitering Highway." His pretty childish sweetheart, Valeria Vesper, lives with her grandmother at Bankside, where she watches the Webster's barge come backwards and forwards, and not infrequently takes a trip in her under Dickie's charge.

There is a mystery about Valeria's birth. She is, in fact, the illegitimate daughter of "Aunt" Susan, now married to a wealthy retired tradesman. Valeria is by no means a facile character, and though, in her youthful ignorance, she becomes betrothed to Dickie, her intense yearning for experiences leads her into other paths.

Aunt Susan had seen to it that Valeria went to a good school, where she became acquainted with Lord Stern's niece, and the acquaintance ripened into close friendship.

Lord Stern fell in love with fascinating Valeria, and here was, of course, an experience after her own heart. It was also owing to Lord Stern that Dickie went to study art in Paris. A delightful passage is that describing Lord Stern's pilgrimage to the neighbourhood of Valeria's home.

"The road was very dusty and dark. Did Valeria, in her smart shoes and silk stockings, have to go down these steps every time she went home? He asked the question as he passed under an echoing brick archway below, and then turning

the corner he forgot everything in the picture that broke on his view.

Was it possible that this lay at the back of those gaunt, sordid thoroughfares? This vision of a silver height crowned by the majestic dome of St. Paul's above the dark lines of wharves opposite. Of course Valeria would live here. What better background could exist for his "lady of the twilight?"

One barge was called *Star of Eve*, another entitled *Lights o' London*. Who named these lumbering crafts? Was there poetry among the bargees? So he asked himself. Then wondering whether he were dreaming, because there, coming towards him in the moonlight, was Valeria Vesper herself."

Valeria's love affair with Lord Stern had a tragic ending, and though the marriage service began, it truly ended with "Amazement." She explained to her friend, Rosalind, long before that she never wanted to catch her shadows. "It's always the thing I haven't got that I want most."

Poor Lord Stern was sacrificed to this disquieting characteristic; but perhaps, at that time, he was more relieved than anything.

Valeria's love of sensation led her in many strange ways. She was a model to the artist, Madame St. Justin. To justify herself for this course she said, "I'm sick of knowing only one corner of life. I don't believe I was meant to stick in a rut. When you're not content, it's a sign you were meant to get out of it."

Dickie not only loses his sweetheart, but his famous picture is destroyed by fire.

Rosalind consoles him for Valeria's faithlessness, and Valeria herself becomes a famous actress, which afforded her all the excitement she craved. But we are left in doubt as to whether she intends to make Lord Stern happy after all.

H. H.

Most happy year! And out of town
The hay was prosperous and the wheat;
The silken harvest climbed the down;
Moon after moon was heavenly sweet,
Stroking the bread within the sheaves,
Looking 'twixt apples and their leaves.

And while this rose made round her cup,
The armies died convulsed. And when
This chaste young silver sun went up
Softly, a thousand shattered men,
One wet corruption heaped the plair,
After a league-long throbbing pain.

From "Summer in England," 1914,
By Alice Meynell.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

"I do not know how long this war will last, but I do know that the quickest way out is straight through. Any division or dissension now will simply prolong the war, and make it more costly in lives and treasure."—*William Jennings Bryan*.

* By Sophie Coie. Mills & Boon.

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