

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

## "THE DEEP HEART."\*

Justin Mellor's uncle had just died leaving him a substantial fortune, happily free from all tiresome conditions. If they had existed Justin would have found some means of outflanking them. He had a strategic mind.

"Thank goodness I'm not too late, the Villa Annunziata is still in the market. What luck! The owner's been dead for at least eighteen months, and the agent says the daughter can't afford to live in it."

He made this speech to his friend Peter Clutton the author.

"Villa Annunziata?" he enquired.

That villa I saw five years ago near Naples. I made up my mind to buy it as soon as I could.

The villa in question now belonged to pretty orphaned Averil Waring, who since her father's death could no longer afford to keep it up. It was a charming spot, and the girl's heart was wrung at the thought of its passing into the hands of strangers.

Justin came upon her for the first time in the orange grove. One of the best things in the book are the charming descriptions. As he came further into that scented gloom, lit by those golden balls of fruit as by countless lamps, he came face to face with the girl whose white figure seemed to detach itself with a certain sharp precision from that dusky background. Nothing could have been more artistically perfect than this charming and graceful figure in its wonderful setting.

Averil listened inattentively to his conversation. She already disliked his red hair and the way he wore it brushed off his forehead. She disliked too his piercing and astute blue eyes. And this was a dislike that remained. Indeed, Justin was a very disagreeable character, but his reformation was ultimately brought about by the influence of a dying priest, with whom he became acquainted. Princess Nadine, an English woman by birth and separated from her Russian husband, lived at Villa Magnolia hard by Averil's old home. Her villa was said to be a palatial abode, for she was a rich woman and spent large sums upon it. She took pity upon Averil's solitary condition and was also attracted by the girl's charm.

Averil was not sure that in speaking to her she was not committing an act that was definitely disloyal to her dead mother, who had always refused to know the Princess. This was quite unjust, for the Princess was a very charming woman, and any scandal connected with her name was from no fault of her own. Before long she had received Averil into her house and heart as her adopted daughter.

Then perhaps propinquity might have done its work and Averil would have returned to her old home as Justin's wife, had not he invited his

friend Peter Clutton to spend his holiday at the villa.

Curiously, it was not until Peter's advent that Justin discovered the state of his own feelings for Averil.

At that moment Peter and Averil advanced towards him. In the brilliant moonlight he could see that the girl's face was very pale, but it had a suggestive beauty that struck him for the first time. Her fair golden hair looked almost frosty in its pallor. And again she made him think of white beautiful things, of tall Madonna lilies with their golden hearts, of white snows lying on hills that drooped to the sea of the pearl radiance of an Italian dawn . . . most of all, perhaps, of some white moth floating past in the shadowy summer dusk. Why had he never realised how unutterably lovely she was? Why had he looked at her only to criticise, to tell himself that she was lacking in a certain *chic* distinction that he admired in women?

As she came nearer she said in a voice that imperfectly concealed her excitement, "Mr. Clutton has been telling me about his new book. I am longing to read it."

Justin resorts to very unscrupulous conduct in order to separate Peter and Averil. Having accomplished his design he sets himself to win her. Though he succeeds in bringing about the betrothal he is never able to overcome Averil's aversion to himself.

The death of the princess leaves Averil a rich woman, and the first use she makes of her freedom is to hide away from her fiancé in England. Here Peter again crosses her path, but the misunderstandings are not cleared up till Justin's conscience led him to confess to Peter the wrong he had done him.

Peter sought and found her in her beautiful home in the Villa Magnolia. "He came upon her where he had always felt certain she would be, sitting by the fountain in the ilex grove.

"I have always loved you," she said gravely. "Always, even from those first days. But they told me it was a girl's foolish dream."

H. H.

## VERSE.

Look round the habitable world; how few  
Know their own good, or, knowing it, pursue.  
—Dryden.

## COMING EVENTS.

July 26th.—Central Midwives Board. Penal Cases, 11 a.m. Monthly meeting, 3.30 p.m. Queen Anne's Gate Buildings, Dartmouth Street, S.W.

## WORD FOR THE WEEK.

Any life that is worth living for must be a struggle, a swimming, not with, but against the stream.—Dean Stanley.

\* By Isabel C. Clarke. Hutchinson & Co., London.

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