

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

## "THE BLACK SPY."\*

In the first instance this purports to be the narrative of Lieutenant von Belke, of the German Navy, on submarine duty.

"Here was I, treading British turf underfoot, cut off from any hope of escape for three full days at least. And it was not ordinary British turf, either. I was on the holy of holies, actually landed on those sacred, jealously guarded islands where the Grand Fleet had its lair. It was my own idea to take a motor-bicycle. A motor cyclist is not an uncommon sight even in these out-of-the-way islands, and they would scarcely expect a visitor of my sort to come ashore equipped with such an article. Also, I could wear my naval uniform underneath my cyclist's costume and so, if I were caught, might make a strong plea to escape the fate of a spy; in fact, I told myself I was not a spy simply a venturesome scout.

"My first task was to cover the better part of twenty miles before daybreak and join forces with 'him' in the very innermost shrine of this sanctuary."

How Lieutenant von Belke is caught in his own trap forms very exciting and amusing reading.

The chapter by the Editor introduces the reader to the Rev. Alexander Burnett, "who had permitted himself to be photographed in the centre of a small group of lads from his parish who had heard their country's call and were home in their khaki for their last leave-taking. The appearance of this group first as an illustration in a local paper and then in one that enjoyed a very wide circulation embarrassed him not a little." The notoriety he thus enjoyed, or rather enjoyed not at all, was destined to have great significance in the events that follow. He had received several copies of the paper from well-meaning friends, and when, a few days later, another newspaper arrived by post he sighed as he opened it. But this particular newspaper had no illustrations, but a certain paragraph was marked with a blue pencil. It indicated that a certain minister in a certain northern group of islands had vacated his parish and there was now a vacancy there. Mr. Burnett turned the prospect of a change over in his mind, and it would probably have ended there but for the unusual occurrence of his meeting a pleasant stranger on the following Sunday as he was on the way back to his manse.

The stranger had much appreciated the minister's discourse, and in the pleasant chat which ensued he burst into a eulogy of the very spot where the vacant living was located.

To make a long story short, Mr. Burnett set out to preach, as is customary in those parts, a trial sermon, but he never reached the ideal little

\* By J. Storer Coulston. Blackwood & Son, Edinburgh and London.

parish for which, though situate in a remote spot, it had been necessary to obtain a passport to enter.

But a minister *purporting* to be Mr. Burnett arrived there in due course, and Lieutenant von Belke, taking up the narrative, describes how he joins him by means of his motor-cycle. In dead of night he arrives at the manse on the island where the British authorities made it very difficult for anyone to obtain access.

Of course, Lieutenant Belke was in hiding during his stay, which should have lasted three days only.

But the strange minister, hitherto known to the lieutenant by name only, and that name, curiously, was Herr Tiel, was later joined by a very charming sister, and the susceptible lieutenant was not at all insensible to her charms.

The plot is too complicated to do more than merely indicate its features.

When Ashington, of His Majesty's Navy, forms one of the group, and gives Belke the information he has risked his life to obtain, namely, the movements of the Fleet, his mission may be said to have been accomplished and nothing remained for him but to rejoin his submarine and arrange for the submarine flotilla's attack; but charming Eileen has spun her toils around him, and after having imparted the coveted information to his commander he persuades him that he can do his country further service by returning to the manse.

Never was a more cunningly devised plan of "biter bit." Herr Tiel, alias Rev. Burnett, proved to be neither one nor the other. Charming Eileen had been persuaded to act as decoy. Ashington of His Majesty's Navy was no traitor; and the hapless lieutenant had placed his submarine flotilla at the mercy of his enemies.

How all this came about forms the basis of a most fascinating story of German espionage, and we can assure our readers that having once taken up the volume they will be unable to lay it down until it is finished.

H. H.

## COMING EVENTS.

*March 21st.*—Central Midwives Board. Monthly Meeting. Queen Anne's Gate Buildings, Dartmouth Street, Westminster, S.W. 11 a.m.

*March 22nd.*—Society for State Registration of Nurses. Meeting Executive Committee, 431, Oxford Street, London, W. 4 p.m.

*April 4th.*—Royal British Nurses' Association Lecture. "Some Points in Personal Hygiene." By Leonard Williams, Esq., M.D. Chair: Percival White, Esq., M.D. Rooms of the Medical Society of London, 11, Chandos Street, W. 2.45 p.m.

*April 10th.*—Memorial Service in St. Paul's Cathedral, for Nurses who have fallen in the war. Queen Alexandra has expressed her intention of attending. 2.30 p.m.

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