

"War! What has that got to do with us?" exclaimed Mireille in an injured tone. "Just as I had made up my mind that to-morrow I would swim with both feet off the ground."

The weary party arrived after many discomforts safely at Bomal, where Chérie's brother and Mireille's father Claude Brandés, practised as a doctor. On the morning after their arrival he was called up on military service. On the night of August 4th sweet Chérie celebrated her eighteenth birthday party.

Little Mireille's diary tells us—

"We nearly had no party at all, Maman and Chérie being worried about the Germans, but I cried, and they hate to see me cry. . . . Now I am going to dress. I shall wear pink, and Chérie will be all in white, like a bride. She will have her hair done up for the first time—done all in curls and whirligigs. Maman has promised to make herself pretty too. She has promised not to think of war nor of the Germans till to-morrow, because, as Chérie says, one is only eighteen once in a life."

The picture of these innocent children enjoying their birthday party with their awful doom breaking over their heads is poignantly described.

Florian Audet, kept his promise to be at his little friend Chérie's party.

"Sur le pont
D'Avignon,
On y danse,
On y danse."

The laughing treble voices could be heard through the windows open to the mild evening and a young soldier galloping through the quiet village heard the song before he pulled up at Dr. Brandés' door. It was Florian Audet keeping his promise to Chérie to be present at her party.

"On y danse,
On y danse,"

sang the girlish voices upstairs.

Florian turned away with a groan.

"What shall I do?" he muttered.

He caught his breath when he saw the vision of beauty in the silken drapery. Was this his little friend, Chérie?

A shudder passed over the man as he looked at her—a shudder of prescient horror. Were not blood-drunken hordes tearing their way towards this virginal flower? Must he leave her to the mercy of their foul and furious lust?

Chérie, whom in that moment he discovered he loved, and yet whose innocence withheld him from taking a last lover's kiss.

"It seemed to him that her virginal youth was round her like an armour of snow."

Thus he left her, fragile and sweet; white as a lily in a moonlit garden.

He left her, and rode away into the night.

And that night the Huns came.

Louise, Claude's beautiful wife, and Chérie were their unhappy victims.

The problems of the maternity of these two form the subject and a very painful subject, of the latter part of the book.

Louise unhesitatingly takes steps to rid herself of that which could only be abhorrent to her, but Chérie finds consolation in her love for her child.

What if everyone hated him? She loved him. She loved him with the love of all mothers, and with the greater love of her sorrow, despair, and shame.

The problem thus depicted cannot fail to raise many questionings in the minds of those that read the book. Could mother love indeed outweigh the horror of the manner of her child's birth.

The return of Florian is the climax to the pathos and tragedy of this story.

"Florian rose to his feet and looked down at the bowed figure. She asks him, 'Should I strangle the little tender throat with my hands, or stifle the soft breath of his mouth?'"

Truly this is a terrible story, and it should rouse and nerve the women of England to spare no means whereby they may help to avenge their hapless sisters who have been the helpless victims of German brutishness.

H. H.

A NEW DEFENCE OF THE REALM REGULATION.

Under a new Defence of the Realm Regulation (40 C) stringent regulations are enforced, under penalties, with the object of protecting His Majesty's forces from the danger of venereal disease, and any woman who, suffering from venereal disease in a communicable form, acts in contravention of these regulations will be guilty of a summary offence.

We have always held that the communication of venereal disease should be a punishable offence, and for both sexes.

VERSES.

Use me, England, in thine hour of need,
Let thy ruling, rule me now indeed;
Give then, England, if my life thou need,
Gift yet fairer, Death, thy life to feed.

One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

Rest after toils, port after stormy seas,
Ease after war, Death after life—
These things do greatly please.

COMING EVENTS.

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 6th.—Matrons Council of Great Britain and Ireland. Quarterly Meeting. By invitation of the President, at Charing Cross Hospital, W.C. 3.30 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.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)