

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

## "THE GREAT INTERRUPTION."\*

This collection of short stories deals with the war from a military and civilian point of view. The series starts with "The Great Interruption," a story of the unspeakable tragedy in a young girl's life, which followed in the wake of the Huns.

The people of Saint Chose were very proud—taking pride in their country because it was France, pride in their village because no German had ever set foot in it. "Not one throughout the war. A piece of rare good fortune. Not a single German has entered our village. Monsieur can ask the curé, or the mayor. They will tell monsieur the same thing."

The Nodiers and their house were typical of the rest of the village. They had pushed themselves out of the parlours and dining room on the ground floor; they had given up the whole of the first floor to their military guests. A paper on the staircase door that led to the upper portion of the house gently announced that a small portion of the house was reserved for the family. Achille was in the Artillery, now down in Champagne. "Yes, he is a good boy," said his father, courteously accepting any compliment that one offers.

The girl that their beloved son was going to marry had been taken captive by the enemy in 1914.

At the outbreak of hostilities Mademoiselle Yvonne had set herself to do nursing in an amateur way.

The Germans had taken Yvonne and many others for hostages. The story does not hesitate to tell the insults she suffered at their hands, this poor Yvonne, who, to cover up her shame, told how it was a French officer who was the father of her unborn child.

Old Nodier killed the child when it arrived, and buried it in the garden.

"A German in our village! What else should I do?"

"Did the mother consent?"

"Oh, no! A mother is always a mother."

And because of what she has suffered said Nodier, my son shall marry her and while we live we will try to make her forget.

A story of grim tragedy this, but there are others of a lighter vein.

"Rather late" is an episode of the air raids. Mr. Ringe, a munition worker, had "a heavy sense" that Fate was thwarting him in an inexplicable but miserably complete style.

"The money—the good money—that is now made by all, not only the skilled mechanic like meself, but by the unskilled 'and, and any hobbled'e'oy youth or 'ussy of a gel."

\* By W. B. Maxwell. Hutchinson & Co., London.

He thought of war workers no better than himself who had risen to affluence. Why had he not risen?

"Becos I 'ave a millstone 'anging round me neck."

"Breakfast ready?"

"Not quite," said Mrs. Ringe.

Not quite. No, that summed it up.

In short, Mrs. Ringe and the young Ringes were the millstone. And on the day in question, notwithstanding that it was his birthday, and that he had had a rasher for his breakfast as a surprise, he was making up his mind to disappear in company with a certain sprightly Mrs. Yates he had met casually that day.

The unmistakable sound of gunfire interrupted their arrangements.

"'N air raid!" said Mr. Ringe, springing up from the table. "Those cursed 'Uns have come back again."

His wife and children ceased to be "millstones" in the awful moment that he found his home demolished.

He found them, however, safe in a shelter. "He was kissing his wife's wet face, he was hugging his grubby children.

'What 'ave they got in their 'ands? Biscuits?'

'No, it's your birthday presents what they bought for you.'

"Joan of Arc" is another good story of a maid-servant who, at the beginning of the war, felt the call of her country after seeing the film "Joan of Arc," in company with a young soldier whom she met outside the theatre.

"I passed the remark whether you were going in to see the show?"

"I wasn't intending," Adelaide gasped.

"No more was I," said the soldier; "that is not alone. But I don't mind, if you don't. Shall us?"

Adelaide subsequently tried to be a W.A.A.C., a W.R.E.N., a V.A.D. She tried to be all the letters of the alphabet, and she eventually returned to service and "carried on," by doing the work of three servants in the domestic crisis. When Dick returned he found a very capable girl awaiting him.

They went to the cinema theatre—the one where they had first met—and sat with clasped hands, except when the lights went up. Though Adelaide felt that she had not attained to her ideals, she was quite happy.

H. H.

## COMING EVENT.

April 25th.—Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland: Quarterly Meeting, The President, Miss M. Heather-Bigg, R.R.C., presiding. 431, Oxford Street, London, W. 1. 3.30 p.m.

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