

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

## "THE ROUGH ROAD."\*

"This is the story of Doggie Trevor. It tells of his doings and of a girl in England and a girl in France. Chiefly it is concerned with the influences that enabled him to win through the war. He did not win the Victoria Cross. He got no cross, no distinction whatever. He did not even attain to the sorrowful glory of a little white cross over his grave on the Western Front. Doggie was no hero of romance, ancient or modern. But he went through with it, and is alive to tell the tale.

"He was the almost freak offspring of elderly parents, and he had the rough world against him from his birth. His mother was old enough to be his grandmother, and his father had died before he had cut a tooth. She wrapped Doggie—his real name was James Marmaduke—in cotton wool, and kept him so until he was almost a grown man. Doggie never had a chance. She brought him up until he was twenty-one like a toy pom, and then she died. Doggie, being comfortably off (he was possessed of an income of three thousand a year), kept on bringing himself up like a toy pom. When he was five and twenty he found himself at the edge of the world staring in timorous starkness down into the abyss of the Great War. Something kicked him over the brink and sent him into the thick of it. And through its terrific experience Doggie Trevor found his soul."

In the able hands of Mr. Locke the making of Doggie Trevor's soul fills a really entrancing volume which it is a real treat to read.

As we have intimated, Doggie Trevor was a very eligible *parti* from a financial point of view, and the Dean of the Cathedral, a charming and courteous man, made no objection when Doggie became a suitor for the hand of his lively and pretty daughter Peggy. She had grown up in his near vicinity, and had become accustomed to his unusualness, and well, of course, a substantial income and the prospect of becoming mistress of Denby Hall was not to be declined lightly.

Doggie's existence was the essence of diletante comfort and unmasculine environment. He collected china dogs, and designed wall papers. His ties and socks were in perfect harmony with his surroundings.

When war was declared it did not for one moment occur to Doggie that it had any immediate relation to himself.

He had always been taught to regard himself in frail health; he would tap his chest and explain that he had never been able to do things like other fellows. But the girls of Durdleberry sent him a white feather, and Doggie became aware that he would have to join up. To an essential gentleman like Doggie a matter of honour was a matter of life.

And so, dressed in his pink pyjamas and his

violet dressing gown amid the peacock blue and ivory hangings of his boudoir room, and stared at by the countless unsympathetic eyes of his little china dogs, Doggie Trevor passed through his first Gethsemane.

Peggy, of course, was delighted, and accompanied him on the walks prescribed for his physical development. When he ached with fatigue, she pressed along fresh as Atalanta at the beginning of her race.

"We've had a topping walk, old dear; isn't it good to feel oneself alive?" Of course the Dean saw to it that his future son-in-law got a commission in a good regiment.

Doggie tried hard. He tried very hard. And then came the inevitable end. He wrote to Peggy that he had been thrown out from sheer incompetence, and offered to release her from her engagement to a disgraced man. To do Peggy justice, she refused.

And then, in his humiliation, he determined to make good, and as Private J. M. Trevor he made good to the uttermost.

Doggie's gradual development as a private and as a man are described with the rare sympathy and understanding that one would expect from the pen of Mr. Locke, and life in the trench village is charmingly described.

But from the moment that he saw pretty pathetic Jeanne at his billet, Peggy's image began to fade. But that is by the way, and Peggy, in the meantime, was beginning to realise that sturdy Oliver was more suited to her temperament, so that everything came right in the end.

It was altogether an amazing Doggie who rose from the ashes of his former self, and his visit to the Deanery as a private is one of the many delightful and amusing passages in this altogether delightful book.

His valet has laid out for his use all the former luxuries of his toilet. "My hat!" said Doggie, scratching his cropped head. "What the devil's all this?"

Pedle, grey head bent uncomprehending, regarded him blankly.

"All what, sir?"

"I only want to wash my hands," said Doggie. "It was, perhaps, this visit and all that the rank of a private meant that caused the weakening in Peggy's allegiance.

It will be a real privation if our readers are unable to procure and enjoy this delightful book.

H. H.

## COMING EVENTS.

February 1st.—Irish Nurses' Association. Meeting Executive Committee, 34, St. Stephen's Green. 8 p.m.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

February 4th.—Examinations, London, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds and Liverpool. The Oral Examination follows in a few days' time.

\* W. J. Locke, Bodley Head. Mr. John Lane.

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