

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"JAVA HEAD."*

This last book of the author of "The Three Black Pennys," which we noticed a short time ago, is the chronicle of a few weeks in the lives of the family of a wealthy ship-owner in a Boston port. Jeremy Ammidon, the senior partner, could never forget he had himself spent many years at sea trading, and it was a constant annoyance to his son William that he was constantly disparaging the new shipping methods as contrasted with those of his day. Laurel, the old man's granddaughter, was one of William's four young daughters, and was the favourite with her grandfather on account of her interest in things nautical. Laurel on the day following her eleventh birthday decided to abandon among other things belonging to her childish ways, the length of pantalets which hung below her dress. "Her years were affronted by them. Such a show of ruffles might do for a very small girl, but not for one of eleven; and she caught them up until only the merest frilled edge was visible. Then she made a bouyant descent and joined her grandfather."

"Bless me" he said turning upon her his steady blue gaze "what have we got here, all dressed up to go ashore?" She sharply elevated her shoulder and retorted "Well, I'm eleven."

His look which had seemed quite fierce grew kindly again.

"Eleven!" he said with satisfactory amazement "that will need some cumshaws and kisses. The first she knew was a word of pleasant imports brought from the East, and meant gifts; and realising that the second was unavoidably connected with it she philosophically held up her face. Lifting her over his expanse of stomach he kissed her loudly."

In the commencement of the book the Ammidon family was in anxiety about the safety of Gerrit Ammidon, master of the ship "Nautilus," long overdue from China, and the relief was great when the news came that the "Nautilus" was safe and almost in harbour. Gerrit was a favourite with all, especially with his handsome sister-in-law.

It seemed to her that Gerrit descending a short stage from the deck, looked markedly older than when he had sailed. They were somewhat mystified by his request that they would return and send back the barouche for him. His unusual demand puzzled Rhoda, while she was changing into gala attire. But the mystery was solved when the barouche drew up before the hall door. "She had a glimpse of a figure at Gerrit's side in extravagantly brilliant satins. There was a sibilant whisper of rich material in the hall, and the master entered the library with a pale set face."

* Joseph Hergesheimer. London: William Heinemann.

"Father" he said "Rhoda and William allow me—my wife Taou Yuen."

Rhoda Ammidon gave an uncontrollable gasp as the Chinese woman sank in a fluttering prostration of colour at Jeremy's feet. Rhoda who was a most charming woman uttered the only welcome. She was enraged at the silent stupidity of the three men, and flashed a silent command at her husband. Never in her life had Rhoda seen such lovely clothes. A long gown with wide sleeves of blue-black satin embroidered in peach coloured flower petals and innumerable minute sapphire and orange butterflies, a short jacket of sage green caught with looped jade buttons and threaded with silver, and indigo high-soled slippers crusted and tasselled with pearls.

"Taou Yuen" said Gerrit with his challenging bright gaze, "that means a Peach Garden. My wife is a Manchu" he asserted in more biting tones, "a Manchu and the daughter of a nobleman."

It was a difficult situation to be sprung upon a family of well-known shipping renown.

It was certainly a moment in their lives when Gerrit announced his intention of bringing his wife with the rest of the family to church, where arrayed in her most gorgeous clothes she politely chewed betel nut.

Though Gerrit had married his Manchu wife from motives of affection the situation was bound to end in disaster, but Taou Yuen's tragic death solved the problem, before he had fully time to realise the consequences of his rash act.

The attraction of the story lies in picturesque situations, and the strong drawing of the many and varied personalities, rather than in the plot which is not satisfying.

H. H.

AU BORD DE LA MER.

(Tenby, S. Wales).

The sea gleams like a jewelled tray
Where, in their matchless beauty, lie
The sapphire ribbons of the sky
Set cunningly to flout the day.

And now the wise, untrammelled sun
Flings round a silver shaded veil
That masks the colours, thin and frail,
Till sea and heaven seem as one.

And lazily the long day through,
The pale craft flit before my eyes,
Like silk embroidered butterflies,
Upon a satin screen of blue.

PERCY HASELDEN.

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

Men know not how great a revenue frugality is.
CICERO.

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