

"THE END OF THE ROAD."

By the courteous invitation of the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases (London and Home Counties Branch), we attended a private exhibition of an Educational Cinematograph Production bearing the above title. This powerful film is authorised by the Council, and produced with the approval of the Ministry of Health at the Alhambra Theatre. It is scarcely necessary to state that the splendid endeavours of the N.C.C.V.D. are bearing abundant fruit. Only a few years ago the production of a play handling social and sex questions with such frankness would not have been possible on our English stage. To-day a mixed audience watches it with the reverent silence of a Church congregation, a proof that the senseless prudery which has been so largely responsible in the past for an enormous amount of preventable disease, misery and degradation is breaking down, and giving place to a more sane, enlightened, and wholesome attitude of mind.

The problems dealt with have become more acute during and since the war, and this film will, we hope, create a big demand for its exhibition among all classes of enlightened and would-be enlightened men and women.

Special emphasis is, of course, given to the terrible and vital results of sexual misconduct. The consequences are not minimised; at the same time undue stress is avoided. There are many points of real beauty and pathos, and although the primary purpose is educational, the story contains a definite trend towards moral inspiration produced by the example of a high standard of living contrasted with the opposite form.

THE STORY ITSELF.

There are two main characters—Mary Lee and Vera Lynch. In the prologue they are both shown as children; the former sees a bird's nest full of eggs, and wants to know more about the mystery; this gives her sensible mother the opportunity of telling her the story of her own entrance into the world; Vera's mother is a woman of a different type, and meets her child's natural enquiries by an angry reproof of "naughtiness." As the children grow up, the results of their bringing up bear fruit. Mary has learnt the beauty of pure love and the sacredness of marriage. Vera has learnt nothing good from her ambitious and worldly mother, and yields to temptations as they present themselves, and finally becomes the mistress of an unscrupulous man who, after ruining her and infecting her with syphilis, deserts her. When she refuses treatment the doctor takes her to a venereal diseases hospital, and shows her some of the worst victims of the disease. Horrified, she submits to treatment, and is cured. Mary becomes a trained nurse. The boy who has grown up with her "sows his wild oats"; she refuses his offer of marriage; thereupon he invites her to become his mistress. The

end of the road with her is happy marriage with a good man. Various supplementary incidents are woven into the main theme, drawn from actual life to give special point and emphasis. One of the shifting scenes is the tragic case of Mrs. Russell Elbridge, whose husband has infected her with gonorrhoea, and given blindness to their only child, while he continues on his criminal course of ruining other women, after separating from his wife. The sordid story of the suicide of a beautiful girl whom he has betrayed is afterwards published in the newspapers.

Mrs. Elbridge is obliged to undergo an operation as the result of the disease with which he has infected her. The theatre scene is admirably reconstructed, and details are not lacking, even the first incision of the knife is shown.

It is impossible to over emphasise the educational and moral value of this powerful film, containing as it does an inspiration toward a more beautiful philosophy of life, by a higher moral standard for both sexes equally.

We strongly recommend our readers to see it if they get the chance. It is not a cheerful play; there is no laughter, no applause. It is full of painful realism, but it inspires abundant hopefulness for a new order of things on the moral side, and, consequently, on the health and happiness side.

B. K.

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"POOR RELATIONS."*

Mr. John Touchwood had more than his fair share of them; that is to say, of poor relations. He himself was a successful and romantic playwright and he first comes before our notice fresh from a triumphant production in New York. On board the big liner he became acquainted with Miss Doris Hamilton, who made an instant and favourable impression on him. Forty-two, and passing rich, John Touchwood was still a bachelor, possibly his numerous poor relations had something to do with his single state.

"If John's plays were full of fierce hues, his private life had been of a mild, uniform pink, a pinkishness that recalled the chaste hospitality of the best spare room."

He had gathered from a passing remark of Miss Hamilton about poor relations, that she herself was not blest with a superfluity of this world's goods, and before the end of the voyage the idea formulated in his mind that she would make an excellent confidential secretary—"a nice, practical young woman."

John was possessed of a very comfortable flat in town, where his temporal needs were attended to by his housekeeper, Mrs. Worfolk, assisted by two maids.

His country place, Ambles, was presided over by his widowed sister, Mrs. Curtis, and her smug,

* By Compton Mackenzie. Martin Secker, London.

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