

time to time held him in a grip of horror. Then there were curious unaccountable happenings—the chaplet found at the door of Gertruda's cell; the white violets chilled with dew on his window sill. The coming of the Duke incognito, to stay at Eberbach added to, rather than detracted from, the supernatural atmosphere, for it soon became evident that he too was drawn under the spell of the girl Gertruda.

Whereas in many of her books Miss Bowen delights to dwell on richness of apparel and to describe sumptuous environment, in this story she relies chiefly on descriptions of natural beauty, and her vivid writing of the harvest of the vintage and her delicate treatment of the details of the perfumery industry are some of the most attractive passages in this alluring book.

A characteristic passage is written of Lally finding the girl Gertruda in the forest after her temporary escape from the prison.

"She was to his imagination so essentially a part of the forest that he saw her in every quivering shade to which the shape of leaf or bough gave the semblance of a human form. Then, as he came out on a little open glade he saw her in flesh and blood before him. Here by the pool lay the girl, her body pressing down the delicate ferns. She no longer wore the prison clothes, but a strange, straight shift of purple, sleeveless, low on the bosom, and open at the sides to the knee. This was girdled by a wreath of milky white berries, the name of which was unknown to Lally."

It was at the harvesting of the vintage that the meaning of this book is revealed. For strange peasants came to gather in the fruits of the vine, and there was a mystery about them, something so intangible that Lally was filled with a nameless fear. At the close of the harvest the strange peasants lingered, and the Duke, curiously altered now, indifferent to Pauline, spoke of accompanying them when they left. Lally asks him wildly:—"Will you wait to be lured on to those places that are neither heaven, nor hell, nor earth?"

The Duke did not reply: it seemed as if he had not heard Lally's words.

Lally felt his body relax, and like a man swooning under a drug, who will keep his senses for a while by fixing them on some tangible object.

He saw one of these strange visitants carrying away a dead vine.

"It was the plant the monks used for sacramental wine," said one, and passed on with his burden.

In the words of the Duke, the gods who dwelt in the woods always came for the harvest, and when they went they took someone with them.

The Duke vanished when they left.

Lally, in his unexpressed dread, called for Luy. There was no answer, nor had he really expected one. He visited the cell of the recaptured Gertruda—it was empty. It seemed to him that a white bird fluttered somewhere out of the reach of the lantern beams, but he was not sure. Lally

took the hilt of his sword in his hand—it was the only Cross he had.

To attempt to elucidate for our readers the meaning of this most fascinating story, would be an impossible and thankless task. Its charm lies in its elusive mystery, and Miss Bowen herself has not attempted to define its purpose. Its charm and power, in our opinion, surpasses any of her previous works. One more passage we quote that will perhaps afford the key to our readers.

The body of the Duke was found scarcely in human shape. He having dallied with these beings, was lured to his death.

"It was certain that he would return for the next vintage in the train of the old gods."

But we repeat that we cannot convey in a short review any idea of the mysticism or the inwardness of this most engrossing volume. But we recommend those of our readers to whom the highly imaginative appeals, to lose no time in ordering it from their library. We promise them a treat that will last long after they reluctantly turn the last page.

H. H.

OUTSIDE THE GATES.

LADY RHONDDA'S PETITION.

Minutes of the House of Lords state that the petition of Lady Rhondda to the King praying his Majesty to issue to her a writ of summons to sit in the House of Lords, has been referred to the Committee for Privileges to consider and report. The petition is accompanied, the Minutes state, by the King's reference of the matter to the House of Lords and the Attorney-General's report.

There are about twenty Peeresses in their own right.

THE BRITISH LEAGUE OF HELP.

Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Vendôme and the Countess of Bessborough have joined the London General Committee of the League of Help, which assists the devastated towns and villages in France.

Before her marriage the Duchess was Princess Henriette of Belgium, and is a sister of King Albert. Lady Bessborough, who is French, is a daughter of Baron de Neufelize.

COMING EVENTS.

April 30th.—Quarterly Meeting of the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland. At 2, Portland Place, W., by kind invitation of Mrs. Walter Spencer. 3 p.m.

April 30th.—Sale of Work. Nurses' Memorial to King Edward VII., Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow.

May 17th to 20th.—Nursing and Midwifery Exhibition and Conference, Royal Horticultural Hall, Westminster, S.W. Open daily from noon to 9 p.m.

May 18th.—Royal British Nurses' Association. Opening of New Headquarters and Nurses' Club, 194, Queen's Gate, S.W., by the President, Her Royal Highness, Princess Christian, 4 p.m.

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