

THE BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"THE HAPPY END."*

This collection of short stories is powerful, sombre and tragic. A little difficult in some cases to follow the drift, but they are all of them unusual, and the literary style cannot be adversely criticised since it emanates from the pen of Mr. Joseph Hergesheimer. "Lonely Valleys" describes the courtship of Calvin Stammark and Hannah Richmond and its unhappy ending. "Hannah was sitting on the stone steps at the side entrance to the parlour. As usual, she had a bright bow in the hair streaming over her back, and her feet were graceful in slippers with thin black stockings.

There wasn't another girl in Greenstream—in Virginia—with Hannah's fetching appearance, she decided with a glow of adoration. She had a—a sort of beauty entirely her own; it was not exactly prettiness, but a quality far more disturbing, something a man could never forget."

Calvin had come in to tell her that the house—"our home"—was finished. They could be married in a week if she chose.

"After supper, in view of the fact of their courtship, Calvin and Hannah were permitted to sit undisturbed in the formality of the parlour. It was an uncomfortable chamber, with uncomfortable elaborate chairs with orange plush upholstery. Their position was conventional; Calvin's arm was cramped from its unusual position, he had to brace his feet to keep firm on the slippery plush, but he was dazed with delight. His heart throbs were evident at his wrists and throat, while a tenderness of pity actually wet his eyes." And though Hannah made but languid response, all went well till the advent of Phoebe, the elder sister, who had years before left home for the variety stage.

Calvin had to take the buggy and meet her at the stage. She had a resemblance to Hannah, and yet he thought no two women could be more utterly different. Her face, the memorable features of Hannah, was loaded with pink powder.

"It's worse than I remember," she confided. "A person with any life would go dippy here. Say, it's fierce. And yet, inside me I'm kind of glad to see it."

Alas! Phoebe had not long been back, before Hannah felt that after all she might become "dippy" in the solitude and quiet of the little home that Calvin had prepared, and she followed Phoebe back to the same career, with disaster as the result.

"The Flower of Spain" relates the story of the infatuation of Lavinia Sanviano, a young Italian girl of good family, for Abrego y Mochales, a Spanish bullfighter. Lavinia was but sixteen years of age, and fresh from her convent school. She was very much in the way of Gheta, her elder sister, whose notorious beauty was a little on the wane.

Lavinia first caught sight of her idol in the afternoon procession of the fashionable world into the shade of the Cascine.

She wished that Gheta would make up her mind to marry Orsi, the fat, good-natured, Neapolitan banker. "Suddenly she longed to have men austere and romantic in love with her. She clasped her hands to her fine cheeks, and a delicate colour stained her cheeks. She stood very straight and her breathing quickened through parted lips."

It was at this psychological moment that she caught sight of Mochales.

"An open cab was moving slowly, with a single patron—a slender man, sitting rigidly erect, in a short, black shell jacket, open upon white linen, a long black tie, and a soft, narrow, scarlet sash. He wore a wide-brimmed, stiff felt hat, slanted over a thin countenance, burned by the sun as dark as green bronze. His face was as immobile as metal, too; it bore, as if permanently moulded, an expression of excessive contemptuous pride."

Lavinia's young pride was mortified that Mochales attached himself to the train of her sister's admirers.

The Spaniard's serenade was for Gheta, "but it overwhelmed Lavinia with a formless aching emotion; it was for Gheta, but her response was instant and uncontrollable. It seemed to Lavinia that the sheer beauty of life, which had moved her so sharply, had been magnified unbearably. She had never dreamed of the possibilities of such ecstasy or such delectable grief."

Lavinia found herself willy nilly betrothed and married to the good-natured banker, who had transferred his attentions from her sister.

Events proved that though at first the marriage was distasteful to her, that she had not made an unhappy match after all.

"Tol'able David" was a young lad who begged to be allowed to drive the mail in place of his elder brother, who had been cruelly handled in the execution of his duty by a lawless family. David pluckily avenges his brother and himself from a second attack and then—

"He clambered up to the enormous height of the driver's seat and the team started forward.

"A grim struggle began between his beaten flesh, a terrible weariness, and that spirit which seemed to be at once part of him and a voice. He wiped the blood from his young brow; from his eyes, miraculously blue like an ineffable May sky."

This is really a delightful tale of a boy's yearning to show himself a man. The author describes him as "the freshest thing imaginable."

H. H.

He who bends to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise.
If you trap the moment before it's ripe,
The tears of repentance you'll certainly wipe;
But if once you let the ripe moment go,
You can never wipe off the tears of woe.

* By Joseph Hergesheimer. Heinemann, London.

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