

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"WAY OF REVELATION."*

This vivid and stirring chronicle of the five years of war deals with life at home and at the front, and endeavours to show the Way of Revelation in many lives. It is almost confined to one set of persons—the "idle rich"—and elucidates its widely differing effects on the various persons concerned. We imagine, from the realistic, intimate, and weirdly fascinating pictures of the young officers in the trenches and in action, that the author must have had first-hand knowledge of those tremendous years. The reader once more lives in the grip of them; once more their poignancy catches the breath and brings tears to the eyes.

It is well that such a book as this has been penned, "lest we forget."

The book begins at the period immediately preceding the war, and the *mise en scène* is London at the height of the season. Adrian Knoyle and Eric Sinclair, two of the outstanding figures of the story, were at that time fashionable young men belonging to a class obviously—even to a type, though they widely differed in appearance and character, that is to say, when grim circumstance brought the latter into evidence.

They may be described as "London young men," educated at public schools and universities. With regard to the future, neither has the remotest idea what he means to do in life; both are euphemistically "looking round." The couple, who were friends, had settled themselves comfortably to "having a good time," which, for young male persons of presentable antecedents, manners, and appearance, was not difficult in those days.

On the particular evening in question they had several engagements, and "went on" from one reception to another as soon as boredom set in.

Adrian had gone to the ball at the great Hotel Astoria for the sake of meeting Lady Rosemary Meynell, who also figures largely in the story. She had winked at Knoyle immediately on arrival. "She was tall and slim, with golden hair of a remarkably luminous quality. The features gave promise of a rare or even seigneurial beauty when character should ripen in the childish face and maturity assert itself in the slender limbs. Her complexion was of a delicate carmine tint, the eyes changeable, of no certain colour, wilful as a kitten's." Charming Rosemary! who became the victim of an effete and rotten society.

Adrian and Rosemary dance together—she dances well, she does most things well. Adrian has great fun for a quarter of an hour, and begins to think he is falling in love. With a keen sense of anticipation they agree to meet later in the night. He and Eric decide to go on to the Doncasters; if that is boring, somewhere else.

Among his engagements was Gina Meynell's "at home." She was of the erotic type, and gathered about her a company of like mind—cocaine inhalers in point of fact, whose presence in society was

tolerated, and who spread their poisonous influence unchecked.

In the midst of race meetings, house parties, river week-ends, and such like, came, as a stroke of doom, the declaration of war.

Adrian had just secretly achieved his engagement to Rosemary.

"By the way, what are your prospects, Adrian? Not that it matters; but mamma is sure to ask."

"None—at present; but in October I'm going to be a diplomat—or something."

Rosemary and he shook hands at parting in a suitably formal manner. No ghost of prescience rose between them—only a sense of regret at a good time ended and of looking forward to good times to come.

He left Arden Park with his host shouting after him "not to get mixed up with the war." So far it had not occurred to Adrian to do so.

Six months later we have a graphic account of Adrian, Eric, and other of their boon companions, at the front. The author has not made the mistake of re-creating these young men, but he shows how, under the veneer of folly and emptyheadedness, there existed the germ of British pluck and endurance, which was developed in such a remarkable degree by the war.

There is nothing new or original in his theme, but it is told with an arresting force that makes the "Way of Revelation" a great book. For over 500 closely written pages, crowded with detail, it never becomes wearisome, so absorbing are pictures lurid, appealing, stirring, pathetic, imaginative, that are unfolded before the eyes of the reader. In his depiction of the corruption of so-called society, as in the ghastly horrors of the war, one is made to feel that Mr. Ewart is in no sense over drawing, but that he is writing with a profound insight, while he describes with an unusually graphic pen, life as it presented itself to him.

Adrian was a man of naturally clean instincts, to whom the war revealed the purpose of life and the hollowness of his hitherto useless existence.

Eric, the dilettante idler, develops into an unusually capable officer. "He retained his old foppish neatness of personal appearance. He never noticeably exerted himself—never, but he disclosed a curious faculty for getting things done." Poor Eric! He achieved the desire of his heart when he married Faith on his leave, although he "went west" immediately after. "Little Percy," "Strawberries and Cream," as he was variously named by his men, died like a hero.

"Little Percy's copped it at last," the men could be heard passing the word down the line.

"Eric articulated his name as one speaking from a long distance.

"Adrian!"

"I'm here. I'm close to you."

"They raised him on to a stretcher.

"The boom of a solitary gun was succeeded by silence.

"A shadow passed from the moon and the misty light revealed that Eric Sinclair's turn had come."

Very moving is the description of his burial.

* By Wilfred Ewart. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

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