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BOOKS

Time and Thomas Waring. By Morley Roberts. (Nash.)

Mr. Morley Roberts has long been known as a writer, yet somehow as a man who has never done himself justice, never had the courage, as it were, to free himself from the ruck of magazined fiction and stand four-square to the winds. In this work, however, the author is himself at last—a free man. There is nothing of what the public is supposed to want about this book, no concession to the Libraries. Mature and sure, writing with a definite purpose, saying precisely what he had to say, Mr. Morley Roberts has struck home in this novel, which must be acclaimed a fine piece of writing. It is the study of a man under the surgeon's knife, who, after the operation, sees life with a more philosophic eye, realizes how futile his wisdom, strength, authority have been, how petty his achievements, how vain his efforts; and so sets to work to redress the balance. Here we have that rare thing, a faithful representation of life. **No shabby romance, no "literat-too-re-la-dy" (to use a word of Aleister Crowley),** but a sincere portrait of a man who begins at last to realise some of the realities and unrealities of life just at the eve of quitting it. All through, a curious strength amounting to passion radiates from this book, a sense of human throb and emotion extremely rare in English fiction. It has a touch of the macabre, so close the author delves into the human mind, into the deepness of things; we read slowly, for the words interest us (we realise the author has carefully weighed his language); the scenes in the operating-theatre are so real that we seem to be present, watching the patient, like the anaesthetist with his finger on the radio-pulse; we wake up, as Mr. Waring, to a new consciousness of life, to the actualities of everyday tragedy. The man has time to re-order his life, to put things straight, to help his daughter marry the man she loves, to help the son he had turned adrift into the world, to help even his enemies; and then the end comes. Again, we are in the operating-theatre. Again, the anaesthetist says gently, "Breathe out firmly." And we follow Mr. Waring into sleep. All this is narrated with admirable dramatic conciseness and effect:

we have read a book we are not likely to forget. If books have value, this has it. In many ways it is a homily, a philosophy of life, essentially a moral work modern in the whole breadth and realism of its composition. A full man's book.