

*Katherinc*, by E. Temple Thurston, may not be a big book, in a discriminating sense of the phrase, but it certainly is one that compels attention even from the habitual and long-sated reader of novels.

Mr. Thurston is a good example of a writer who is deservedly winning his way by adopting no other working formula than that of modern life as he sees and understands it. He did not deliberately set out to write a religious novel in *The Apple of Eden*, or a sex-problem novel in *Traffic*. He simply felt the tragedy and the pathos of certain conditions rendered possible by the conflict between human desires and the laws of the church, and embodied them forcefully in pages that are not easily forgotten. *Katherine* differs from his earlier books in portraying Protestant England rather than Catholic Ireland; but it conveys the same impression of being the outcome of direct, keen observation of flesh-and-blood men and women. The woman who fancies herself unhappily married; the woman who thinks that, because her husband insists upon giving to the service of his country some of the hours that she wants him to waste upon her whims, he must have ceased to love her, is not a new character in fiction; but this particular example of the type is done with a skill that is none too common. The situation, how-

ever, is suddenly taken out of the class to which it seems at first to belong by the injuries which Katherine receives in a painful accident—injuries which make it impossible, so her physicians decide, for her life to be prolonged beyond two years at most. This verdict they intend to conceal from her as long as possible, but without their knowledge she finds it out. Before the accident Katherine, in spite of her unhappy married life, has had the strength of mind to put from her the temptation of another love that is offered her, a love which she ought never even to have listened to. But now that the situation is radically, cruelly changed; now that she believes a slow, painful death is already hanging over her, will she still have the courage to put from her the solace of a secret romance, even though the price be dishonour? Mr. Thurston handles this delicate theme with a rare discretion and discernment; and in the final readjustment which ushers in an unforeseen happy ending, he amply justifies the use of the hackneyed device of old love letters by making them serve, in a most felicitous way, as a key to the true character of the three people most immediately concerned.