

suggesting flogging in cases of criminal assaults upon girls under fourteen years of age, but he did not see his way to proposing any amendment of the law in that direction. When women have votes, no doubt they will arrange to have a Home Secretary who can "see his way" to punish this most dastardly crime. Meanwhile, we must be satisfied that our little sons get the cat if they play truant from school. This is, of course, infinitely more infamous than the murder of women—*body and soul*.

Upwards of 1000 women signed the memorial to the Upper House of Convocation protesting—it is to be regretted in vain—against the exclusion of women from Parochial Church Councils. This narrow and unchristian spirit in the Church is doing much to undermine its influence with liberal minded people. It is dangerous in these days to attempt to rule by doctrine, we must have works, and a Church trammelled with obsolete Eastern tradition, is a doomed Church.

### A Book of the Week.

#### "THE KING WITH TWO FACES."

ALMOST simultaneously with the appearance of the new historical romances of our two great romanticists has appeared a book by a comparatively unknown writer—a woman. It is natural that it should challenge comparison, and what is the result?

Mr. Stanley Weyman's "Shrewsbury" is a clever tale, so is Mr. Anthony Hope's "Simon Dale," which I hope to review next week. In the first we get a portrait of William III., in the other of Charles II., but neither portrait can compare, either for brilliancy or for artistic effect, or for historical care, with the portrait of Gustavus III. of Sweden, the "Knight of the North," which Miss Coleridge gives us in her absorbing pages.

As I read page after page of this masterly book, with its daring handling of politics, its weird descriptions, its shrewd aphorisms, its atmosphere of literary ability, I could not help thinking that this is such a book as Charlotte M. Yonge might have written had she been born half a century later, so that she could have added to the undoubtedly great powers of her imagination the indispensable adjunct of a knowledge of life as it really is. Tied down as she was by the traditions of her day, and by her narrow outlook, she yet was able, through sheer force of her imagination, to write a book like "The Chaplet of Pearls." Had she been able, as we say now, to "live her own life," might she have possibly produced a "King with Two Faces"?

This is mere idle speculation; suffice it that Miss Coleridge has done it—has achieved a success as signal in its way as that of Miss Montresor's first book, but in a totally different style. "Romola" is absolutely the only great historical novel that I can think of at this moment, which has come to us from a woman's hand, and on this ground, if on no other, we ought to stretch eager hands to greet Miss Coleridge.

The opening chapter of her book is about as good as anything of the kind could be. The Black House, the four nameless conspirators, the arrival of the

\* "The King with Two Faces," By M. E. Coleridge. (Edward Arnold). Fifth Edition.

unconscious messenger, who is never to leave the house alive—these make one's heart beat faster, and quicken one's pulses; but never for one moment does the tale degenerate into mere sensationalism. The hero is Adolf Ribbing, devoted body and soul to the King; and to the King it has been prophesied, that by the hand of Adolf Ribbing he shall meet his death. The war between superstition and the better nature of Gustav—the wonderful way in which young Ribbing always "turns up" again, however dangerous the work to which the king sets him—and the final working out of the mysterious prophecy, form the subject of the story.

But in the course of it we are introduced to Madame de Stael, to Marie Antoinette, and to the noble and devoted Count Fersen, the hero of the never-to-be-forgotten "Korff Berline."

The account of the struggle of the King with his Ryksdag would alone be enough to make this book remarkable; and it is most interesting to us just now, when the Swedish Drama is so much in our minds, and the Swedish national character for that reason such a fascinating study. The brilliant, meteoric nature of the influence of Gustav over the minds of men, his wonderful appearance, alone, at night, before the gates of the beleaguered city of Gothenburg, and his behaviour in the final moment of crisis, all stamp the individuality of the man upon our minds; and the curious character of his attempts to establish an absolute monarchy by means of the democracy—the nobles to a man being dead against him—are a most interesting study in politics. One of the things that haunt the mind most is the verse of the Beggar's song, used as a sort of signal by the secret society bound together against the King.

"We were young, we were happy, we were very, very wise,  
And the door stood open at our feast,  
When there passed us a woman with the West in her eyes,  
And a man with his back to the East."

I should much like to know whether this is a translation of a real song, or an invention of Miss Coleridge; if the latter, then she has a very special gift for getting on the edge of one's emotions.

Most eagerly shall we look for her next contribution to our literature.

I believe that any competent critic, being given to read these three romances, "Shrewsbury," "Simon Dale," and "The King with Two Faces," with no clue to the sex or authorship of either, would unhesitatingly pronounce Miss Coleridge's the best of the three, both in matter and in manner.

G. M. R.

#### WHAT TO READ.

- "Through China with a Camera." By John Thomson
- "Side Lights on Siberia." By J. Y. Simpson.
- "William Shakespeare." By George Brandes.
- "Auld Lang Syne." By the Right Hon. F. Max Muller.
- "Random Recollections." By Robert Ganthony.
- "The Study of Children." By Francis Warner, M.D.
- "Le Calvaine." By Octave Mirbeau, Paris.
- G. Charpentier.
- "The Disaster." By Paul and Victor Margueritte.
- Translated by Frederic Lees.
- "My Happy Half Century. The Autobiography of an American Woman." By Frances E. Willard.
- Edited by Frances E. Cook.

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