

A Book of the Week.

"THE FATAL GIFT."*

MR. FRANKFORT MOORE has gone back from his ultra-modern style to the eighteenth century romance, which he exploited with some success in "The Jessamy Bride," and his readers have no cause to be dissatisfied with this return.

"The Fatal Gift" is, as a matter of fact, the story of "the celebrated Miss Gunnings," and their triumphal conquest of the London public, in the days of King George II. The story, considered as a story, labours under one fatal disadvantage, which is common to all historical romance. Everyone who has heard of the two lovely sisters, has heard that they married, respectively, the Duke of Hamilton, and Lord Coventry. Therefore from the first, one knows that Lord Blantyre has no chance, and we are dependent upon the author only to hear what brought about the break between Maria and her lover.

Very few historical personages are brought into the tale,—His Hanoverian Majesty flits once across the page, and the introduction of the two beauties to the vulgar-minded old man, who admired women according to their weight, avoirdupois, and spoke very little English, is made the occasion of some of the author's happiest strokes of wit.

"The King only it was who made mistakes. They had something to be thankful for, however: his vulgarity only was made manifest, not his barbarity. He scrutinised the girls as he would have examined sheep, and the remarks which he made, in the French of an uneducated German, to Lady Caroline upon their appearance, were frankly rude.

"His Majesty says he is ashamed of you for not speaking French or German," whispered Lady Caroline.

"Tell his Majesty that we'd be ashamed of it ourselves if we belonged to the reigning families of Germany or France," said Maria.

"His Majesty wishes to know whether you prefer being in England to being in Ireland," said Lady C.

"Please tell his Majesty that just now we'd rather be in Ireland, or any other place," said Maria.

"Ach," cried the King, without waiting for the diplomatic interpretation contemplated by Lady Caroline.

"Ach, j'ai peur qu'elle est patriotique—ach, pshaw!"

"His Majesty fears you are too patriotic," said Lady Caroline.

"Tell his Majesty he wouldn't have to complain if I was a German," said the girl.

"Lady Caroline made no attempt to translate this phrase, nor did the King wait for her to try. He stood before the girls with his hands on his hips, as he said—

"You have zeen ze great zights. Would you much like to zee a parade of droops—cavalry droops? Or what great zight would you like much to zee?"

"Please, your Majesty, we should dearly like to see a Coronation," said Maria, calmly; and with a look of such child-like innocence that the King himself laughed—yes, after a few moments of deathly silence."

If Maria Gunning, the girl brought up in a Connaught bog, and who could hardly read or write, was really as witty as Mr. Moore makes out; she was, indeed, a *rara avis*. So much beauty joined to so much wit is a thing to have upset Touchstone's notions of compensation.

* "The Fatal Gift." Frank Frankfort Moore. Hutchinson.

The idea of the London of those times is skilfully given with very few touches; and we are shown a glimpse of John Whitfield, then just beginning to electrify the dry bones of religion. Some of the funniest sayings in the book are those of the alarmed mother of the beauties when she fears her daughters have "got religion."

"Converted? Oh no, no! 'Tis impossible that Heaven could have such a blow in store for us."

"Nay, wife, the blow has not yet fallen: a merciful Providence may yet avert it," said her husband."

G. M. R.

WHAT TO READ.

"The Long White Cloud: AO Tea Roa." By the Hon. W. P. Reeves, Agent-General for New Zealand.

"Through the High Pyrenees." By Harold Spender and Llewellyn Smith.

"Through Armenia on Horseback." By Rev. George H. Hepworth.

"Studies in the Mind and Art of Robert Browning." By James Fotheringham.

"Impressions." By Pierre Loti, with an Introduction by Henry James.

"The Modern Man and Maid." By Sarah Grand.

"Mary Dominic." By Grace Rhys.

"A Lotus Flower." By J. Morgan-de-Groot.

"Owd Bob." By Alfred Ollivant.

Coming Events.

MEDICAL RELIEF.

Lectures at the Portman Rooms at 4.30 p.m.:

November 25th.—"District Nursing," Miss Amy Hughes; Dec. 2, "Sick Insurance," Mr. F. G. P. Neison; Dec. 9, "The Provident Dispensary and Provident Nursing," Dr. J. B. Hurry. Prospectuses may be obtained of Mrs. Hill, 19, Park Mansions, Battersea Park, S.W.

THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN.

November 19th.—Meeting of the Members of the Professional Sub-Committee at 20, Upper Wimpole Street. Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, Convener, will preside, 2.30 p.m.

November 26th.—Meeting of the Committee of Arrangements, at London House, St. James's Square, by the kind permission of Mrs. Creighton. The Countess of Aberdeen, President of the International Council of Women, will preside, 10.30 a.m.

December 7th.—Opening New Wards at the West London Hospital, by H.R.H. Princess Louise.

December 7th.—Ball at the Holborn Town Hall for the benefit of the Royal Free Hospital.

December 12th.—Festival Dinner at the Hôtel Métropole, in aid of the Infant Orphan Asylum, Wanstead. H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge will preside.

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