

A Book of the Week.

MONSIEUR BEUCAIRE.*

This short tale is striking both in idea and in style. If Mr. Booth Tarkington is a young man, he has doubtless a career before him. The task he has attempted is decidedly a difficult one; for an American to try and depict the Bath of the eighteenth century the Bath of fashion and romance, the Bath of Beau Nash is, to say the least of it, daring.

Perhaps he has handled his subject a little diffidently, given somewhat too timid a picture of the gay world which ruffled it at Pump Room and Assembly; but the romance which he unfolds, in words concise and telling, is of an original and very charming description, though we will hope that Lady Mary Carlisle was then as little typical of her sex in England as she happily is now.

Mons. Beaucaire is a mysterious figure in Bath society; he came over in the suite of Mons. de Mirepoix, French Ambassador, and remaining in the city after his master had left it, was known as a clever and successful gambler, but quite honest.

The opening of the book is most original. The Duke of Winterset has cheated at cards; the young man catches him in the act, and the wretched nobleman is surrounded by six of his servants.

"It's murder, is it, you carrion?" he asks.

Mons. Beaucaire lifted his shoulders in a mock shiver. "What words! No, no, no. No killing! Only disgrace."

In short, as the price of his silence, the Duke of Winterset is to introduce him to Bath society, to present him to the beauty of Bath, Lady Mary Carlisle. Raging, therefore, but helpless, the Duke presents his friend, *M. le Duc de Chateaurien*. Once introduced, M. Beaucaire needs no further help. Lady Mary is entranced. Every means is tried to trip him. Various notorious duellers are hired by the Duke to quarrel with him; his skill with the sword is greater than theirs. At last in despair, the Duke hires six ruffians to set upon him, as he rides home beside the window of Lady Mary's coach. The other English gentlemen who accompany her ladyship are supposed to hold aloof, while one man fights six, like a lion, performing prodigies of valour. Here we beg to question probabilities; Englishmen, however vain and frivolous, however snobbish about titles, do like to see fair play. Just as the young man is overcome, tied to a tree and about to be beaten, up ride his tardy servants, and effect a rescue without difficulty; but Lady Mary has been told that he came to England as barber in the suite of M. de Mirepoix, and her whole estimate of him changes when he does not deny it.

The scene in which the man, who so admired Englishwomen, and who thought he had found for himself a mate worthy of his life-long devotion, makes his last appeal, is most pathetic.

In point of fact, this M. Beaucaire is a member of the Royal family of France. Having declined to marry the lady selected for him, he has incurred the wrath of the King, and, to escape Vincennes, escaped to England, where he has masqueraded on his own account, and, deeply smitten with the charms of the shallow Lady Mary, has determined to try and win her.

* By Booth Tarkington. (John Murray.)

"One evening," he says to his brother, after the disclosure has been made, "I am obligè' to fight some frien's of M. de Winterset there, and some ladies and cavaliers look on, and they still think me a servant. O, I am a great actor! It is true there is not a peasant in France who would not then have known one 'born'; but they are wonderful, this English people, holding by an idea once it is in their heads—a mos' worthy quality."

The chagrin of the unfortunate Lady Mary when the real rank of the man whose qualities she has failed to recognize is made known, is well given. The Duke's snub is very complete, and very delicately administered. The book lingers in the memory, and one envies that Princess of France to whom M. Beaucaire returned.

G. M. R.

Verses.

Whose baby is loveliest?
 Mother's own.
 All round the world—north, south, east, west—
 Hers alone!
 For whether it be a Chinese tot,
 With eyes aslant and a shaven crown,
 Or a dear little girl of the land of the free,
 Or a toddling prince in London town,
 Or the one rare treasure a Soudan slave
 Hugs to her heart, all wee and brown—
 Each in its mother's gentle pride
 Is fairer than all the world beside.
 Whose mother is loved the best?
 Baby's own.
 She whose cheek was first caressed—
 She alone.
 For whether she be an Eskimo,
 Or coloured mammy, or stately queen,
 Or a wandering organ grinder's wife,
 Jingling and beating her tambourine,
 In every land where children are
 The baby eyes from their deep, serene
 Gaze, rapture-bound by the tender grace
 In the mother's bended, love-lit face.

—From the *Indian Medical Record*.

What to Read.

- "The North Americans of Yesterday." By Frederick S. Dellenbaugh.
 "The Lover's Replies to an Englishwoman's Love Letters."
 "The Whirligig." By Mayne Lindsay.
 "The Red Chancellor." By Sir William Magnay.
 "Doom Castle." By Neill Munro.
 "A Daughter of the Veldt." By Basil Marnan.
 "Anna Lombard." By Victoria Cross.

Coming Events.

June 3rd.—The Duke of Portland presides at a dinner in aid of the Home of Rest for Horses, Hotel Cecil, 7.15.

June 8th.—Grand morning concert in aid of the East London Hospital for Children, Royal Albert Hall, 3.15.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)