

## A Book of the Week.

### THE VELVET GLOVE.

Mr. Merriman has once again, as in "The Slave of the Lamp" sought his inspiration in the machinations of the Jesuits. The scene of his present novel is laid in the Spain of 1870, about the time of the Carlist rising of that date. The disturbed state of the country gives plenty of chance for that lawlessness which is of the essence of romance; but indeed, Mr. Merriman succeeds in convincing us that in most of the details of daily life, Spain is still about a couple of centuries behind the rest of Western Europe.

The opening of the book is singularly characteristic.

"The Ebro, as all the world knows—or will pretend to know, being an ignorant and vain world, runs through the city of Saragossa. It is a river, moreover, which should be accorded the sympathy of this generation, for it is at once rapid and shallow."

It may be that the charm of an opening like that is lost upon some people, but it is safe to assert that anything so witty, so suggestive and so terse, would whet the appetite of the majority for more.

Mr. Merriman falls short, as always, in his women portraits; but even in these we note a marked improvement since he last wrote. The character of Sor Teresa hangs well together, though she is only a sketch; and Juanita, though at first only a flighty girl in a convent school, proves herself afterwards a woman of intelligence and sympathy who might easily develop into a worthy wife for Marcos.

The author is dominated again, as in "Roden's Corner," by the ideal of the Monosyllabic Man. Marcos probably says less in these pages than has ever previously fallen to the rôle of any hero of fiction. He is a man of action, we are told, not of words; yet he manages to convey to the girl all that it is essential she should know; though his reserved and taciturn conscientiousness goes very near to the final wreck of his happiness.

Briefly, the story is as follows:—

A man named Mogente is known to be the owner of a colossal fortune. This man returns secretly and alone, at night, to Saragossa, and is murdered in the streets by men in the pay of one Evasio Mon, a Carlist, who believes that the possession of the dead man's fortune will suffice to place Don Carlos on the throne. Mogente has a daughter, a pupil in a convent school, and if he leaves the fortune to her it only remains to force her to become a nun, and the money is the property of the Church, and apparently, therefore, the property of Evasio Mon.

But the gentleman has reckoned without the Sarrions, father and son. These fine specimens of the Aragonese nobility are the oldest friends of the murdered man, and Sarrion has seen the murder from a window. He pieces out the story bit by bit to his own satisfaction, and sends for his only son, Marcos, the last of the Sarrions. He puts before him the peril in which Juanita stands, and the monosyllabic Marcos sets himself to outwit Evasio and save Juanita. Fortunately for the success of his schemes, his father's sister, Sor Teresa, is sister superior of the convent in which Juanita is being educated. She knows that the girl has no vocation for a life of religion, and works

quietly and secretly on her brother's side. Marcos, who loves the very ground on which Juanita treads, persuades her to consent to a nominal marriage with himself, knowing full well that the girl is but a child, and that the great issues of the question cannot be explained to her.

The hand of one who, like Stanley Weyman, knows the strength and subtilty, the charm, and the might of the love of man for woman and woman for man, would have made more of the final situation. Mr. Merriman is a novelist of action, not of emotions, though many people might be astonished to hear the two authors thus compared.

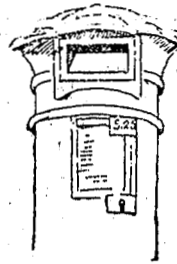
Nevertheless, the book is charming, and nothing from beginning to end mars the excellent good taste of it.

G. M. R.

## Letters to the Editor

### NOTES, QUERIES, &c.

*Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not in ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.*



### LEGAL STATUS FOR SPECIALISTS.

*To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."*

DEAR MADAM,—I read with great interest Mr. Colin Campbell's able letter in your issue of last week. It seems to me that the points of difference between those who desire the proposed legislation for midwives and those who do not are so vital that it is difficult to see how a common meeting-ground may be found. Those who oppose the suggested legislation do so on three distinct grounds, every one of which, in my opinion, would be a sufficient reason for so doing.

1. In the first place, a system of annual local licensing, under county or borough councils on which women have no seats, from which, indeed, they have been deliberately removed, is, as you have forcibly pointed out, a grave danger, as it deprives midwives of any power of self-government; again, the limitation of their sphere of work by purely artificial boundary lines is a hardship which would not for a moment be tolerated by men.

2. The experience of those best competent to judge is overwhelmingly against legislation for any class of specialists. With the example of the medical profession before us, why should midwives ask for such recognition? Granted that child-bearing is a natural process—those who know anything at all about it know that the emergencies of midwifery work are, when they occur, sudden and overwhelming, and need the nerve and resource, acquired only in the course of a prolonged and varied training, to cope with adequately, and I am certain that if a vote were taken of trained nurses who have had midwifery experience as to the advisability of conferring legal status on women with a few months' special training in midwifery, in the interests of the working class mother they would plump solid against it.

\* By Henry Seton Merriman. Smith, Elder, and Co.

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