

The following resolution has been introduced into the State Senate in Texas:—"Whereas there are so many dukes, lords, and counts touring the United States seeking matrimonial alliance with our most accomplished and richest marriageable young ladies, and being desirous of protecting them from being deceived and duped, therefore be it resolved that the Committee on Federal Relations be requested to bring in a Bill providing for the taxation and licensing of foreign dukes, lords, and counts, both real and genuine, bogus and fraudulent, found in the State of Texas, and providing severe penalties for violation of the said law, to the end that the young women of Texas may be protected against engaging in speculations of such a risky and dangerous character as investing in such enterprise."

El Book of the Week.

QUESTIONABLE SHAPES.*

As everyone knows, Mr. Henry James is a past-master in the art of making the flesh creep. Mr. Howells, though he most successfully exploited spiritualism in "The Undiscovered Country," has now for the first time come before us as narrator of the Ghost Story. His collection forms a piquant contrast to that of Miss Wilkins. Her weird experiences came invariably to persons totally ignorant in such matters, and helplessly unable to understand them. Mr. Howells, on the contrary, gives us only instances where the highly-strung, introspective minds of the neurotic persons concerned made their own terrors, and forged their own chains.

The first story concerns an apparition, seen by a *fin-de-siècle* young man called Hewson. He was, says the author, "the ordinary skeptical American." (This is understood to be Americanese for sceptical.) He saw an apparition in his bedroom, at dawn of day, when he was staying in a country house. We are not told what the apparition was. It does not concern the story in the least. The point is, what Hewson did with his experience; and the point is made with considerable force. His "skepticism" does not prevent his belief that he has really seen something. Then comes the desire to tell people about it, followed by the disillusioning, the annoyance, the disgust, engendered in a sensitive person who, for the first time, finds his word discounted. Then, of course, this genuine, first-hand ghost story gets into the papers—told so circumstantially that nobody has any difficulty in identifying the place where it happened; and the gentleman who was Hewson's host on the interesting occasion of the apparition finds himself unaccountably shunned by those skeptical Americans whom he has invited to stay under his haunted roof. Here is a dilemma for poor Hewson! How he extricates himself, and with whose help, is admirably shown.

"The Angel of the Lord" can only be described as a study in insanity. The same description might apply to the last story in the book—"Though One Rose from the Dead." But this is far the more impressive of the two. It shows with peculiar strength the ease with which a man who has all he wants here

below thinks he can afford to laugh at and put aside the question of the Hereafter. It shows, with a horror which strikes deep, the despair which is the portion of such a man, if all he desires is removed.

But it also reveals another thing: the morbid tendency of mind engendered between a man and a woman who are wholly absorbed in each other, and have voluntarily cut themselves apart from other influences.

"One conclusion from my observation of the Alderlings during the week I spent with them was that it is bad for a husband and wife to be constantly and unreservedly together, not because they grow tired of each other, but because they grow more intensely interested in each other."

The result of the close intercourse of the Alderlings is the abnormal development of telepathic faculties between them, which culminate in a catastrophe so dramatic that Mr. Howells does not know how to apologise for it sufficiently. G. M. R.

"Goin' Back."

No, I 'aven't made a fortune since I've been upon the Rand,

Tho' I 'aven't done so badly, so to speak;
But there's always somethin' callin' from my own
Australian land,
An' the callin's growin' louder every week!

For it tells of silver wattles, in the moonlight
glist'nin' fair,

An' of miles of bush that's tinted blue and grey;
Of the perfume of the wattle-bloom upon the evenin'
air,

An' the callin's growin' louder every day!

Oh, it tells of river-reaches, girt with mallee tall an'
slim,

Of the banks with ti-tree bushes, all a-flower;
Of lagoons befringed with rushes, where the teal an'
wild duck swim,

An' the callin's growin' louder every hour!

An' it tells of sad eyes gazin' o'er the purplin' hills at
night

Of a stern-faced dad, grown bent, an' worn, an' grey;
Of the kids who cheer'd and whimper'd when their
brother went to fight—

Hang the fortune! *I am goin' home to-day!*

—GEORGE COSSINS.

Johannesburg, 1903, in the *Idler* for August.

What to Read.

"Place and Power." By Ellen Thorneroyroft Fowler.

"Six Chapters of a Man's Life." By Henry Norman, M.P.

"The Tickencote Treasure." By William le Queux.

"Dragooning a Dragoon." By E. Livingston Prescott.

"Alarums and Excursions." By H. B. Marriott Watson.

"The Mississippi Bubble." By Emerson Hough.

"On the Sands." By Charles Marriott.

* By W. D. Howells. Harpers.

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