

## A Book of the Week.

### THE GAGE OF RED AND WHITE.\*

Few women have achieved as much as Miss Hope in the way of historical romance. Her distinctive manner, firm touch, and close acquaintance with the period she studies, all render her an exceptionally interesting writer.

But in "The Gage of Red and White" she has handicapped herself in the way that is inevitable with those who select the prominent historical figure of the day for the leading rôle in their romance, namely, that the end is foreknown. Everyone who has ever read the history of France at all knows that Jeanne D'Albret did not marry *Le Balafre*. Therefore, the novelist must do without all the stimulus experienced by the reader whose attention is kept on the stretch by wondering what is coming.

Apart from this—a fault which many may reckon as no fault at all, since the fashion of a story's end is looked upon as unimportant nowadays—the story is full of deep interest. It may come as a novelty to many to find the Duke of Guise in the fashion of a hero. Our Protestant historians have so held up the family and the League to execration that all impartiality has been lost sight of. But without doubt our author makes the young D'Aumale loom largely heroic through these pages—an honourable lover, a generous enemy, a man who moved straight among the tortuous mazes of the court of Francis I. and of Henri II.

The present reviewer is not enough of an historian to know how much of truth there is in Miss Hope's idea that Catherine de Medici was in love with this hero. It seems likely enough. Reading, as we do, of the day of Catherine's power, when she gripped her wretched sons as it were by the throat, and meted out a long, slow, complete, Monte Cristo-like revenge upon all who had been her enemies, one loses sight of the years—nearly twenty of them—when she was Dauphiness, the neglected, despised wife, the plain Italian, openly ignored by the husband to whom Diane de Poitiers was everything. In this tale we see accumulating, drop by drop, the bitterness which was generated from what Catherine had to suffer, the gall, the spite, which culminated in the Saint Bartolomé. We see the way in which the courtiers thought her a person whom it was safe to offend—one upon whom their wits may be sharpened. D'Enghien sneers at her, and a couple of hours later D'Enghien dies, struck down by an unseen hand, which flings a box at him from the great height of one of the upper windows of the Louvre.

Catherine's was the nature which some men consider to be the typically feminine. Clever, revengeful, treacherous, working underground, working everywhere. What wonder that she found nothing in common with the downright daughter of Henri D'Albret—the dark-faced Béarnaise whom D'Aumale loved?

Somehow the whole story seems to throw a flood of light upon what happened in the succeeding generation. It is sad to think of the noble, impulsive, warm-hearted Jeanne passing into the austere, rigid, Huguenot Jeanne D'Albret of history—the disillusioned wife of a selfish libertine. One feels that Jeanne, as Miss Hope paints her, could never have

come to this—that the two noble hearts must have stretched out to each other, and ultimately met—that the girl was too shrewd to play as she did, straight into Catherine's hands. But we thank the author for making some pages of history live before us; and her blunt dialogue does not offend us. It is daring to make sixteenth century nobles thus converse:—

"This is slow work, Gaspard. I can't stand much more of it, can you?"

"But what can we do? We can't cut our way through an army?"

"We didn't when we got here."

But the end justifies the means. If these young men did not use these words, they doubtless used their equivalent; and it is far easier to imagine them thus tersely saying what they mean than it is to enter into the spirit of those novels in which "Beshrew me, wench, but I do doubt thee!" is the order of the day.

G. M. R.

## Coming Events.

*May 12th.*—The Lord Mayor presides at the Festival Dinner of the City of London Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, Hotel Cecil.

*May 13th.*—Quarterly Council Meeting of the Matrons' Council, 431, Oxford Street, London, W., 11 a.m.

*May 13th.*—Annual Meeting of the Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses, 20, Hanover Square, W., 3 p.m. Miss Louisa Stevenson, President, in the chair.

### AGENDA.

1. Minutes of the last meeting.
2. Opening Remarks by the President.
3. To receive the Annual Report and Audited Accounts.
4. To elect the Executive Committee for the ensuing year.
5. To consider the following additions to the Constitution:—

"That ladies and gentlemen not connected with nursing be eligible for election as Associates of the Society."

"That the annual subscription for Associates shall be 5s."

6. To consider the following Resolution:—

"That this meeting cordially approves of the Bill for the Registration of Nurses introduced this Session into the House of Commons by Dr. Farquharson, M.P., and considers that it is desirable, in the public interest, that a Select Committee should be appointed to inquire into the whole Nursing Question."

7. Other business.

Amongst those who will take part in the proceedings are the Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, Miss Isla Stewart, Miss E. S. Haldane, Mrs. Homan, Mr. H. J. Tennant, M.P., Dr. Bedford Fenwick, and others. Tea, by the kind invitation of the President.

*May 17th.*—Annual Meeting of the Association of Asylum Workers, Medical Society's Rooms, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, W. All interested in asylum work and workers are cordially invited to attend. 4 p.m.

\* By Graham Hope. (Smith, Elder and Co.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)