

"But surely they didn't find any women cowardly enough to lend them their clothes," said an heroic little woman when she heard the news. We sincerely hope, for the honour of womankind, that they did not; but in Johannesburg there exist numberless old-clothes shops kept by Moses and Solomon of that ilk, and no doubt the faint-hearted Cornishmen found there the raiment to envelop their broad and burly limbs.

The *Bedworth Guardian*, in settling the whole woman question in a few lines, and deciding that Nursing is the *only* sphere for women's activities, forgets that there are not enough sick people in the world to keep all women employed, and forgets also that there are thousands of women who have no homes to "sphere in."

"We hear much—a great deal too much—nowadays, about women's rights, the new woman, and so forth; but there can be no question that home is the proper sphere for women, and that they will be more profitably employed in attending to their domestic duties than in agitating for their political rights. The sick room is pre-eminently the sphere for ministering women. From their very nature, the ladies are peculiarly qualified for the work of tending the sick. When, as is now so often the case, Nurses undergo courses of special training in Hospitals and elsewhere, the amount of good that they may achieve is simply incalculable."

A Book of the Week.

"THE AMAZING MARRIAGE."*

I WAS much amused when glancing over Mr. Humphrey's monthly magazine, entitled "The Books of To-day and the Books of To-morrow," to see that he calls the two novels produced by the masters of fiction this autumn, respectively, "Meredith the Obscure," and "The Amazing Hardy," a delectable jest, which must have caused many Philistines to smile.

"The Amazing Marriage" cannot be called exactly light reading, for Meredith is a philosophical writer who requires his readers to gird the loins of their mind before they presume to open his pages. Nevertheless, this last novel of our greatest living master of English literature is not only a deeply interesting story, but it abounds in beautiful passages of description, and those pointed epigrammatic sayings which are so characteristic a feature of the style Meredithian.

The first two chapters relate the remarkable history of the old Buccaneer and the Countess Fanny, and their strange elopement. These fantastic personages were the parents of Chillon and Carinthia—the brother and sister whose mutual love for, and dependence upon, each other, is the most interesting feature in the subsequent story. The history of their lives begins after the death of their parents, when they leave their old home and walk over the mountains in mist and sunshine to join their English friends at a German watering-place. The descriptions of scenery during this walk are assuredly poetry and not prose, and Carinthia's frame of mind, when she discovers during her conversation with her brother that he is in love with a beautiful English girl, is portrayed with that wonderful insight into a woman's character and heart

in which the Sage of Box Hill has shown himself unique among modern writers.

Shortly after this discovery of her brother's attachment to his "golden Riette," his sister meets the Earl of Fleetwood, a prankish nobleman whose riches and social position overbalance his powers of brain. In a moment of pique he proposes to Carinthia, who accepts him, and then follows a marvellous description of their amazing wedding-day. They are united at a country church in England; immediately afterwards the earl takes his countess to witness a prize-fight, then he drives her to an inn, engages the prize-fighter's sweetheart as her lady's maid, and deserts his bride. This she resents, and, in spite of his commands, refuses to go and live in solitary grandeur at any of his castles, but elects to take refuge in Whitechapel with the prize-fighter's sweetheart, and work among the humble poor.

Eventually, after a great deal of correspondence and much mysterious conversation, an infant is born, which changes the complexion of events, and Carinthia consents to go and live with her child at Esslemont, one of her lord's domains.

The fencing between the father and mother—the hasty visits and abrupt departures—keep the reader on the tenter-hook of expectation; little by little the reader and Lord Fleetwood learn the value of the woman he has married and abandoned for a freakish whim, but it is too late. According to the gospel of Meredith, it appears that there are some wrongs that a woman cannot forgive, and Carinthia cannot forgive the injuries to her good name, caused by her lord and master's behaviour.

I could not help wondering as I read this marvellous study of a woman's character, if Carinthia would not have forgiven all her injuries if she had not been so devotedly and absorbingly fond of her brother, so that his happiness and prosperity seem to her to be so far more important than anything else in the world.

I think this devoted sister's love is the very keynote of the story.

Retribution overtakes Lord Fleetwood; knowing that his wife will never forgive him, he casts about for consolation elsewhere, and finds it in the fold of the Church of Rome, where he subsequently dies of self-inflicted austerities in his Monastery.

I do wish that Mr. Meredith had not made the widow marry again, I really can't forgive him for allowing his heroine to console herself with the colourless individual who flits through the pages labelled with the name of Owain. Space fails me to record how excellently well the minor characters are portrayed, especially the artist Woodseer, and the maid Madge.

A. M. G.

Reviews.

WE have received the first number of the *Scalpel*, a new sixpenny monthly journal of medicine and surgery, edited by Dr. Thomas Dolan, who is well known as having been for ten years the Editor of the late *Provincial Medical Journal*, which the *Scalpel* now represents. Dr. Dolan promises "to use the *Scalpel* intelligently and delicately, avoiding all coarse dissection, and if we do turn up some fibres and expose them to professional gaze it will be to advance professional interests."

* "The Amazing Marriage," by George Meredith; 2 vols. 12s. (Constable & Co., Westminster.)

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