

During the night following the awakening sermon, the rector firmly believed that he received a call from on high, and, though physically unsuited for the enterprise, and though deeply in love with a nice English girl who reciprocated his attachment, he abandoned his lucrative living and his hopes of domestic happiness, and betook himself to the wilds of South Central Africa. So far the story opens well, and is vigorously and attractively told. Any reader fond of tales of adventure (and remembering how well in the past Mr. Rider Haggard has catered for their appetites) would be captivated by this promising beginning.

"The Sons of Fire" and the "Council of Wizards" are duly interviewed by the Reverend Thomas Owen, and his adventures among them are related through all the rest of the chapters of this pleasantly printed little one shilling book. Unfortunately Mr. Rider Haggard seems to have missed his especial vocation a little. As a recorder of fights and a teller of mysterious tales in a weird and attractive manner he stands without a rival. There is something startling in finding such an author using these talents of imagination to relate the fictitious story of a saint's martyrdom by savage tribes. Such stories need to be told simply to be forcible and convincing. They are hindered, not aided, if they are told with melodramatic effects of thunder and lightning. Strange to say the story of "She" was far more credulous than this fictional missionary tale, where the crucifix and the Bible are used, like the celebrated key of Solomon, in a kind of half-magic, half-realistic manner.

Some years ago, when Mr. Haggard's engaging novel of "She" was first published, it gave our family so much pleasure that we promptly named a spirited young mare we had recently acquired "She who Must be Obeyed," and, wishing our coachman to comprehend the allusion, we lent him the volume to read. He returned it to me after a week, and asked me with a very serious air, "Do you think 'She' really was two thousand years old, ma'm?" and, though still a little agnostic, he was quite prepared to believe if he found other people believing.

It is much to be hoped that an author capable of writing such fascinating romances as "She," "King Solomon's Mines," and "Alan Quartermain," will in the future abandon the telling of fictional tales of the melodramatic propagation of the gospel in African parts, and delight the imaginations of our young people and their elders by stories of the former type.

The spirited accounts of the various battles and slaughters, added to the skilful method with which they are related, prove that his hand has by no means lost its cunning.

A. M. G.

Reviews.

HAVE you read the *Weekly Sun* literary supplement? If not, buy it at once. Mr. T. P. O'Connor, the editor, one of our greatest living journalists, has prepared therein a literary treat of surpassing interest. Touching on the influence which the works of George Eliot had on him. Mr. O'Connor relates the following incidents of his pathetic struggle before Fame crowned him with her wreath of laurels:—

"The Mill on the Floss" was the second book of George Eliot's which I read. Few books have made

an impression upon me so deep. The circumstances under which I read it, and the feelings which it produced in me will illustrate, even better than anything I have yet written, the power I had at this period of my life—and that I have even to a certain extent still—of living in a book altogether outside the facts of my own life. I was at that moment still without a situation, and without the hope of one. I came to London, it will be remembered, in that dreadfully hot summer which saw the outbreak of the Franco-German war. The heat of London—so much in excess of any I had ever experienced in the more temperate climate of Ireland—exhausted me; so that often after weary walks for miles through the burning and hopeless streets of London, I used to have to lie down for hours in exhaustion and with a splitting headache. I lodged in a little back room in what was then known as Brydges, and is now called Catherine Street, Strand. The house is almost opposite the office of the *Echo*, and is now the office of the *Stage*—a dramatic newspaper. I still remember the rather dingy quilt made out of soldiers' old uniforms which lay across the bed. Somehow or other, it seemed to have some strange appropriateness in its dinginess and shabbiness to my own dark fortunes at that moment. I was a rigid ascetic, both by taste and necessity, at that time. My breakfast in a coffee-shop cost me just twopence—a penny for a cup of coffee, and a penny for two slices of bread-and-butter, or one roll without butter. I wanted only one good meal a day, after the ascetic fashion of my own people, who in many large sections of life rarely, if ever, eat meat more than once a day, and seldom eat it as often. In the evening my meal often consisted of a small brown loaf, which I bought in a baker's shop, and ate in my little bedroom with the dingy quilt. Yet, in such surroundings as these I read 'The Mill on the Floss' with such intense absorption and enjoyment that I actually lived with the characters in the book, and I still remember that I wandered for days after I had finished the book with a feeling of sorrow almost as poignant as if the death of Maggie Tulliver had been the death of some person that I had known and loved in real life. I never saw George Eliot, but I suppose it was the recollection of the important part she had thus played in my own small and inner life that made me feel, when she died, as if some beloved relative had passed away."

A SEASONABLE GIFT.

JUST now our thoughts are turning—by no means lightly, unless the purse be a heavy one—towards the consideration of Christmas gifts. It is quite an art to choose these, because, however costly a offering may be, if it do not happen to be the thing we need and desire, there is apt to be a "Dead Sea apple" flavour about what should give only undiluted joy. "If only Santa Claus would listen to the prayers of an aspiring Probationer, and give her what she craves, it would rescue her mind from the danger of incipient insanity. For who *can* understand the endless complications and intricacies of medical terms, without a Hoblyn's Dictionary." This is a common chorus among Probationers and staff-Nurses. But the pathetic chorus may be stilled at this present-giving season by the offering, at Christmas and New Year, of the coveted volume, with full confidence that all will say "It's the very thing I wanted."

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