

A Book of the Week.**"THE SEATS OF THE MIGHTY."***

ACCORDING to the title page, this story is taken from the "Memoirs of Captain Robert Moray, sometime an Officer in the Virginia Regiment, and afterwards of Amherst's Regiment," and, in a short "Forward," Mr. Gilbert Parker records how he discovered in Quebec certain historical facts that were suggestive of romance. These historical elements Mr. Parker has woven into a very interesting novel, full of adventure and action, containing the characters of a rather attractive hero and heroine, and a most engaging villain. Children always prefer reading, or being read to, about naughty boys and girls, and grown people retain some of their early preferences, and often find that the villain of a tale is more picturesque, or, at any rate, more amusing to read about than the well-meaning men and women. I have often thought how grateful the reading public ought to be for the existence of villains, for, without their aid, no story of adventure could ever be written. I think that is one of the reasons why so many modern stories are so insipid—well-meaning people worry each other from good motives, and the up-to-date story ventilates problems and uses its characters to point and accentuate their morals. But people who are old-fashioned in their literary tastes are inclined to consider that these pamphleteering personages do not adorn the tales, though they do point their tiresome morals till every reader is exhausted with their tautological reiteration of the obvious.

Monsieur Doltaire, the courteous, charming villain of Mr. Parker's last tale, is a most fascinating conception of a gentleman and a complete rogue, and I am glad to say that he never repents, and is never sorry for his sins. It is one of the somewhat original charms of this book that the author has boldly and bravely placed on record that the heroine, Alexe Duvarney, was extremely taken with Doltaire's manners and conversation, and though, being a good sweet girl, she eventually learnt to stifle her inclination to be a victim to his undeniable charms, *yet she needed to resist*. Unlike the old-fashioned heroines who always flout the rascals of the melodrama before the wretched man has opened his mouth, or done anything to prove his villainy, Alexe was *very nearly* captivated by the silver tongue and elegant manners of the villain who so glibly talked to her of his affection and so-called esteem, but who shrunk from no lie, flinched from no dishonour, and dared every adventure to ruin his rival and benefit himself. He was capable of hanging, poisoning, or ruining any man, woman, or child who crossed his wishes in the smallest particular; but, to save his life, he could not have been rude to anyone—not even to an importunate beggar. Towards the end of the book a fine scene takes place between Doltaire and Alexe. The man tries with all the art which he knows so well how to employ to win the honest girl's consent to his suit. "Monsieur," says the brave-hearted maid, "I have lived long enough to know what pity moves you. It is the moment's careless whim—a pensive pleasure—a dramatic tenderness. You have no principles." "Pardon me, many," he urged, politely, as he eyed her with admiration. "Ah! no, Monsieur, habits, not prin-

ciples. Your life has been one long irresponsibility."

After more conversation, in which Alexe shows the penetration that brains and experience had given her into Doltaire's heart-motives, her wily "gallant" pleads that for a time she had been under his influence, and had even acknowledged it. Her noble, truthful answer is typical of the girl's nature, and of the high moral tone of this attractive story.

"Monsieur," she went on, "there were times when listening to you I needed all my strength to resist. I have felt myself weak and shaking when you came into the room. There was something in you that appealed to me, I know not what; but I do know that it was not the best of me, that it was emotional, some strange power of your personality. Ah, yes! I can acknowledge all now. You had great cleverness, gifts that startled and delighted; but yet I felt always—and that feeling grew and grew—that there was nothing in you wholly honest; that by artifice you had frittered away what once may have been good in you. Now, all goodness in you is an accident of sense and caprice, not true morality."

"What has true morality to do with love of you?" he said.

"You ask me hard questions," she replied. "We go from morality to higher things, not from higher things to morality. Pure love is a high thing; yours was not high."

What was his (her accepted lover's, Robert Moray's) was all of me worth the having, and was given always; there was no change. What was yours was given only in your presence, and then with hatred of myself and you—given to some baleful fascination in you. For a time the more I struggled against it, the more it grew; for there was nothing that could influence a woman which you did not do. Monsieur, if you had had Robert Moray's character and your own gifts, I could, Monsieur,—I could have worshipped you!"

I must apologise for such a long quotation, but I think the readers of the NURSING RECORD will forgive me if they read it, for it is a noble passage. The whole book is one that every wholesome-minded woman will read, mark, learn, and inwardly enjoy; yet it is full of adventure and perilous escapes, so that it will not come amiss to their men folks if they include it among their holiday luggage.

A. M. G.

Bookland.

THE "Authors" gave a complimentary dinner last week to the great woman novelist, Mrs. Hodgson Burnett, whose last work, "A Lady of Quality," is, by some literary critics, considered to surpass any other novel written by a woman. Mrs. Burnett delivered a most graceful speech, in which she remarked: "I think it possible that—say a hundred years from now—a woman may stand as I do, in some such place as this, the guest of men who have done the work all the world has known and honoured, and she will be the outcome of all the best and most logical thinking, of all the most reasonable and clear-brained men and women—women and men—of these seething years. She will have learned all the things I have not learned, and she will be a woman so much wiser and more stately of mind than I could ever hope to be—she will have so much more brain, so much more fine and clear a reason, that if we were compared we should scarcely seem to be creatures of the same race. And of this woman I say, 'Good luck to her, great happiness, fair fortunes, and all the fullest joyousness of living; all kind fates attend her, all good things to her—and to the men who will be her friends.'"

* "The Seats of the Mighty," by Gilbert Parker. 6s. (Methuen, 1896.)

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)