

A Book of the Week.

"SIMON DALE."*

ONE of Mr. Hope's reviewers has called his present story "an agreeable romance, in the Ruritanian manner!" And in sooth, it belongs to the realms of pure romance. However, it is none the worse for that; and, if it strains our capacity for belief to the utmost, when the hero coolly asks King Louis XIV. of France in what manner he will choose to die, still we bear in mind the delicious saying of Pudd'nhead Wilson, that truth may be as impossible as you like; it is only in fiction that you must abide steadily by the probabilities. Things as strange as that threatening of *Le Grand Monarque* in an open boat may really have occurred; the annals of Courts are full of wild romances.

It is much to the credit of Mr. Hope that he should succeed in laying his scene in the reign and about the Court of Charles II. without saying one word that could offend the most scrupulous. The dialogue is, as usual, the strong point. It is witty, pointed, delicate, and graceful; perhaps too uniformly witty, since Mr. Hope seems unable to resist putting epigrams into the mouths of all his characters. The failure, to my mind, is in the heroine, Barbara Quinton. She is so persistently disagreeable, that one really wonders how any lover could have put up with it. Certainly, at the end, she makes amends, but in all the earlier part she is a most unsatisfactory mistress. Perhaps she found that a continual waspishness was the only weapon she could wield against the licence and impurity of that evil day. For all her thorny ways, however, I think that Master Simon Dale was extremely obtuse.

As in the "The King with Two Faces," the hero of this story was the subject of a prophecy, which was duly fulfilled.

The scene in which he "drinks of the King's Cup," is, perhaps, the most impressive in the book.

Charles II. figures largely in the tale, and the author, like most who have written of this king, seems to have a curious kindness for him, in spite of his low, besotted habits of life, his selfishness and his insincerity: there is something about him which seems to appeal to the male mind: I have noticed the same sentiment, in the good humoured toleration extended by men to a drunken man. A woman will turn from the degraded spectacle in horror; a man has always a furtive kindness, an amused pity in his heart, as though, while he does not imitate, he finds no difficulty in understanding. The dialogue between Nell Gwyn and the King, when the monarch enters, just after the headstrong Simon Dale has proposed to marry the notorious Nelly, is a good example of Mr. Hope's manner.

"Nell rose, and coming to the side of the King's chair, stood there.

"Had things been other than they are, Mr. Dale would have asked me to be his wife," said she.

"A silence followed: then the king remarked,

"Had things been other than they are, Mr. Dale would have done well."

"And had they been other than they are, I might well have answered yes," said Nell.

"Why yes, very well," said the King, "for Mr. Dale is, I'm very sure, a gentleman of spirit and honour, although he seems, if I may say so, just now rather taciturn."

"But as matters are, Mr. Dale will have no more of me."

*"Simon Dale." By Anthony Hope. (Methuen & Co.)

"It's not for me," said the King, "to quarrel with his resolve, though I'm free to marvel at it."

"And asks no more of me than leave to depart."

"Do you find it hard, madam, to grant him that much?"

"She looked in the King's face, and laughed in amusement, but whether at him or me, or herself, I cannot tell."

"Why yes, mighty hard," said she. "It's strange how hard."

"By my faith," said the King, "I begin to be glad that Mr. Dale asked no more. For if it be hard to grant him this little thing, it might have been easy to grant him more. Come, is it granted him?"

"Let him ask for it again," said she, and leaving the King she came and stood before me, raising her eyes to mine. "Would you leave me, Simon?" she cried.

"Yes, I would leave you, Madam," said I.

"To go whither?"

"I don't know."

"Yet the question isn't hard," said the King, "and the answer is—elsewhere."

"Elsewhere!" cried Nell. "But what does that mean, Sir?"

"Nay, I don't know her name," said the King; "nor, maybe, does Mr. Dale yet. But he'll learn, and so, I hope, shall I, if I can be of any service to him."

G. M. R.

WHAT TO READ.

"The Spring of Day." By Hugh Macmillan, D.D.

"Travels in British East Africa." By W. W. A. Fitzgerald.

"Campaigning on the Nile and Niger." By S. Vandeleur.

"Italian Literature." By Dr. Richard Garnett.

"The Sundering Flood." By William Morris.

"The Incidental Bishop." By Grant Allen.

"The Scourge Stick." By Mrs. Campbell Praed.

"Hetty Fleet." By A. St. J. Adcock.

"Wyndham's Daughter." By Annie S. Swan.

"Tales of Trail and Town." By Bret Harte.

"The King with Two Faces." By M. E. Coleridge.

Coming Events.

March 16th.—The Lord Mayor presides at the Annual Meeting of the Royal Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, City Road.

March 16th.—Drawing Room Meeting at the Mansion House on behalf of the Fund for the Permanent Endowment of a Bed at the Great Northern Central Hospital as a Memorial to H.R.H. Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck. 4.30 p.m.

March 22nd.—Festival Dinner of the East London Hospital for Children, Mr. B. L. Cohen, M.P., L.C.C., presiding.

March 25th.—Royal British Nurses' Association. Sessional Lecture. Afghanistan (with Lantern Illustrations), by Miss Lillias Hamilton, M.D., late Physician to the Ameer at Cabul. At the Rooms of the London Medical Society, 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square. 8 p.m.

March 25th.—Annual Meeting of the Seamens' Hospital Society, Royal United Service Institution. The Bishop of London will preside.

DELICIOUS MAZAWATTEE TEA
DELICIOUS MAZAWATTEE TEA
DELICIOUS MAZAWATTEE TEA
A Guarantee of Purity.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)