

**A Book of the Week.**

**"A VOYAGE OF CONSOLATION." \***

Miss Duncan's delicious piece of fun is not, strictly speaking, a new book, it came out in the earlier part of this year; but I feel I should be failing lamentably in my duties were I not to draw attention to such a gem of wit and fun. I remember thinking that "Vernon's Aunt" was the funniest thing by a woman that I ever read; but really Miss Duncan has surpassed herself in this new piece of drollery, and is as refreshing as a water-spring in the desert. I do not in the least hold, with the late Charles Reade, that "most loving women have about as much sense of humour as a turtle dove." The remark shows in itself a want of knowledge of human emotion, for the power to feel strongly almost invariably works both ways; and the woman who loves best will almost certainly be the most keenly accessible to the humorous side of things also. But I do think that, as a rule, women who write books take themselves too seriously, and underrate the enormous advantage which a little "comic relief" gives to their finer passages.

I do not allude to the greatest names. No doubt, everybody will cry out at me with the example of George Eliot, which, of course, I shall freely admit; and both Miss Austen and Miss Ferrier were fully sensible to the importance of humour. But how much would Sarah Grand, for instance, be improved by the addition of a few ounces of fun! Miss Duncan's present book is as light as a feather throughout. It carries on the history of Miss Mamie Wick, of Chicago, whom many of us remember with pleasure. Mamie starts the book by breaking off that engagement to Mr. Arthur Page, which concluded her adventures in the earlier book. This done, she telephones to her father, in New York, to know what she had better do. The Senator decides that a trip abroad is the usual thing under the circumstances, and adds, "Bring Momma."

The trio accordingly sail on the *Germanic* forthwith for Europe; and the tale is, a whimsical record of their experiences, complicated by the love affairs of several other young persons, and concluding with the renewal of Mamie's own engagement under the most ultra-modern circumstances.

One remonstrance I would like, in the interests of my sex, to address to the accomplished Miss Duncan. A common male sneer at our sex is "the lady novelist's law." It is surely extremely easy for a woman who writes a book to assure herself on such subjects, and not to give herself away as does our author here.

Four young people clope to Dover, and are respectively joined together at a registry office the following morning. This is simply impossible. In the ordinary course of events, a registry office would require three weeks residence as rigidly as a church; and a special licence must be obtained from the Lord Chancellor, who does not reside at Dover, and would probably make a good many enquiries before granting it to people, three of whom were American citizens, the only English member of the party being under age.

But it is ungenerous to cavil at a book which has so diverted a weary reader. It is too full of good things to quote. One of the prettiest features in it is the Senator's pride in, and affection for, his women,

\* "A Voyage of Consolation." By Sarah Jeannette Duncan. Methuen.

What they do not wish to see has no pleasure for him; he lives as it were, a joint life with them, admiring, loving, protecting them, yet admitting their entire personal liberty to the fullest extent.

In fact, the loyalty to each other of the whole trio, each so different, is a charming trait, and one thinks of it with envy, recalling the attitude of the British paterfamilias, and brother, happily rarer now than formerly, who only dared take pleasure in the society of their own family, furtively as it were, and under penalty of being considered hen-pecked.

The illustrations are very pretty and spirited. They compare favourably with those of Mr. Greiffenhagen to Mr. Frankfort Moore's book, in which everyone looked as if either tipsy, or in too high a wind to stand up straight.

G. M. R.

**"The Lark that Tirra-Lirra Sings."**

When lilac shaketh her spray  
In the honey-sweet wind of May,  
And tulip offereth up  
Her ruby and amethyst cup,  
To receive the gold rays that fall,  
And be overbrimmed therewithal.  
The secret of Spring is revealed  
To the dweller within the field:  
Higher and ever higher,  
Like the voice of the heart's desire,  
The lark from the furrowed sod  
Ascendeth the ladder of God.  
What magic of song or speech  
To the meaning of Spring may reach?  
Man foregoes the endeavour,  
And abandons the hope for ever:  
That which he loses and leaves,  
The lark attains and achieves.  
Buoyed on the exquisite breath  
Of the May-World, "Listen," he saith,  
"To my passionate music, so far  
Past all that your weak words are!  
The song of songs, out of sight,  
Has soared to the light of light."

*From the Pall Mall Gazette.*

**WHAT TO READ.**

"Papers Relating to the Navy during the Spanish War, 1585-1587." Edited by Julian S. Corbett, LL.M.

"Talks with Mr. Gladstone." By the Hon. Lionel Tollemache.

"Memorials of James Northcote." By Stephen Gwynn.

"The Jew, the Gypsy, and El-Islam." By the late Sir Richard Burton. Edited, with an Introduction and Brief Notes, by W. H. Wilkins.

"The Mutineer." By Louis Becke and Walter Jeffery.

"Ezekiel's Sin." By J. H. Pearce.

"Evelyn Innes." By George Moore.

"The Admiral." By Douglas Sladen.

"The Edge of Honesty." By Charles Gleig.

"John Burnet of Barns." By John Buchan.

"Mars." By S. Darling Barber.

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