

A Book of the Week.

THE DOMINION OF DREAMS.*

Now that the pressure of the book-producing season is over, one has leisure to read some of those which perforce, for lack of space, were omitted in the earlier summer. And chief among these is the sheaf of Gaelic superstitions and legends which the author calls "The Dominion of Dreams."

Race characteristics are a most curious study; and the psychical development of the Gael among the most interesting of all such questions.

Much allowance must of course be made for geographical conditions, and those influences of climate and isolation which powerfully affect the mind of mankind. The dwellers on the wild, inaccessible, rocky isles which lie North and West of Scotland, are centuries behind ourselves in civilisation. Girt round by howling seas and dangerous rocks, with a starving soil and a cold climate, they live, perforce, an inner life, shut up within themselves. They are reserved, dignified, independent; also they are poetic, superstitious, and intensely conscious of that invisible world, those blind tremendous forces of nature, which seem to disappear altogether in the rows of mean streets that make cities. Nature, as the Gael knows it, does not exist for us. The lonely walks home past the weird crags where lurks the Fairy Fool, whose touch is madness—the wild evil spirit that intrudes into the music of the pipes, and sends young people mad at the wedding rejoicings—the one woman's face that makes a man's heaven or hell, because, whether she be his or another's, there is no getting away from her, for life is fixed and permanent and unalterable, and people have no ambitions, and no wealth, and no distractions from the fixed contemplation of one idea; all these things make one feel that one is entering upon a new world. And, to read Fiona Macleod with the proper enjoyment, one must first try to acquire the needful state of mind.

The book was made much more interesting to me, in that I have heard so much from Miss Goodrich Freer about the outlying Highlands, in which she lately spent so many months in pursuit of the national folk lore. She went among folk who spoke and understood no word of English, and had to be interpreted by the debonnair old Roman Catholic priest who lived among them; where her only diet for many weeks was tea and flounders, and where the inhabitants looked upon the house of Hanover as upstart usurpers, and still patiently looked forward to a time of Restoration!

Bearing in mind that conditions such as these now actually exist, and that you might transport yourselves there for your summer holidays, if the wind chanced to serve, and there happened to be a boat which had business at one of the Isles, and you could face the diet programme, and the extreme probability of having no lodging of any kind but a kitchen with a peat fire and no chimney; if all this has no terrors for you, then I advise you to go—with a store of tinned food, and "The Dominion of Dreams" in your trunk.

And then, lying by the music of the Atlantic in its holiday humour, and watching the boiling of whirlpools under mysterious underground caverns, you may

* By Fiona Macleod. Constable.

chance to see the mystic "herdsman," lonely on the hillside, or hear the chanting of Columba's monks, as they crossed those dangerous channels to almost certain martyrdom; or the echoes of the exquisite love of Ulad and Aithne:

"If he be living still, I shall find my king; if he be dead, my king awaiteth me; there is but one love."

G. M. R.

Poem.

A PARODY FROM "THE GEISHA."

I.

Doctor when him qualify
He think him mighty big,
Go down east end, cure him sailor
(Smellee like a pig),
No like sailor—take him practice
Downee west end town;
People no come ringee door-bell,
Makee doctor frown.

Poor old doctor man
Muchee makee swear,
Plenty make, morphia take,
Makee drown him care,
Then he try him back a gee-gee,
Plentee money drop;
Poor old doctor man,
Chop, chop, chop.

II.

Doctor he no money makee
Allee lifey long,
Makee plenty diagnosee,
Diagnosee wrong.
When he do big opelation
Man he muchee die,
Coroner he talkee, talkee,
Makee doctor sigh.

Poor old doctor man
Muchee makee jump,
Whisky drinkee plenty lot
Flavoured from the pump.
Sickee man no longer come
Makee shuttee shop;
Good-bye, doctor man,
Chop, chop, chop.

F. W. GALE.

(From "St. Bartholomew's Hospital Journal.")

WHAT TO READ.

- "Russia on the Pacific and the Siberian Railway." By Vladimir.
- "Characteristics." By Dr. S. Weir Mitchell.
- "Wild Eelin: Her Escapades, Adventures, and Bitter Sorrows." By William Black.
- "When the Sleeper Wakes." By H. G. Wells.
- "The Black Terror: a Romance of Russia." By John K. Leys.
- "Adventures of Rosalie Stuart." By William Shaw.
- "Mr. Miggs." By Alexander Stuart.

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