

## A Book of the Week.

## THE INIMITABLE MRS. MASSINGHAM.\*

This is a vigorous and clever romance, by one who has studied the English life and manners of the last century with force, if not with entire accuracy. It is most interesting, the excitement at times being of quite a breathless sort. The hero is also the narrator—one Robert Borradaile, a budding Hercules, apprenticed to his uncle, an advertising Chemist of Arundel Street, Strand. In the house comes to lodge Mr. Matheson, a pious Presbyterian gentleman, with his lovely daughter Gretna. The description of this man, who has a scientific turn, and is busy over a secret invention "for the good of mariners," is very clever. His frank, simple manner, his religious seriousness, his dislike that his daughter should go to the play, all contribute to the shock we feel, when he is found to be employed in the printing of forged Bank of England notes, and the hue and cry is out after him.

In the course of his stay in the apothecaries' shop, he has learned the deaf and dumb alphabet; and thus, when brought up at Bow Street, contrives to signal to Robert Borradaile to help his daughter's escape.

Then follows the flight of the innocent young pair, Robert protects his lady at risk of his life, knocks down and injures various minions of the law in the discharge of their duty; and gets transported to Botany Bay for ten years.

Here occurs the part of the book which the writer has felt most deeply.

The voyage to Australia, the five or six months' hell on board the convict ship, is enough to sicken the heart and make the very flesh revolt. But what follows among the miserable wretches when landed is even worse.

One marvels that any man could bear it and live. But Robert endures it for several years; and with wonderful skill is his gradual degradation described. In the nick of time he is sent into hospital—the result of a punishment of two hundred lashes. The doctor is a humane man, finds he has a superior convict to deal with, and does much to lighten the miserable Robert's lot.

Read, as the present reviewer has read it, at the close of that majestic and unprecedented reign, than which we happy souls have hitherto known no other, the book strikes a deep note. Can it be that a hundred years ago we were so cruel, so brutalised, so blasphemous, so idiotically unwise, as to keep and organise such hotbeds of devilish wickedness as were these convict settlements?

We look round at Society as it is; and there are many to tell us that the world is growing worse daily; but when we think that all this gruesome ferocity, which reads like a nightmare, is a thing of the past, we know that in the dead century England came far, very far, upon her toilsome road, although much, very much, still remains to make the heart of the would-be reformer beat fast.

When we read of a ship of convict women arriving, and the men of the place crowding down to choose fresh concubines—under the designation of "assigned female servants"—the wretched women themselves having not the faintest voice in the question of their own disposal, and when we realize that this is not

\* By Herbert Compton. Chatto and Windus.

fiction, but history—the history of England, not in the dark ages, but in the eighteenth century, surely we may take courage.

If so much has been done, why not more? If the grandchildren of the men who framed such systems have had the courage to condemn them, surely there is very much that can be achieved by the next generation, so that the twentieth century's all carry on the work of cleansing, and of mercy, in which the Great and Righteous Queen so nobly bore her true woman's part.

G. M. R.

## In Memoriam.

## THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

In the valley of the shadow of this death  
England lies,  
Says one name with sobbing breath,  
And with this one name replies,  
When one saith:

"It is well with her to-day in Paradise."

It is well with her, we know; but Love must still  
Very bitter find the cup that Death's hands fill.  
Those that go

Have no part in grief, we know,  
And are glad to know them freed  
Of all pain, but human sorrow  
Cannot see to-day atoned for by to-morrow.

Eighty years we saw and loved her; crowned and wed'  
Blessed the child,  
Praised the tender wife, the mother wise and mild,  
And revered upon the widow's head  
The crown of sorrow that weighed down  
More heavily than England's crown.  
How should Love tell her beads, except with tears,  
Beside this Queen who ruled us three-score years?

How should Love tell—but this Love has other ways:  
Not only weeping, but with solemn praise  
We thank God

That so many years she trod  
England's ways, paven street or sod.  
That so many times her eyes  
Saw the sun set in the skies  
More beautiful in dying, like a soul  
Made lovely with the nearness to its goal.

Therefore this our sorrow is not without light,  
Though there has fallen upon her the night  
When shall none

Labour more, whate'er be done,  
Much or little. Much she wrought  
Ere death ended deed and thought.  
Much love from her people won,  
As a star in her high place  
Stood she—now the loss is ours,  
Hers the earth, the grass, the flowers, and God's face.

NORA HOPPER.

—Westminster Gazette.

## Coming Events.

Saturday, February 2nd.

FUNERAL OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA.

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