

A Book of the Week.

PLACE AND POWER.*

"Good aims," said Aurora Leigh, "not always make good books." A perusal of the volume before us will enable us to amplify the saying, and to assert that good aims do not make good books even when strengthened by good dialogue.

There is no doubt whatever of Mrs. Felkin's capacity as a wit. Her power of epigram is very great. We fully agree with Eileen St. Just, when she affirmed that to marry her would be like living with the "Dolly Dialogues," or a bound volume of *Punch*. But to write a witty tract is an ambition which is wholly new in our experience; and fails perhaps on account of its own inherent impossibility.

It is a most curious characteristic of this author that the things her people say are always interesting, the things they do are wholly unconvincing. In this volume we have a Curse—a carriage accident, resulting in three premature births—the operation known, I believe, as "Transfusion," or passing blood from the veins of a healthy to those of a moribund subject—a drowning episode—a gun accident—a fall in the hunting-field—and a discovery that two babies were changed at birth; and none of these things waken our interest, or compel our attention, because they all are manifestly made to order, and in no sense a portion of the story. Conrad Clayton, the blatant atheist, is a cad of such vast dimensions that we cannot believe he would have been tolerated for a moment in any society. In fact, we cannot believe that a man so sunk in provincial littleness, so ill-bred, so childishly conceited, could have been a clever enough man to rise to eminence in the State. The portrait is a caricature. It is not too much to say that he never, throughout the book, once makes a remark that would suggest any kind of intellectual capacity. And the only indication given of ability by the brilliant Mark Stillingfleet is his power to join in the flippant repartee encouraged by Eileen St. Just.

The book must be a disappointment to all who, like the present reviewer, would welcome with open arms any writer who is informed by the vital truths of Revelation, and is not afraid to stand forth as a champion of the Gospel. Mr. Felkin has often, in verse or epigram, given hints of a mind which has seen deeply, and an intellect which has judged acutely; but her present effort seems to reveal a shallowness for which one was hardly prepared.

It may seem ungracious to cavil, however, at work which provides generously for our amusement. Here and there we catch our author in her happiest vein, as the following examples may serve to show:—

"Queens always make offers instead of receiving them. When a queen wants to propose to a man she says, 'May I offer you half-a-crown?' That's the way it is done."

"And I don't know that it's such a bad way after all. If a queen said that to me, I should reply, 'By all means, Madam, if you'll accept a sovereign in exchange.'"

Or—

"I wish, Sophia, that you would leave off choking," said Mr. Bamfield, as if his wife were continuing the exercise for her own selfish pleasure.

* By Ellen Thornycroft Fowler. Hutchinson and Co.

'It is a detestable habit, and one which I have noticed is growing upon you.'

"'It was only a crumb,' began Sophy, and then went off into a fresh paroxysm.

"'It is a most remarkable thing,' said Eileen, 'that people who are choking will always jeopardise their lives by explaining the cause of the accident, which is of no interest to anybody. They will use up their last breath in gasping out that it was only a crumb or a drop of water—as if their friends believed for a moment that it was a hogshead of beer or a mutton chop.'

Or—

"It is so difficult nowadays to tell the difference, at a little distance, between a puncture and a proposal. You come upon a young man upon his knees in a grassy lane at the feet of a young woman, and you say to yourself, 'The days of romance are not yet over; these also are in Arcady!' But as you come nearer you discover that the suppliant is not proposing at all, only pumping. Such is the romance of to-day."

G. M. R.

Bird Call.

Out of the distance and the dark
The cry of the bird,
Like some wonderful word,
As if the dear darkness had stirred,
And had dreamed the dawn lark.
Dear heart, dear and far,
Did you dream of a star
Or a bell, or a bird—
And I heard?

ZONA GALE, *The Bookman*.

What to Read.

"The Grand Duchy of Finland." By the Author of "A Visit to the Russians in Central Asia."

"For England. Poems written during Estrangement." By William Watson.

"The Stolen Emperor: a Tale of Old Japan." By Mrs. Hugh Fraser.

"The Island of Sorrow." By George Gilbert.

"Six Chapters of a Man's Life?" By Victoria Cross.

Coming Events.

October 10th.—Thirtieth Annual Special Collection in aid of the medical charities of London by Hospital Saturday Fund.

October 16th and 17th.—National Convention of persons interested in the Defence and Extension of the Civic Rights of Women, convened by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, the Holborn Town Hall. Apply for information to Miss Palliser, Secretary, 25, Victoria Street, S.W.

October 22nd.—Meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Council of Nurses, Matron's House, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, E.C., 3 p.m.

Meeting of the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, Matron's House, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, 4.30 p.m.

October 23rd.—Meeting of the Executive Committee, Society for the State Registration of Nurses, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, 4.30 p.m.

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