

from clear. An unsightly appearance was caused by "education eruption and brewers' blotch."

It is time laws relating to women's status were brought into harmony at home and in the Colonies. The Common Serjeant at the Old Bailey last week directed the jury to find Ernest John Dacre not guilty of stealing the property of his wife, whom he married in Australia. The Married Women's Property Act, he said, was not effective in the Colony of Victoria, and consequently they were thrown back upon the common law of the land, which said that the property of the wife was the property of the husband. Dacre was accordingly discharged.

Then, again, the Federal Cabinet in Australasia has decided to address an earnest representation to the Imperial Government, urging that the nullification in the Mother Country of marriages with a deceased wife's sister, which are recognised in the Commonwealth, is a grave breach of the unity of the Empire, and praying the Imperial authorities to give the matter their consideration.

A Book of the Week.

THE LAST HOPE.*

There is a haunting sadness about the title of Mr. Merriman's last novel. It seems to us, as it were, from the grave; the last work of him who was always a conscientious, artistic workman, and who, perhaps, in his later days, laid too much stress upon certain canons which he had laid down for himself as regards the methods of his trade.

His leading idea was, it appears, something like this:—

"Tell people what happened; not consecutively, but in a series of snap-shots; then leave them to form their own conclusions respecting the character, motives, aims of all those concerned."

His first snap-shot is a striking one. The Marquis de Gemosac, one of the old French nobility, strong Legitimist and conspirator, is in a neglected Suffolk graveyard, drawn thither by the local tradition respecting an unnamed Frenchman, cast ashore there in a shipwreck, who had lived and died among the East Anglian fisherfolk; who had married a Miss Clubbe; who had become the father of a son; and who had been buried in the country churchyard, never to the last knowing whose son he was. The name by which he was known was Barebone. His son passed as Loo Barebone. But to the Marquis de Gemosac he was Louis de Bourbon, grandson of Louis Seize, son of that Dauphin of France who, according to a strangely persistent report, was, as a fact, smuggled out of the Temple, and afterwards disappeared into space.

The Marquis has come to Farlingford to look at Loo, and to suggest to him that he shall lay claim to the throne of France.

Loo has the Bourbon countenance, and, apparently, the Bourbon ineffectiveness. He does not accept the offer of the Marquis until he has proposed to Miriam, the Rector's niece, and been refused. Miriam refuses him because she ardently believes in his claims. She is secretly sure that he is King of France, and she knows herself no suitable wife for a reigning monarch. She sacrifices herself for his future, in which she

believes, thereby showing herself a mighty poor judge of character; for Loo has none of the essentials necessary for one who would capture a throne by force. He is gay and handsome, he is also brave and noble-minded; but he is a dreamer and not a doer; there is no stiffness in his resolution. The woman who was shipwrecked with his unknown father had with her, among other things, a miniature supposed to be the child's mother. This miniature was a portrait, not of Marie Antoinette, but of Madame de Guiche, mistress of the Duc d'Antois.

The supposition then was that Loo's father was an illegitimate son of Charles X., which would, of course, account for the Bourbon likeness.

On the other hand, had the child really been the Dauphin of France, it was quite conceivable that the lady to whose care he was entrusted should have had instructions to pretend that he was, in fact, somebody else—somebody of consequence, enough to account for her anxiety for his safety, but at all risks not the heir to the throne himself.

The most striking snap-shot in the book is the scene in which, at a meeting of ardent Legitimists, the miniature, which had been for years jammed together, is opened, and found to contain a portrait of Marie Antoinette, carefully placed there by one of the conspirators.

But the snap-shots which treat of Miriam's sacrifice are not so convincing.

They reveal the truly masculine standpoint taken up by Mr. Merriman in all his books. He assumes that it must be obvious to all his readers that, in spite of her refusal, Miriam was so much in love with Loo as to render her self-sacrifice a heroism and a tragedy. But it is not easy to assume a young woman of whom you know nothing to be ardently in love with a young man of whom, from beginning to end of the book, you know singularly little. Such things are by no means inevitable; one needs to be told something of what was in the hearts of these two young people before one can pour out sympathy for them. One is asked to invent too much for oneself. The function of the novelist is to create the situation for you; and the simple fact of Loo's proposing to Miriam does not in the least show that she was or must have been in love with him in return.

G. M. R.

What to Read.

"The Most Illustrious Ladies of the Italian Renaissance."

"The Dream of Peace." By Francis Gribble.

Coming Events.

November 7th.—Annual Conference of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland at York (five days).

November 9th and 10th.—Meeting of the National Council of Women of Great Britain and Ireland, York.

November 25th.—Meeting of Delegates of the Provisional Committee for the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain and Ireland, 431, Oxford Street, London, W., 2.30 p.m.

To consider and take action upon a letter from Miss L. L. Dock; Hon. Secretary International Council of Nurses.

* By H. Seton Merriman. (Smith, Elder and Co.)

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