

lent opinion, not that men and women were exactly the same for the purposes of Church government, but that there was a difference which was removed if the woman had a little ratable property. That practically meant that man, minus woman, equalled ratable property." There is much truth in his gibe. Surely a ratable qualification for admission to a Church franchise comes uncommonly close to Simony.

## A Book of the Week.

### DIVERS VANITIES.\*

Among word-painters, few living writers can rank higher than Mr. Morrison. There is something which is really classic in his ability to discard all words but those essential to his meaning, and his unerring instinct in selecting just those which will express what he desires to convey. It is seldom possible to select, for special praise, special criticism, a volume of short stories. The fact that we do so this week will of itself express how high our opinion is of this young man, who takes his views of life from the seamy side, who never embellishes them with one unlikely touch, who relies on the intense pathos of human nature alone to redeem much that is sordid, to soften much that is hard, to ennoble much that is vile. The Angel of Pity has brushed with his ineffable wing the lips of this man, who stands as a mouthpiece of the malefactor and the down-trodden—the man who simply says, "See! That is so. These things are among you and you took no heed, and you let it go. But I will make you look. I will take you by the hand, and through me you shall look into the dark secrets of such possibilities as you never dreamed of; and afterwards, will you be able to turn away and forget?"

Will you? That is the question.

Mr. Morrison is the friend of the "gonoph"—thief, the "fence"—receiver of stolen goods—of the "lob-crawler"—or boy put through windows by a larger thief—of the "peter-claimer"—or snatcher of unwatched bags and small luggage in railway stations. He gives you their lives in a few pages of large clear print, not merely one incident in their career, but the whole thing lies out before you in its unspeakable piteousness, its terrible, naked, shameless shame. Human life, stripped to its last rag, is merely the life of the beast of prey. To live, you must eat. To eat, you must either work, or otherwise procure the means. There exists a vast number of degenerates, to whom work is no better than hell, who will do anything, everything else, rather than work for bread. Take the story, called "One more unfortunate"—perhaps one of the least interesting, and yet one of the most terribly fascinating—a story that will not let itself be forgotten. Bill Harnell, in new sea-boots and new serge coat, tramping home, across one of the Thames bridges. A woman throws herself into the filthy river, and true to his instinct, Bill kicks off his heavy boots, pulls off his new coat, and flings himself in after her. When he has brought the woman to land, he finds his clothes have disappeared—the woman, too, has whipped herself up and disappeared with incredible speed, down a dark alley.

"Lor'!" said an immense woman who now appeared, "Done 'im for 'is boots, pore bloke, What a shame!"

"Wet, mate?" asked another, kindly.

"It's jist the same ol' game," pursued the first. "They done it afore, many's the time. It's water-boots they tries for, mostly. They ought t'ave six muuse, both on 'em—'er and 'er bloke. She won't never be drowned; swims like anything."

"What's 'er name?" demanded Bill, as the state of the case grew apparent to him. "Oo are they, an' where do they live?"

The faces about him were instantly expressionless as a brick wall.

"No, we dunno, mate," came the reply in far-away tones, "we dunno nothin' about 'em. You go 'ome afore you ketch cold."

Picture to yourself a woman who will elect rather to throw herself into the foul dark river at night, and risk its dangers and its disgustingness, in order to obtain the pawn-price of a pair of sea-boots, than to do a day's work for a day's wage!

One of the more amusing of the stories, most of which are tragedies in little, is the reclamation of Spotto Bird. Spotto is a watch thief of a clever and usually prosperous kind; but he has been caught, has undergone penal servitude, and in goal has so far lost his dexterity of touch, that on coming out he bungles his first attempt, and finds himself in the clutches of Mr. Bullwinker, social reformer, who has discovered that criminality is a disease, and can be cured like any other, but must of course never be punished.

"Amid the multitude of Mr. Bulwinkle's views, only one appeared unchanging; ever and persistently he proclaimed himself a man of peace, quarrelling unceasingly, with opposition and with none. . . . If the row were between his country and another, his country must be wrong, and if the row were between an honest man and a thief, then obviously the thief was a very ill-used person. Likewise, such was the peace-maker's sympathy with rows, that if he found a policeman quelling one in the street, he invariably took his number."

As long as this gentleman confined himself to explaining his views to Spotto at 5s. a day, Spotto bore it, although the pay was wretched. But it was when the next stage was divulged, and he found he was to be set to digging, that the outraged thief knocked down his benefactor, took his watch, and decamped, with the profound sympathy of every reader, in addition to his other booty!

The pathos of "Ingrates at Bagshaw's" is almost too poignant. It leaves a heart-ache. There is a humorous touch and a gleam of brightness in "Charlwood with a number," for which we are grateful to Mr. Morrison, as a prisoner may be grateful to his torturer when he hears he is to be let off for once. The volume closes with three legends of old Essex, which give a touch of vivid variety to a most noteworthy collection of studies. It would be interesting to know that this remorseless author had decided for once to chronicle humanity in its less sordid, petty, low, and crawling aspects. Rising from these terrible pages one is forced to the conclusion of Maud's despairing lover—

"Face it out as we may, we men are a little breed."

\* By Arthur Morrison. (Methuen.)

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