

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"HEDWIG IN ENGLAND."*

This book and its companion, "Marcia in Germany," were published some years ago, but as we think that probably many of our readers have never had them brought under their notice, we have this week departed from our custom of reviewing a recent work, in order to revive these two amusing stories, which have a special significance at this time.

Indeed, but for the date on the cover they might well have been written for the moment.

Hedwig asks leave of the Baron, her father, to visit some relations in England.

The Baron consents, but prepares Hedwig for some of the eccentricities of the English.

"A striking difference is that with us it is the women who admire and applaud the men; in old England, the stage is held by the women with their smart frocks and smart sayings, while the men sit down below clapping their appreciation."

So Hedwig, after a bewildering journey, found herself in a wealthy house in a fashionable part of London.

Instead of the motherly aunt and an effusive welcome, she was ushered by the butler into a luxurious boudoir.

"Hedwig's eyes were fixed upon the fireplace, with its cheerful blaze, before which two deep armchairs were drawn up.

These might have been empty had it not been for a pair of silk ankles and grey suede shoes which protruded from one, and found their resting-place just under the mantelpiece.

The owner of the ankles was Beatrice, Hedwig's cousin.

"Awfully glad to see you, my dear Hedwig. You must have had a time of it in this infernal fog."

At the same time a figure rose from the chair on the other side of the mantelpiece, and Hedwig saw to her amazement that she had interrupted a tête-à-tête.

"Buck up, Bunny, and ring the bell, and light the spirit lamp and bring the table over to the couch, and the cake-stand, too," Miss Ilford commanded. Poor Hedwig was much affronted by Bunny's languid acknowledgment of the introduction; no clicking of heels and deep bows from that quarter. Instead of the motherly, comfortable English version of a Frau she had imagined her aunt to be, there appeared, when they were assembled before dinner, the vision of a worldly and beautiful woman dressed in the height of fashion and extravagance.

She was dining out, and then a further feeling of outrage awakened in Hedwig's breast.

Without any hint of apology, too.

"Well, I suppose I must be starting now," she observed. "Sam, you may carry my cloak downstairs, if you're good. Ta-ta, children."

How objectionable it was to Hedwig to see a woman who ought to be middle-aged, and thinking

of nothing but her family and household, coquetting with boys the age of her own son.

In a letter to her Papachen, she gives vent to her disapproval of the household in general.

Mrs. Ilford's attitude to her baby son gives Hedwig food for reflection, and she compares Nigel to a contemporary in Germany, Hans von Friednau, who would walk sedately into the room in his plain, rather coarse little garments and kiss the hand of everyone present.

Master Nigel had just been borne off by his nurse, a confused mass of delicate laces and embroidery, with white kid shoes kicking furiously.

"Dear me, babies are like other domestic items, a little of them goes a long way," Mrs. Ilford remarked, with a laugh.

The climax of outraged feeling was reached on Christmas Eve, which she spent with her cousins in a hotel by the sea.

Her aunt had gone off to Monte Carlo, and the day, so full of sentimental associations for the German girl, was spent in solitude, while her relations amused themselves on the golf course.

In a letter to Papachen, she gives way to her desolation.

"I daresay none of them have even remembered that it is Christmas Eve. I have been wondering what you will do, my poor Papachen, all alone—who will decorate your tree and brew the punch, and sing, 'O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum?'"

Papachen was making himself perfectly happy by courting a second wife during his daughter's absence.

Hedwig's visit to some middle-class relations in Suburbia presents a picture of British snobbery seldom excelled. Her typical German love affair lands her home on a wave of bliss.

We are sure that our readers will derive immense amusement and some wholesome home-truths from the perusal of this book. H. H.

I WISH.

I wish I were a willow tree—
Young wind in the green hair of me
And old brown water round my feet,
And a familiar bird to greet.

For I am such a stunted pine
On this blue mountain-top of mine;
Celestial hills are barren things
Without the little voice that sings!

—By Elizabeth Bertron Fahnestock
in the "Outlook."

WORD FOR THE WEEK.

"There will always be two types of minds in the world. One that thinks charity the greatest of human virtues, because it holds it to be the spontaneous outpouring of the soul; the other looks rather to justice between man and man and between nation and nation, as the highest expression of the mind of man."—Mr. R. B. Cunninghame Graham.

* By W. Marchmont. London: Heinemann.

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