

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"MR. MISFORTUNATE."

The romance of "Bonnie Prince Charlie," as told by Miss Bowen, will be attractive, for sure, and so needs no preliminary recommendation. It deals with the period subsequent to his defeat at Culloden, during his retirement in France, when he was deluded by the false hopes held out to him by Louis XV of reinforcement and money in order that he might once more endeavour to establish his claim to the throne. As is inseparable from Miss Bowen's writing, the book abounds in vivid local colouring, and her characters are painted with the grace and charm which are peculiar to her.

Prince Charles and his brother Prince Henry of York during their attendance at Mass give the varying characteristics of the two brothers as exhibited in their attitude to religion.

"The music penetrated to the heart of the young man kneeling by the pillar, who folded his hands tightly on his heart and pressed his knees deeper into the velvet cushion with a little tremor of emotion." Prince Henry shortly afterwards donned the Cardinal's hat.

"His companion, a few years older than himself, and of an appearance far more attractive and handsome, remained kneeling a little behind him in the shadow, making no great trouble to stifle his yawns or to conceal his boredom at the long ceremony. . . . His face was so charming, his bearing so manly, that all the ladies in his vicinity were looking at him, and several endeavouring to engage his attention.

"But this feminine flattery, to which he was but too well used, appeared to weary him as much as the Mass; he took no notice of any of his admirers, his sole interest seemed to be for his young companion, whose very earnest devotion he regarded with some intolerance."

Then follows a vivid description of his dress and personality which is very alluring. Yet, his noble figure standing there so negligently might have been in the eyes of many that of a martyr to this faith, to whose tenets he had sacrificed his fairest hopes and whose influence had cost his family a triple crown. It was because he realised this that he was indifferent to-day, because his brother set the things of faith before the things of time, that he was impatient with him, and because he had no thought in his heart beyond the passion for his lost inheritance that he had escaped the allure of the fashionable wantons with which the gay and vicious Court circle abounded. In contra-distinction to the painted beauties of that period there ever arose to his imagination the healthy face of the noble Flora Macdonald, creeping out to meet him with a bowl of milk; by moonlight, with other Scots-women free stepping, with wind-browned face and loose hair, simple creatures without art or

luxury to adorn them, faithful and brave as the men folk, fragrant and strong as their heather.

But for all that his toast was the "second daughter of France, the black eyes," a toast given in defiance during his wanderings, a stiff little creature of brocade and lace, her complexion too whitened to show pallor, too rouged to show a blush, exact as an expensive puppet in her decorum and taught grace." Was she not the daughter of Louis XV, on whom all his hopes and ambitions hung?

Poor Charles, the treachery of Louis was foreshadowed in his daughter's disdain.

"Monseigneur has presumed."

Stewart pride flamed to meet the Bourbon pride.

"It would not be the first time there has been an alliance between our houses," he reminded her proudly.

Her reply had the astonishing cruelty of a child's artlessness.

"It would be the first time that a daughter of France has espoused one in the position of Monseigneur."

It was after this rebuff that Charles entered into an intrigue with Madame de Talmond. He preferred her to other women, but she only stirred his fancy fitfully. On her side at least there was love and loyalty, and on his there was "at least anodyne if not balm in this warm affection so freely offered; anodyne for the pain and mortification, the misery and remorse closed in his sore heart." But he did not hesitate to leave her side at the message that his faithful friend Lochiel was dying.

Charles entered the death chamber, the light from the outer room enabled him to see the bed with its looped-back curtains and the outlines of the Highland chief, whose pillows had been composed, and over whose limbs was spread a rug of Cameron tartan. What memories now of the days at Moidart when this man had been persuaded to risk all in a cause he knew to be damned.

Old Lochiel wandered in with an aimless curiosity and a dull sorrow. He straightened the coverlet of his son's bed with a shaking hand.

"They always said a fair-haired chief would be unfortunate," he said.

"There is no one," said Charles, "so unfortunate as I am."

Enough quotations have been given, we feel sure, to make every reader long to read the book as a whole, and indeed no one should miss the opportunity of doing so. Writing of such rare charm as Miss Bowen's should not be neglected by any intelligent person, and those who fail to appreciate it are indeed to be pitied.

H. H.

A WORD FOR THE WEEK.

"Thinkers are scarce as gold; but he whose thoughts embrace all his subject, pursues it uninterruptedly and fearless of consequences, is a diamond of enormous size."—*Lavater*.

*By Marjorie Bowen. W. Collins & Sons, Ltd.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)