Miss Marie Corelli.

By Kent Carr.

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Miss Marie Corelli's 15th Century Home at Stratford-on-Avon.

PREFATORY NOTE.

MISS MARIE CORELLI is at once the most popular and the most abused of novelists. Her public is staunch as her critics are bitter. As Miss Marie Corelli divides opinion, so probably will this book. The critics will not like it, but her public will, unless I am greatly mistaken, eagerly welcome it. If some of the things it contains are of almost sensational interest from a literary point of view, that is the good fortune of editor, writer, and publisher, who find themselves in a position to give to the world an account of a remarkable personality, the difficulties of the task notwithstanding. The illustrations this little book contains may be taken as some measure of the special matter which we have been so fortunate as to command.

THE EDITOR "B. B."

CHRONOLOGY.

ADOPTED by Dr. Charles Mackay; educated in a French Convent; trained for music and wrote an opera at fourteen; published "A Romance of Two Worlds" and "Vendetta," 1886; "Thelma," 1887; "Ardath," 1889; "Soul of Lilith," 1892; "Barabbas," 1893; "The Sorrows of Satan," 1895; "The Mighty Atom" and "The Murder of Delicia," 1896; "Ziska: the Problem of a Wicked Soul," and "Jane," 1897; serious illness, 1897; death of Eric Mackay, 1898—resulting in further serious illness of Miss Corelli; "Boy" and "The Master Christian," 1900.

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MISS MARIE CORELLI.

CHAPTER I.

Childhood's Dreams—Eric Mackay—How "A Romance of Two Worlds" came to be Written—The Illness of Dr. Mackay and the Death of Eric.

It was Stevenson who suggested that in criticism it might be as well to dwell on merits, these being oftenest overlooked. But since 1886 the critics of Marie Corelli have been mainly concerned in handling, more or less roughly, those things in her writings which are assuredly not merits. To add to the unfairness, certain of her friends, armed with no better literary equipment than their partisan-

ship, have chosen to cry aloud, an adulation which must be as offensive to the recipient as to the reader. The public have not criticised at all, being content to offer that sort of substantial appreciation which sends up editions. And, with it all, in this present year of grace she stands easily first as the novelist who can win the largest audience to her utterances.

For the baby girl, adopted into the Mackay family through her mother's marriage with Dr. Charles Mackay, there was from the first the literary environment and abundant affection. There was also the loneliness which comes of necessity to every little one in a household where the playfellows are all in the grown-up stage. It drove Dr. Mackay's "Wee Rosebud" to the companionship of books and to pretty fancies in which angel visitors came to

stay. The influences around her were gracious ones and may well have quickened her powers, but they can in no sense be said to have created or even suggested them. Her baby personality was unique, but it was precisely the personality which now makes her unique as a woman. The amazing mental audacity and matter-of-course religious conviction which led puzzled governesses to call her a "strange" child are as much her own possession to-day as are the clear violet-gray eyes, which in the old days looked out of the little face in her country nursery.

Her birthday fell on the 1st of May, and the old rhyme with its wonderful promises filled her childish mind with an abiding sense of responsibility. If the mysterious and the unknown appealed to her from the first, her attitude

towards them took the peculiarly unchildlike form of "being much more interested in trying to consider what God might be doing than what His creature man did." God to her was always a close personal friend, to be taken into her confidence and all the little businesses of her daily life. The budding-out of a favourite May-tree on her birthday seemed to her God's birthday gift; and once when her governess instilled the maxim, "You must be good and try to please God," she answered in amazement—"Why, of course; everybody and everything must try to please God, else where would be the use of living at all?"

In the same way her belief in angels was inborn. She never went to bed without expecting to see one. And these angel friendships of hers received a gentle encouragement from Dr.

Mackay himself. Once when the little girl complained that she "could not see the angel in her room," he answered out of his wise poetic soul, "Never mind! It is there you may be sure, and if you will behave just as if you saw it, you will see it some day."

Most of her play-time was spent in Dr. Mackay's study. Here in his charming way he told her stories of his own personal friends, Charles Dickens and Thackeray; of how General Hugh Mackay fought at Killiecrankie, or of his own literary life "through the long day." She read where she would, and at ten years old Shakespeare and Scott's world had been added to her own. Poetry entranced her at all times, and "Adonais," "Lycidas," and Keats' "St. Agnes' Eve" wrought their old spell.

In the fulness of time, when the days

of private governesses and indiscriminate reading came to an end, she was sent to study at a French convent. The effect on such a nature was inevitable. "I became for a time," she said, "so absorbed in the mysteries of the religious life, that I had some vague ideas of founding a 'New Order' and of being the leader of an entirely original community of Christian workers, who should indeed follow Christ in spirit and in truth. Fond of solitude and meditation, I was what my school companions called *devotée*, and was given to much reading and thought. I passed most of the hours of relaxation in the convent chapel, playing and improvising melodies on the great organ near the altar, preferring this mode of occupying myself to the games of croquet, tennis, and archery in which all were permitted to engage."

The idea that she had her own way to make in the world was instilled into her from the first. But the way thereto must have seemed singularly clear to Dr. Mackay when he listened to her vocal rendering of the old Scotch ballads, and realised that her small fingers had all the makings of a brilliant pianist. She herself had large aims on the subject and had almost composed an opera, when her career suddenly snapped. Excessive strain, hard work, and harder thinking, proved too much for her, and she was ordered home to rest. Here the "angel" fancies visited her again. And the result was their embodiment in "A Romance of Two Worlds," when, on her last return from the convent, Dr. Mackay's illness compelled her to think of earning a livelihood.

George Eric Mackay—generally

known as Eric Mackay — has been so much associated with the novelist, that it is as well to give here some outline of his actual life and connection with her. He was the second son of the poet Dr. Charles Mackay, by that gentleman's first marriage. He was born in 1835, and partly educated at the Academy of Inverness under that well-known "dominie," Peter Scott. When he was old enough to begin to think of a career, his father tried him first in a house of business, but to no purpose, and then endeavoured to fit him for literature. But he objected strenuously to what he stated was "a beggarly profession," and urged his father to let him go on the stage. Charles Kean tried his powers as an actor, but found him wanting in perseverance. Frank Mori the composer

then tried his voice, and thought it sufficiently good for him to try the career of an opera singer. His father sent him to Italy for training when he was about twenty-four years of age, and for five or six years paid £10 a month for his musical education. All this time, however, he never took any lessons at all, but merely passed his days in amusement. This fact coming at last to his father's knowledge, the money supplies were stopped. He was thus thrown on his own resources, and lived somewhat precariously, sometimes giving lessons in French and English, and doing a little correspondence for the press. He acted for a short time as correspondent to one of the London papers during the Garibaldi campaign. A great many notable people tried to assist him—among others, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, W. Hemans (son of the

poetess Felicia Hemans), Sir William Perry, Captain Sir Richard Burton, and others. But he was always in difficulties, and never seemed able to keep a position. His father sent him money now and then and gave him valuable introductions, but apparently all to no purpose. He lived some years in Rome, and on leaving there did some secretarial work for the late Sir William Perry, Consul at Venice. He published one small book of poems, entitled "Songs of Love and Death," which he dedicated to Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, who had given him some assistance. A reference to this volume, published in the sixties by Chapman & Hall, will show the capabilities of his literary bent in this early period of his manhood. The book was a failure and made no stir. He then started, at different seasons,

two small papers in Italy—one called *The Roman Times*, published in Rome, the other *Il Poliglotta*, published in Venice. Also he published two small paper-covered volumes, entitled "Days and Nights in Italy," and "Lord Byron at the Armenian Convent." The former was merely a collection of the stray articles he had written for newspapers, the latter was a *resumé* of facts already known but put in guide-book form for the use of travellers visiting Venice. Both books were failures, and he got himself into debt with his newspapers and various ventures, till, after twenty years' absence from England, he returned to his father's house quite penniless, at the age of forty-five. There he met his father's little adopted girl for the first time when she was still a mere child. She was full of fairy tales, romances, and poetry,

and the unfortunate condition in which he, her beloved step-father's son, found himself, moved her to the greatest distress and compassion. She did all in her power to smooth over the "ructions" between him and his father, and her friend Miss Bertha Vyver—daughter of Countess Vyver, once a well-known "beauty" at the Court of Napoleon III. — who had then come to reside with her as a companion and sister, did the same. The two girls scraped money together for him, and urged him to try his hand again at literature, and stick to it. A few extracts from some of the letters he wrote to Miss Corelli at this time, when he had taken lodgings at Clapham and was trying to find work on the newspapers, show how much he felt her spirit of enthusiasm in urging him on.

"I am happier than I have been since boyhood, for I have a little sister again, and that little sister—the best and brightest in the world—does everything for me. But how far short of your ambition for me must I fall!—for you have already done so much in your short life—you a child and I, alas! a man growing old."

It should be noted here that his own sister, the only daughter of Dr. Mackay, had died very suddenly and tragically in her girlhood. Another letter says—

"I must thank you for sending me the little Keats volume. Curiously enough, I never read his poems at all before. Browning I can't stand, but if you like him I must read him. You seem to live in an atmosphere of poetry, but pray be careful and do not study too hard."

After a little while spent at home he produced a volume, entitled "Pygmalion in Cyprus," which was published by subscription among his father's friends.

It was not a success, and its author, again disheartened, declared himself sick of literature. He then tried writing plays, and offered two farces to John Hollingshead, but these were rejected. Meanwhile his "little sister" wrote her first story under a *nom-de-guerre*, and sent it to a well-known magazine. It was returned with the editorial assurance that "novel-writing was not her *forte*." She was rather glad of the rebuff, for her whole soul was centred in music and poetry, while her singing-voice was winning such golden opinions that she was destined for a musical career directly her training was complete. She used to attend a great many concerts, especially those of Sarasate, and it was while listening to the famous Spanish violinist in her company that Eric Mackay suddenly conceived the

idea of learning the violin. His "little sister" warned him that it was somewhat late to begin, but nothing would move him from his fancy, so she managed to get him an old "Guarnerius" violin from Chappell on the quarterly instalment system, which she paid till it was all cleared off; while she also, with the assistance of her ever sympathetic friend Miss Vyver, managed to pay for his lessons on the instrument. He never did, however, manage to play more than a simple tune in single notes upon it, and the only good his whim brought him was that, while practising, he got the suggestion of his most successful book of poems, "Love-Letters of a Violinist," the title of which Miss Corelli suggested. She undertook to arrange for its publication with Messrs. Field & Tuer, and made herself responsible for all costs, selling some of

her little family trinkets to meet the necessary expenses. Some of the letters exchanged between herself and the late Mr. Andrew Tuer are proofs of her great anxiety that the book should be a success. She corrected all the proofs, chose the binding, and wrote personally to all the influential men she could think of to call their attention to the volume. It came out at first anonymously, and the "canard" that it was the work of the Duke of Edinburgh was started by Eric Mackay himself. When the true authorship became known, Miss Corelli, at Mr. Mackay's own wish, undertook to get it included in the "Canterbury Poets," where it still commands a circulation; and it was she who wrote the preface to it, signed "G. D." Mr. Mackay gave away the book voluntarily to the publishers of the "Canterbury Poets" for the sake

of the advertisement thus procured, so that he made no money at all by its great success, which had the rather unfortunate result of disinclining him for further literary exertion. Meanwhile, his father, Dr. Charles Mackay, sorely straitened by hard circumstances, fell dangerously ill, and was struck down by paralysis. Under this heavy trouble Marie Corelli could think no more of a musical career, and she and her friend Bertha Vyver remained by the aged poet's side, carefully nursing him night and day. The making of a livelihood was now absolutely necessary, and as Eric Mackay earned nothing to help his father, Marie had to put her own shoulder to the wheel to keep the household going. It was in the most trying circumstances that can well be imagined that she wrote her first book, "A Romance of Two Worlds."

She divided her time between her little uncarpeted bare study and her step-father's sick-room; and even in this, her first book, she tried to do a kind turn to Eric Mackay by quoting some verses from his "Love Letters" in the story, which only, however, secured her the censure of those who, not knowing the facts of the case, accused her of writing to "advertise" her family connections. After this, her first success, she worked incessantly, hardly allowing herself any time for exercise or fresh air. She did all her literary work without the assistance of a typist or a secretary, and managed all the business part of it as well. While she worked thus, Miss Vyver attended with the devotion of a daughter on the invalided poet Charles Mackay, and Eric Mackay wandered in Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park, writing more

verses and poems, though nothing he did ever came up to the quality of the "Love Letters." A rather curious story is connected with Miss Corelli's book "The Mighty Atom." Eric Mackay wanted to publish an "anonymous" volume, entitled "Arrows of Song," to see if it would "take." The publisher, Mr. Hutchinson, was applied to. He came and saw Miss Corelli, and told her he could not undertake it on his own risk—"poetry did not pay." "But," he added, "if you will write me a story I'll take Mr. Mackay's poems for your sake and see what I can do." Miss Corelli at once agreed to this, and wrote "The Mighty Atom" in order to secure the publication of Eric Mackay's "Arrows of Song," which, however, was not a success. Unfortunately the poet never managed to earn a livelihood by his pen, though it has to be conceded

that he was given every opportunity to do so. Over and over again he was asked to try his hand at a story or a magazine article, but he would always declare he "had no patience to write prose." He was evidently not happily gifted that way, as may be seen by reference to his "Days and Nights in Italy," published in Rome in 1872. However, after his "little sister" achieved her first success he never knew what it was to want the comforts or luxuries of life, for she took a pleasure in gratifying his every wish, and surrounded him with as much care and tenderness and devotion as she had shown to his father, till he died suddenly of pneumonia on 2nd June, 1898, at the age of sixty-three. By this event Marie Corelli was left entirely alone in the world, with the exception of her faithful friend Miss

Vyver, who has been with her nearly all her life since childhood, sharing her joys and sorrows, and knowing every incident of her career.

CHAPTER II.

"A Romance of Two Worlds"—Mr. Hall Caine and Mr. Bentley—Some of Miss Corelli's Trials — The Helen Faucit Memorial — Miss Corelli's Correspondents—A Letter from the Front.

In the first flush of youth fairy tales and sober realities march hand in hand. And the fact that the young girl, fresh from her convent, should have heard voices and seen visions is not in itself remarkable. The significance lies in their effect on her peculiar quality of mind.

As we have said, religion with her was not so much a creed as a conviction. She had real genius, though of a kind very far removed from the infinite capacity for taking pains;

moreover, she had a profound belief in herself. That the visions were sent to teach her the why and the wherefore of created things she never once doubted. And with the confidence born of direct information she set herself to report the same to her generation.

Having written down certain "singular psychical experiences," in the form of a romance, her first idea was to offer it to Arrowsmith as a shilling railway volume, under the title "Lifted Up." As a preliminary trial trip, however, she sent it to Bentley's publishing firm. Here all the readers, Hall Caine amongst them, advised its rejection. "Hall Caine's strictures on my work were peculiarly bitter," says Miss Corelli, permitting herself to endorse a story about him in this connection which it would have been

better perhaps to withhold, and of which more anon.

Now, Mr. George Bentley, the chief of the firm, had a very good business head of his own, and finding his readers waxing eloquent in their wrath over the work of a new writer, promptly sent for the manuscript. With an amiable femininity Miss Corelli has conjectured that the note of personal pity had something to do with the matter. It is without any *arrière pensée* towards Mr. Bentley, but rather the reverse, that we receive the suggestion a little sceptically. Mawkish sensibility towards incompetent work has no sort of virtue to recommend it. On the contrary, it is quite fair to assume that Mr. Bentley was struck by the fact that his readers had found Miss Corelli's novel a big enough fellow to fight, and that his ample

acquaintance with the public had taught him that its opinion is unanimous on nothing under the sun. A chorus of praise voiced to the same pitch as his readers' disapproval was a sufficiently comfortable prospect for any publisher to contemplate.

However it may be, Mr. Bentley's dictum was distinctly favourable. "I still keep the kind and encouraging letter he wrote me at the time, informing me of his decision and stating the terms of his offer," says Miss Corelli. "These terms were a sum down for one year's rights, and the copyright of the work to remain my own entire possession." That these terms were advantageous may be gathered from the fact that the sale of this particular book alone still brings in a pleasant little income to its authoress. Mr. Bentley, however, was of the opinion that the

title "Lifted Up" was an unattractive one. Dr. Mackay accordingly suggested a substitute, and as "A Romance of Two Worlds" it was finally published.

From the first it had an enormous success. Edition followed edition; letters to the authoress poured in from all parts of the world; it was translated into many tongues; learned Brahmins studied its teachings; while a clergyman of the Church of England wrote to say that its revelations had saved him from suicide.

For all this it certainly owed nothing to the reviewers. Four press notices, short and unfavourable, were all it received. He who runs may read Miss Corelli's opinion of the one in which the *Morning Post* expressed its views on the book. "I still keep it by me preciously," she says, "because it serves as a wholesome tonic to my

mind, and proves to me that when a leading journal can so review a book one need fear nothing from the literary knowledge, acumen, or discernment of reviewers."

Milton, as we know, essayed to justify the ways of God to men by a great epic. It was by "a plain history of strange occurrences happening to oneself" that Miss Corelli sought to prove the actual certainty of a future state of being, and to clear up all knotty points on the subject of the Creation.

The story opens with a description of the apathy and nervous irritation from which Miss Corelli, or the heroine —the book is written in the first person —was suffering, and tells how, in despair, she followed the advice of an Italian artist, Raeffello Cellini, and consulted a certain Heliobas, a "physical

electrician." "By that is meant a great deal," we are warned parenthetically, and as events unfold themselves we see the force of the remark. She journeyed to Paris and visited Heliobas at his abode, Hôtel Mars, Champs Elysées. At her approach the doors swung noiselessly open, and she entered a spacious hall with fluted pillars of white marble. There was a fountain playing in the centre, and the air was full of the delicate perfume of exotic plants. Heliobas, who was a Chaldean, descended directly from one of the Wise Men of the East, had a stately bearing, a compelling smile, and a mellifluous accent. Both he and his sister Zara, who was of surpassing loveliness, welcomed their young visitor with a charming courtesy. Having first effected her physical cure by means of electricity, Heliobas asked

her if she would like to see what to mortals is unseen. She answered in the affirmative, adding—"I would give my life if it were worth anything to be certain of the truth of Christianity." With the remark that this utterance had saved her, Heliobas sent her spirit away from her body, and she was at once lifted to the spheres by Azul, his angel bride. Here she saw the planets at close quarters, finding them vastly superior to this poor earth of ours, while not one among them all held a single human creature who doubted his Maker. World after world yielded up its mystery, till her progress was perforce blocked by the centre of the universe. This consists of a huge electric circle, compassing a globe of opal-tinted light where God dwells. Here every thought and word of every inhabitant on every planet

is reflected in lightning language before the Creator's eye as easily as we receive telegrams. The Creator Himself is a shape of pure electric radiance, and in creating He plants an electric germ into every living soul. With more than half the inhabitants of the globe this germ of Immortality remains always a germ, but it can be cultivated till it becomes a radiant, burning, inextinguishable flame. By dint of excessive cultivation, indeed, certain rare spirits like Heliobas and Zara have even been enabled to enter into communion with their twin souls. From their authentic observations we are sorry to learn that the earth, from its position in the universe, receives a less amount of direct influence from the Electric Circle than any other planet; but, as a set-off, God has laid Christ as a cable—the expression is

Miss Corelli's own—between us and His heaven. In her journey she did not see the moon, that being a chimerical electograph which yet controls the tides—the Electric Circle can do anything—but otherwise she was allowed a very free range. Even her unuttered wish to see the Christ was not refused. . . . "And when the Redeemer stepped out of the Inner Circle, the angels drooped their radiant heads like flowers in hot sunshine. I alone, daringly, yet with an inexpressible affection welling up within me, watched with unshrinking gaze the swift advance of that supreme Figure."

Her eyes having seen and her ears heard, she was the more fortified to bear the loss of her darling Zara, who, in white satin and orange-blossoms, joined her twin soul, or, as the blind

world had it, was struck dead by a flash of lightning almost immediately after her return. Her grief was still further assuaged by the latter's visionary appearance, but, unlike the Ghost in Hamlet, with nothing but good to tell of the Great Beyond.

That Hall Caine should have rejected that astounding production says nothing for his business capacity. A reader's duty is to float the stuff which has the best marketable value, and not to pander to private literary predilections. It is easy enough to prophesy after the event, but it seems incredible that any man with average commercial instincts should have failed to perceive that in this young girl's novel a very riot of saleable qualities lay to his hand.

To begin with, the whole conception was unique. Other people, Bunyan

for instance, had been given to allegorical travel, but since St. John the Divine no one had undertaken by a "plain history of strange occurrences happening to oneself" to prove the actual existence of God and His Heaven. "If the new teaching tell us aught certainly of these let us follow it," said our Northumbrian forefathers when Christianity itself was first propounded to them. And now, according to Miss Corelli, the further sign for which the world had travailed in anguish for eighteen hundred years had been vouchsafed.

It is within the bounds of possibility that in the process of time the same ideas might have presented themselves to another brain. But it is quite inconceivable that anyone except Miss Corelli would have been able to convey them to the public so convincingly.

And we must always remember that her implicit belief in what she related robbed it of every trace of charlatanism. She was born original, and there was no striving after effect even when her canvas was glowing with strange and unusual hues. She wrote "comme l'oiseau chant," as easily and as naturally.

The book, too, came at a time when the world was primed to welcome any addition to its occult knowledge. The new creed was neither spiritualism nor hypnotism, but then neither was it science. And the people who were getting a fearful joy out of the rappings of a table or the prognostications of a fashionable wizard, found in it something more sufficing than them all.

It promised them so much too; not only the sure hope of immortality, but certain material advantages which no

man may despise—eternal youth among other things, and absolute immunity from doctors' bills.

And then, perhaps from the inherent magnetism of her own nature, Miss Corelli was able to gauge the temper of the public. As she truly says, the latter like to believe in God and in Heaven. For man is a creature of tradition, and in the end almost invariably harks back to the creed he learned at his mother's knee. To most of us a new creed is upsetting; and life at its best is not so smooth that we can afford to dispense with the hope that the future at least has better things in store. And the only creed that comes to us full of lovely and radiant hope is Christianity.

In stepping onward through the night man has no comforter so sure as belief. And for every brother whom

Miss Corelli has helped to this good gift—and there are many such—believers and unbelievers alike owe her a debt of gratitude. For if God will not exact from any man a larger share of belief than is in his power to give, we may be sure that neither will He deal hardly with those for whom the new truths are too difficult. The simplest intellect that has believed up to the limit of its capacity will be rated with the intellect which has toiled alone for the spreading of the light though all around it was "greatly dark."

A well-merited oblivion has fallen on the words of wisdom with which Hall Caine afflicted Mr. Bentley. But we can very well imagine what the masculine intellect would say on such an occasion, and the curt idiomatic English in which he may have remarked, that if Miss Corelli wrote straight from

her heart to the hearts of her readers there was such a thing as modifying the idiosyncrasies of temperament; that there are certain sacred silences and large reserves to be considered in dealing with Holy Writ; that much patience and humility is required to write even of the little things of life, and that some study of the line work of literature, so to speak, might have saved her from dilating on chairs "of very ancient Arabian design," when as a matter of fact the people of Arabia were artlessly ignorant of chairs at all; that to make sarcastic remarks upon certain living people who have nothing to do with the story is to break one of the unwritten laws of fine writing; that there are certain common terms of expression which Heliobas, being presumably a gentleman, would scarcely have used to a lady patient; that to

pelt unbelievers with invective is scarcely the way to bring before them the graces of Christian charity; that Diderot, the arch-unbeliever, was capable of quite beautiful bits of generosity towards adverse critics for instance; and as a parenthesis he may have added that to compare the Supreme Being to a man reading telegrams, or Christ to an electric cable, comes with a jar on most people's nerves. But these remarks are "as though they were not," as Miss Corelli would say; and Hall Caine himself has just blandly remarked, while refusing to be drawn into a controversy with her, "experience has taught him that it is better not to argue."

In an autograph letter Tennyson told Miss Corelli that she was right in not caring for fame. Dr. Mackay was probably of the same mind; but we

can be very certain that the merely human part of him experienced an agreeable glow when he found the public forcing it on his little girl. Unhappily "the order came" for him very shortly after she had written "Vendetta," "Thelma," and "Ardath." We can understand all his loss meant to the little household. Miss Corelli, however, continued to work hard and to keep on the home for the sake of assisting Eric Mackay to that position in literature which she always hoped he would one day attain, namely, the Poet-Laureateship, which he tried for, and failed to win.

She had no difficulty in making her career or winning her public. Her new stories received the same hearty welcome as "A Romance of Two Worlds." And "Ardath" brought from Tennyson a letter of praise which

she values above almost any other encouragement she has ever received.

It is not too much to say that in the interests arising from her own individuality and literary position each one of Miss Corelli's days is full to overflowing of colour and incident. But since the success of "A Romance of Two Worlds" set its seal on her career, it is singular how few landmarks we can find which have broken or even sharply differentiated any portion of her life from the rest.

But though she does not say much about it, she has suffered very many bitter trials. Her own serious illness brought her face to face with death, and she had scarcely risen from her sick-bed when she was grievously injured by a false report published in *Literature* —then under the editorial management of the late Mr. H. D. Traill—to

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A Corner of the old Tudor Drawing-Room at Miss Marie Corelli's House, Stratford-on-Avon.

the effect that her next work would be entitled "The Sins of Christ." This report lost her all her Colonial sales for a year, and she at once placed the matter with Sir George Lewis, who managed to get an apology (of a very half-hearted kind) printed in *Literature* for the damaging and wholly unwarrantable statement. The apologetic letter written by Mr. Traill to Miss Corelli on the subject would make curious reading if she would permit it to be published, but she says "The man is dead, and I do not wish to say anything against him." The cruel report, however, took such ground that months passed before the idea of "The Sins of Christ" could be eradicated from the public mind. Immediately after her worry with this affair came the tragic episode of Eric Mackay's death, the circumstances of

which are well known among Miss Corelli's private circle of friends, and which caused her so great a shock as almost to bring her to the grave, weak as she herself was from the effects of her own recent illness. That illness had been of a very serious nature, and it was only by the greatest care in nursing on the part of her friend Miss Vyver, and the great skill of Dr. Mary Scharlieb, that she ever rallied. She had finished a passage in "The Master Christian," with its cheery assurance, "You will soon be well," when all work had to be laid aside for the time. Now, it is one thing to believe in the suitability of the medical profession for women in the abstract and quite another to stand by the belief when one's life hangs in the balance. But Miss Corelli called in Mary Scharlieb, of Harley Street, and allowed her to perform the necessary

operation. The result, as we know, was of the happiest, and Miss Corelli's praise of "the best and cleverest of women" is pleasant reading. "My gratitude to Mrs. Scharlieb," she says, "not only for her brilliant skill, but for her tenderness, sympathy, and untiring care, will be a lifelong tribute." She had scarcely begun to work again when she was persecuted by another malicious slander, namely, that she had not written her own books at all, but that Eric Mackay was the real author of them! This was, perhaps, the unkindest cut of all on the part of her malignant enemies, as, had it not been for her ardent and unselfish efforts, Eric Mackay would not only have never been received at home again by his father, but his poems would never have had the chance of publication, and his name would have remained unknown.

The matter was quite the other way round, many of the lines in the "Love Letters of a Violinist" having been suggested by Miss Corelli, as Eric Mackay's own letters to her admit. In one letter he writes—"I think I must put footnotes to the 'Love Letters' to point out the *similes* and *conclusions* suggested by my little guardian angel, who has so many pretty fancies."

Miss Corelli took on her own shoulders recently a disagreeable duty in the affair of the Helen Faucit memorial. It was rendered all the more disagreeable by a dread of hurting him who holds Helen Faucit's name in love and reverence. Helen Faucit's triumphs had never been witnessed by the generation among whom she died; but their fathers had told them, and with both

herself and her husband they had many kindly and affectionate associations. But when the latter proposed to erect a memorial in her honour in Shakespeare's church at Stratford-on-Avon there was a universal shiver of dismay; everyone felt instinctively that whatever honour Helen Faucit had deserved at their hands, that at least was unfitting. The situation was a painful one, but when Miss Corelli stepped into the breach, it was explained to Sir Theodore with an almost Biblical directness, and, in their relief and discomfort, people had much to say on Miss Corelli's "tone." It might, however, be as well for the censorious to understand that Miss Corelli probably found her task at least as unwelcome as they would have done themselves, and that she had dared to speak where they had remained silent.

It should be remembered that Sir Theodore Martin sought to purchase the most important position in the chancel of Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-on-Avon, namely, a place opposite the bust of Shakespeare, and that certain local magnates also sought to sell, in order to save themselves from paying off the church debt, which they had guaranteed to clear. Had Miss Corelli not stepped in when she did, the affair would have been a national scandal. Sir Theodore did not withdraw from his position because of "newspaper controversy," but simply because that position was untenable in the face of the law. Miss Corelli found that to place the alto-relievo where he wished, two mural tablets would have to be displaced, while the permission of the families to which these belonged had not

been asked. Through Miss Corelli's active influence these families were discovered, and legal processes served at once, whereupon Sir Theodore promptly withdrew. Otherwise he would certainly have had his way, despite the private and energetic protests of Mr. Sidney Lee and all the press. It is only fair to Miss Corelli to say that Sir Theodore was offered any other place in the church by the vicar, Mr. Arbuthnot, but he declined to accept any position but that which faced Shakespeare's bust.

Wherever she travels, whether it is to picturesque bits of Devon, to Homburg, or to the Lake of Geneva, Miss Marie Corelli's working life goes on much the same. At the moment of writing she is working hard on her new novel, for which the contract has

already been signed, but its title is not yet decided upon. Sometimes she takes the particular place at which she is staying as the background for her stories; sometimes she turns to account stray bits of information picked up from her fellow-voyagers. Once when she was on board a steamer going from Thun to Interlaken she heard an English tourist describing, in detail, the "can-can" as he had seen it danced in Paris. His description was soon listened to by a wider audience in "Wormwood." As to her North Devon visit, "The Mighty Atom" has made Combmartin one of the pillars of romantic literature, and Reuben Dale, or Edward Norman the sexton—until the day of his death —quite a personage in his way. And the villagers point out with pride to tourists the old pulpit where Lionel

and Jessamine are supposed to have fallen asleep.

All sorts and conditions of people write to Miss Corelli. There are letters from Indian princes, addressed with a fine reverence to "one who is inspired with the truths of the Divine;" and curious communications from mites in the school-room, who have discovered with amazement that commiseration in their scholastic woes is to be had from a grown-up source.

"You have no idea what a mass of strange letters reaches me from all parts of the world," she says herself; "it is quite a business to get them answered—in fact, some of them are never answered at all. I occasionally get anonymous communications abusing my respective publishers, and I can never take a holiday without

receiving something in the way of an epistolary condemnation for daring to rest and amuse myself. When I took Killiecrankie Cottage for a summer season in Scotland, I used to get letters from complete strangers, asking me—in fact, almost commanding me—to send them grouse and salmon by the next train. . . . But there are also the beautiful, helpful, gracious letters I receive from people who are good enough to say that they have derived comfort from what I write. From hard-working miners in Texas, from army and navy men, from hospital nurses, from little children even, who sympathise with Lionel and Jessamine in 'The Mighty Atom,' come all sorts of loving and kindly greetings, for which I am deeply grateful."

She has received many appreciative letters from various Royal personages,

But on this subject she exhibits a perhaps exaggerated sensitiveness. The idea that any portion of her success should be set down to the "patronage" of those in high places has even clouded her natural pleasure in the fact that her work gave enjoyment to the best woman of her time—the late Queen. It was the Dowager-Duchess of Roxburgh who first brought "A Romance of Two Worlds" to the Queen's notice. As a result, there came a prompt telegram from Balmoral requesting that all Miss Corelli's books should be forwarded to Her Majesty. A complete set was accordingly sent and duly acknowledged by one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting. "And," adds Miss Corelli, "if it were possible to regret the honour of the Queen's acceptance of these volumes, I should certainly have cause to do so,

as the extraordinary spite and malice that has since been visited on my unoffending head has shown me a very bad side of human nature, which I am sorry to have seen."

It was at a dinner given by Sir Charles Hall, at Homburg, that Miss Corelli first met the King—then the Prince of Wales. After the first introduction, he saw a great deal of her, and invited her to a luncheon to meet the Duke of Cornwall and York, to whom he presented her with the simple words—"This is my son George, and he has read as many of your books as I have, which is to say that he has read them all."

It is not true that he was at all annoyed by the allusion to himself in "The Sorrows of Satan"—he has, on the contrary, always admired the daring and "go," as he has called it, of its

author, and she remains always the same favourite with him. He has shown his unchangeable feelings towards her since he became King by accepting her booklet, "The Passing of the Great Queen," a little work which Queen Alexandra has also highly approved. On one of the last visits to England of the Empress Frederick, Her Majesty received Miss Marie Corelli at Buckingham Palace with especial courtesy and kindness, and gave her a private interview lasting nearly an hour. The Empress was particularly interested in the fact that a German translation of "Thelma" was being at the time issued in Leipzig, and informed Miss Corelli that she had more reasons than one to be fond of that novel, as it was the last one her beloved husband read during the illness which deprived the world of the

favourite "Unser Fritz." The Empress also spoke of the interest she took in the improvement and advancement of women's education in Germany, deploring that the majority of German women had so few privileges. The only other person present in the room during the interesting conversation which took place between the Empress and the novelist was one of the Empress's ladies, Countess Bruhl.

It is interesting to know that Miss Corelli's books have been translated into German, Dutch, Spanish, Italian, Persian, and Hindustani. They command a very ready sale abroad, and are especially popular in Germany, Holland, and India. But the universal character of her popularity is best shown by two incidents in connection with the Boer War.

One story is told by a New Zealand

trooper recently returned from South Africa, and it illustrates the thirst for literature out on the veldt. On one occasion the troop to which he belonged was detailed to convoy a long train of transport waggons. Arrived at Elands River, where the 300 Australian Bushmen, under Col. Hoare, made their memorable nine days' stand against 5000 Boers under De La Rey, he lighted upon a stray copy of Marie Corelli's novel, "The Soul of Lilith." The other troopers eagerly surrounded him with cries of "After you, old man; after you for a read." For weeks previously they had fed their minds on every chance piece of torn newspaper they came across.

"The Soul of Lilith" came into use directly the march was resumed. As the finder read each leaf he tore it out of the book and passed it on to the next

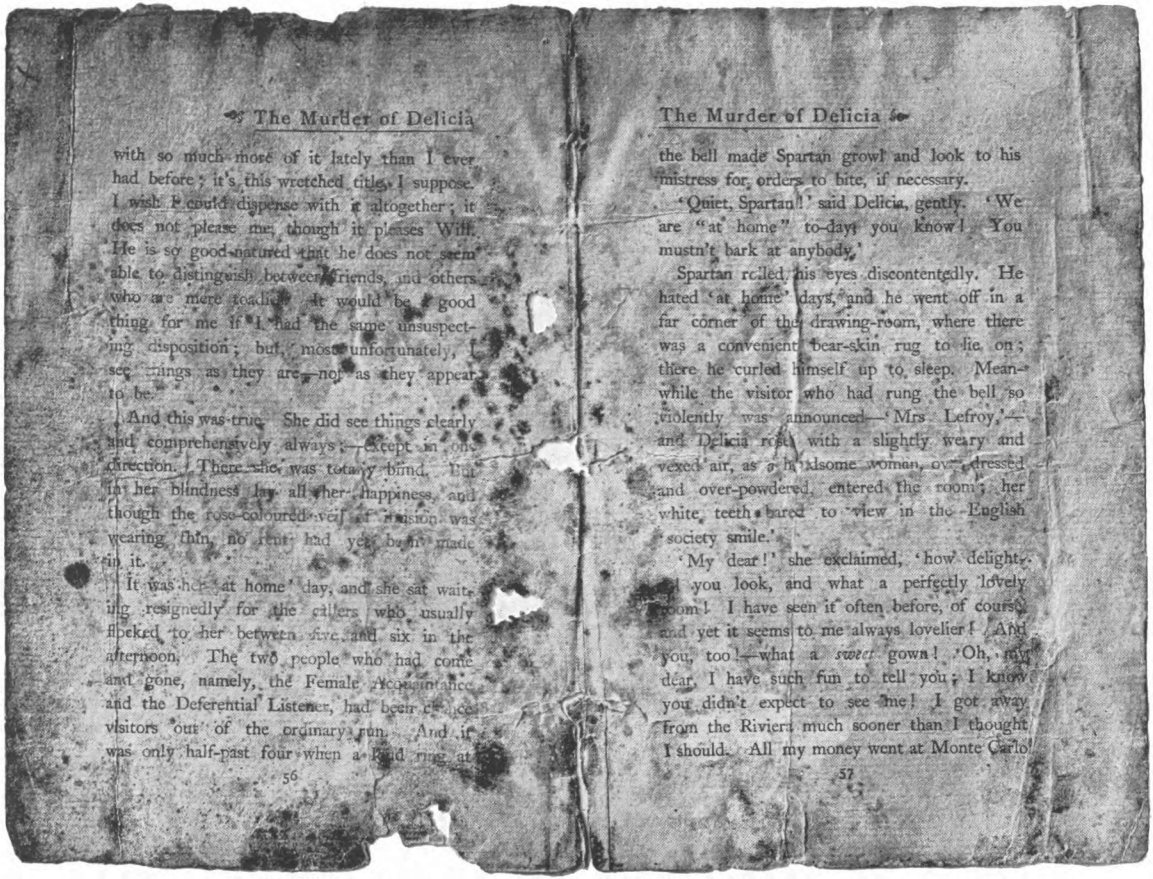
trooper (they had "fallen in," by the way, in the order in which they had made their requests for "a read"), and before the next stopping place was reached sixty leaves of the volume were distributed among just as many troopers, each of whom was busily engaged in reading his leaf in time to get the next one from the man in front. The sixtieth man was on the first page of the story when the finder of the book was going through the 119th page.

The second incident is described in a letter she received from the front:—

"Ladysmith, 22nd May, 1900.

"DEAR MISS CORELLI,—I hope you won't think me presumptive for writing to you. Something compels me to send you this as a memento of the Boer War.

"To begin, I am a colour-sergeant in the 1st Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment, and a lover of your books. They have so often afforded me so many hours of recreation that I feel it a duty which I owe to you, to let you



with so much more of it lately than I ever had before; it's this wretched title, I suppose. I wish I could dispense with it altogether; it does not please me, though it pleases Will. He is so good-natured that he does not seem able to distinguish between friends and others who are mere toadies. It would be a good thing for me if I had the same unsuspecting disposition; but, most unfortunately, I see things as they are—not as they appear to be.'

And this was true. She did see things clearly and comprehensively always;—except in one direction. There she was totally blind. But in her blindness lay all her happiness, and though the rose-coloured veil of illusion was wearing thin, no rent had yet been made in it.

It was her 'at home' day, and she sat waiting resignedly for the callers who usually flocked to her between five and six in the afternoon. The two people who had come and gone, namely, the Female Acquaintance and the Deferential Listener, had been of the usual visitors out of the ordinary run. And it was only half-past four when a loud ring at

the bell made Spartan growl and look to his mistress for orders to bite, if necessary.

'Quiet, Spartan!' said Delicia, gently. 'We are "at home" to-day, you know! You mustn't bark at anybody.'

Spartan rolled his eyes discontentedly. He hated 'at home' days, and he went off in a far corner of the drawing-room, where there was a convenient bear-skin rug to lie on; there he curled himself up to sleep. Meanwhile the visitor who had rung the bell so violently was announced—'Mrs Lefroy,'—and Delicia rose, with a slightly weary and vexed air, as a handsome woman, overdressed and over-powdered, entered the room; her white teeth bared to view in the English 'society smile.'

'My dear!' she exclaimed, 'how delight- ful you look, and what a perfectly lovely room! I have seen it often before, of course, and yet it seems to me always lovelier! And you, too!—what a *sweet* gown! Oh, my dear, I have such fun to tell you; I know you didn't expect to see me! I got away from the Riviera much sooner than I thought I should. All my money went at Monte Carlo

A photographic reproduction of the sheet of "The Murder of Delicia" found in the Boer trenches after the battle of Colenso; showing the holes made by bullets, mildew marks, and blood stains.

know of what good they have been during the war. I landed in Natal on 13th of October, 1899, the day war was declared by the Boers, so have been through the whole of it. I was wounded and taken prisoner at Nickolson's Nek on 30th of October, 1899, and on account of wounds was sent by General Joubert into Ladysmith. I recovered and took part in the defence.

"Now to tell you about your delightful books which were invaluable to the troops during the siege; one, 'The Sorrows of Satan,' was read and re-read by me, and then handed round. As many as three would be waiting to read it, so where literature was scarce, you can imagine what a blessing it was to have a book like it. We all seemed to think it the very best we ever read. Still more strange to say, I was one day strolling over the battlefield of Colenso, and I found in the trenches evacuated by the Boers two leaves of one of your famous books, 'The Murder of Delicia,' which I am sending to you, with a clip of Mauser cartridge, also found in the same trench about 500 yards east of Fort Wylie, and which was occupied for so long by the Boers; so that you see the Boers also read your works. As the remnants of it were blown about, and greatly disfigured by the weather, I only picked up the two

leaves; also I am sending two other cartridges used against us by the Boers, which I found at Umbulwana after the Boers had gone. One I have converted into a pencil, during my spare moments, and the other I've left for you to have made into whatever you wish; a 'pocket knife,' if I may suggest anything.

"The pencil cartridge I've marked with a bit of string, so that you can distinguish it from the other; and by pulling out the bullet you can see how it is arranged, so that when not in use it can be reversed so as to prevent the point from being blunted; and the other five are complete. I've polished them up a bit so that they will not rust. They can always be polished by a little paste and a bit of a rag, and are quite harmless. I regret that I cannot have it made into something more suitable, but I'm camped a long way from *anywhere*, so must offer apologies for this long letter, and the cheek for presuming so much.

"Trusting you will accept this little present as a mark of appreciation for the very happy times I've spent in reading your great works,

"I am, dear Miss Corelli,

"Very sincerely yours,

"THOMAS JOSEPH BYRNE."

Our own Royalties are not alone

in their encomiums. Miss Corelli possesses a charming letter of thanks written by Queen Marguerite of Italy, while from the unhappy storm-tossed Empress of Austria came a pathetic little message: —

"Your books have afforded Her Majesty, the Empress of Austria, many hours of happiness and rest. She not only admires your talent and style of writing, but also the poetical imagination with which your works overflow."

Mr. Gladstone's first visit to Miss Corelli was quite unexpected. He dropped in to afternoon tea, and, in the course of the pleasant friendly little call, Miss Corelli laughingly demanded an explanation as to why she was thus honoured, and this is the answer she received — "I was curious to see for myself the personality of the young woman who could write so

courageously and so well, and in whose work I recognise a power working for good, and eminently calculated to sway the thoughts of the people. It is a wonderful gift you have, and I do not think you will abuse it. There is a magnetism in your pen which will influence many. Take care always to do your best, and never work in a hurry. As a woman, you are pretty and good. As a writer, be brave and true." And when he said good-bye, he added — "God bless you, my dear child. Be brave; you've got a great future before you. Don't lose heart on the way. Good-bye."

Miss Corelli's supposed and reported "hatred of men" is pure fiction. She has as many men friends as women—perhaps more. Among them, in the literary world, are Coulson Kernahan,

Anthony Hope, Robert Hichens, Mortimer Menpes, Clifford Harrison, W. H Wilkins, Sydney Whitman, and many of the French and Italian writers.

CHAPTER III.

Who is Mavis Clare?—Miss Corelli's Dislikes —Her Personality—The Battle with the Critics.

"MR. STEAD is responsible for the absurd rumour that I depicted myself as Mavis Clare in 'The Sorrows of Satan,'" says Miss Corelli. But other people than Mr. Stead have fallen into the same error, and this in some measure owing to Miss Corelli's extreme incaution. The very name has a familiar sound, and the initials are identical with Miss Corelli's own. Mavis Clare holds opinions which Miss Corelli at one time or another has openly voiced; Mavis Clare is a victim to the malice of the Press, and Miss Corelli, as we know, considers herself in like case. The comparison

could be carried on *ad infinitum*, but as a matter of fact the points of resemblance are sufficiently superficial. Moreover, Mavis Clare, under different names, has appeared in almost every book Miss Corelli has ever written. Mavis Clare is Delicia, plus a faithless husband; Mavis Clare is Jane, with silvered hair and slightly altered characteristics; Mavis Clare is the Miss Letty of "Boy," hungering for the touch of little hands; and even with all her southern environment, Angela Sovrani differs little from the prevailing type.

The particular Mavis Clare of "The Sorrows of Satan" was intended to portray a dead girl friend of Miss Corelli's: the latter called her heroine originally Mavis Dare, but on its being objected that another fictional heroine had the name of Avice Dare it was

hurriedly changed to Clare just before going to press. On learning all this, Mr. Stead frankly apologised for his indictment, to which a rather brilliant wording had helped to give prominence. Someone else has suggested that perhaps Mavis Clare was the unconscious working out of a personal ideal, and this to some extent may be true. As Gladstone says, Miss Corelli is pretty and good, and, being good, may naturally strive to emulate a type of character she evidently admires. In reality there is something more vivid and exotic and, we may add, more interesting, about Miss Corelli's own personality than about that of any heroine she has ever portrayed.

Whatever feelings Miss Corelli may entertain towards interviewers in the abstract, she exhibits a most charming hospitality towards such folk from the

moment they enter her house. And from the pretty face to the dainty frock and the kindly manners there are nothing but pleasant and gracious things for them to record. Her individuality invests her every surrounding with interest.

Her dislike of self-advertisement is not generally understood. From various sources one can get a very fair idea of the little lady whom Mr. T. P. O'Connor dubbed "Dresden China," and in whom Gladstone found a power working for good. It is as much from side-lights as from direct information that we derive our picture. In her serious illness her dread of publicity made her try to stop the issue of bulletins. Thus her indignation against the journalist who described her as "a much-advertised lady," if very great was also very just.

"I am perhaps the least advertised of all the novelists now catering for public favour," she declared. "Very few allusions are ever made to me in the Press. When at the Foreign Press Association dinner last December my name was coupled with the toast of 'The Ladies,' and a kindly compliment bestowed on me by the toast-giver, every reporter there carefully refrained from mentioning the fact, or, if they did mention it, their editors eliminated it. . . . I have not even yielded to the tempting offers of the leading periodicals, who desire to give my portrait to the public, simply for the very reason that it suggests self-advertisement. I dislike 'puffery' of every description, and have never envied the loud booms given freely and without unkind comments to many of my contemporaries. At a

time when the shrewd public fully recognise the existence of the undignified 'claw me and I'll claw thee' system among authors of every description, the *Speaker's* reviewer would be more correct as well as more just if he commented on my lack of advertisement rather than otherwise."

From replies given to many inquirers, we learn who are her favourites among the great ones in the world of art. Luke Fildes and Alma Tadema stand first with her among artists; among novelists—Sir Walter Scott and Charles Dickens; among poets — Byron, Shelley, and Keats; among books—the Bible, Shakespeare, Plato, and Montaigne's Essays; among musicians—Wagner, Schubert, Chopin, and Bizet; among men singers — Masini, Tamagno, and Plançon; among women singers — "none!"

And this last emphatic monosyllable reminds one of quite a formidable list of dislikes printed together in the *Ladies' Realm:*—

The man who is his own God Almighty.

The woman who cannot consecrate her life purely and faithfully to one great love-passion.

The priest who preaches and does not practise.

The "new poet," who curls his hair with the tongs and writes his own reviews.

The modern marriage market.

Women bicyclists and he-females generally.

Tuft-hunters and worshippers of Royalty.

American millionaires.

Fuss, hurry, and lack of courtesy.

The man who thinks that every pretty woman he sees is, or ought to be, in love with him.

The woman who finds a charm in every man except her own husband.

Pretended "friends" who are secret foes.

Music—when it isn't wanted.

William Archer and his god Ibsen.

Society noodles.

Ladies of title who allow their portraits to be on sale in the shops for any cad to buy.

"The Woman who Did."

Low conduct in high places.

Cynics and pessimists.

Want of sympathy with little children.

Lack of enthusiasm in a great cause.

Sneerers at faith and aspiration.

Materialists.

The man or woman who has outlived romance.

The hostess who interrupts conversation between two friends merely to introduce a bore.

The "funny man" at a party.

The being taken in to dinner by an uncongenial partner as old as Methusaleh.

The health-faddist and consumer of tabloids.

And last, and greatest dislike of all—moral cowardice.

And to all these dislikes Miss Corelli might have added authors who shirk the technical part of their work. Of these she has several trenchant

things to say—"I do not employ a literary agent. I consider that authors, like other people, should learn how to manage their own affairs themselves, and that where they take a paid agent into their confidence they make open confession of their business incapacity, and voluntarily elect to remain in foolish ignorance of the practical part of their profession."

When we get a companion list of "likes," we shall find flowers and music and rare old books writ very large indeed. But it must be music under special conditions—in the open air, on the water, or in a quiet room. The unexpected in music is one of music's greatest charms. And it is in the evening when she herself sits improvising on the piano or mandoline that her songs shape themselves. Her love for flowers is a part of that larger love

for nature which in her daily life finds expression in long country drives.

Her daily routine, as she tells it, sounds very simple. But its ordered simplicity contains a method which has produced an enormous quantity of matter. "I write every day from ten in the morning till two in the afternoon, alone and undisturbed, save for the tinpot tinkling of unmusical neighbours' pianos and the perpetual organ-grinding that is freely permitted to interfere *ad libitum* with the quiet and comfort of all the patient brain-workers who pay rent and taxes in this great and free country. I generally scribble off the first rough draft of a story in pencil, and then I copy it out in pen and ink, chapter by chapter with fastidious care"—(Miss Corelli, by the way, is the possessor of a particularly characteristic handwriting)—"not only

because I like a neat manuscript, but because I think that everything worth doing at all is worth doing well."

All Miss Corelli's belongings are daintiness itself. "I like things which gather themselves about me, not things which have to be gathered," she says, and the remark explains the indefinable air of association which belongs to her rooms. The cosiness of these, with their books and flowers and inviting chairs, to say nothing of the Pleyell in one corner, is perfect, and an evening at home appeals to Miss Corelli more than any theatre or crowded assembly. The theatre, however, at any time never rouses her to much enthusiasm. Her settled conviction that we have no good actors to speak of may have something to do with this, but the iniquities of playwrights and theatrical managers may

have been further borne in upon her by the personal hardships she has had to put up with at their hands. At the present time six different versions of "The Sorrows of Satan" are being acted all over the kingdom, and this without any pecuniary benefit arising to herself. The hardship becomes emphasised when one remembers her expressed opinion that any dramatisation of a novel tends to vulgarise it.

A most important member of Miss Corelli's household, whom no biographer may neglect, is her toy terrier Czar, who makes up in spirit for what he lacks in size. He is in the most entire sympathy with his mistress' opinion of the Press, and his greatest pleasure is to give it practical expression by worrying all the press cuttings he can get hold of.

Four of Miss Corelli's utterances,

spoken at different times and to different people, form the rough groundwork on which a stranger could build up an accurate picture of the personality of the authoress of the dozen odd most popular novels of her century—

"If I could not make a penny by it, I should still write, and still love writing."

"I think it a bad sign when men and women are afraid of solitude. Some of my loneliest hours have been the happiest in my life."

"I have never asked anyone to help me and I never will. When I cannot get for myself all I need it will be time to die."

"I am not 'intense,' and I never yearn for anything I consider it would be unreasonable for me to seek: my life is far too busy for indulgence in morbid fancies."

A celebrated dramatic critic once indited an angry letter to a theatrical manager demanding the reason why no tickets had been sent him for a first night's performance. The manager wired back the laconic message, "Where do I come in? Two lines of abuse." "Barabbas" certainly was not received as it deserved. A book entitled "The Silver Domino" had preceded it, and, rightly or wrongly, its brilliant sarcasm was set down to the authorship of Miss Marie Corelli. It is well known that an understanding was arrived at among certain pressmen to ignore or "slate" the next book bearing her name. That next was "Barabbas," and the proof that it was not read was cunningly given by the complete misquotation of many of its passages, and wrong wording of the gist of the story. The critics were

"at sea" too in their New Testament knowledge, setting down the two angels seen at the tomb of Christ on the resurrection morning to the "lurid invention" of Miss Corelli. And Miss Corelli thereupon retorted by appending the following notice to every copy of "The Sorrows of Satan":—

"SPECIAL NOTICE.—No copies of this book are sent out for review. Members of the Press will therefore obtain it (should they wish to do so) in the usual way with the rest of the public, *i.e.*, through the booksellers and libraries."

Hard experience has dinted, if not the necessity, at least the inevitability, of criticism into most of us. We get it—on the knuckles—in our fagging days, and later on life continues to point out our mistakes with all the necessary vigour. It is rarely a

pleasant experience, but the rough discipline has brought home the advisability of silence to most men; moreover, it is always open to the wise to listen and profit.

Miss Corelli has had no fagging days, so to speak, and her genius had won half the world to her worship at an age when most men have scarcely begun to feel their feet. Quite unsolicited, the great majority had voiced soft and pleasant utterances on the subject of "A Romance of Two Worlds." When the critical fraternity spoke in another tongue Miss Corelli declared that they had not read her book, a statement which certainly has been proved true.

She has since laughed heartily—though it was a laugh which left something of a painful echo—in the pages of the *Idler*, at these same critics,

telling, too, a little story against the arch-offender, Hall Caine—

"On being introduced to me at a ball, when my name was made and my success assured, he blandly remarked before a select circle of interested auditors, that he had had the pleasure of *recommending* my first book to Mr. Bentley."

In this instance Mr. Hall Caine clearly gave himself away into Miss Corelli's hand, and she used her opportunity in publishing the story. But, as an example of difference, it might not be amiss to place side by side, without comment, the record of how Rousseau comported himself in similar circumstances. He was once dining at a café. Like Miss Corelli, his name was made and his success assured. To his amazement he heard a total stranger boasting of his acquaintanceship before

a select circle of interested auditors. Rousseau rose quickly and left the place as quietly as he could, lest by some unhappy chance he should be recognised and the ridiculous person exposed.

Miss Corelli laughed again when "Barabbas" had reached its fourteenth edition. And Hall Caine—outside the pale—must have had a cheery sensation of ever-decreasing loneliness as he welcomed Swinburne, H. D. Traill, Grant Allen, Zangwill, etc., to the outer darkness. It is possible that Edmund Gosse, "one of the minor poets," may have arrived amongst them in an extinguished condition. Having ventured to remark that certain present-day authors have the "taint of popularity" upon them, he had been promptly pulled up by a pertinent reminder from Miss Corelli, that he

at least could not complain of this terrible blot on his career.

All this, we may remark, is not exactly a proof of that indifference to criticism to which Miss Corelli lays claim. Rather, it goes to show, as one of her friends has said, a little sadly, that she is perhaps too sensitive about the opinion of others. Everything of course depends on the point of view. And unhappily Miss Corelli's point of view on this particular subject leads her to stigmatise plainness of speech as "unkind," or "ungentlemanly," or "dishonest." As a matter of fact, it is plainness of speech which is usually made steep to the reviewer; where he is minded to deal out a heavy-handed justice his editor looks askance, and the business manager, with an eye to publishers' advertisements, openly growls. His

work is more often than not its own reward, but, like Miss Corelli herself, he goes through with it because he happens to love it. In any case he can afford to treat with leniency the idea which she has put forward, that he does not read the books on the criticism of which he stakes his reputation.

CHAPTER IV.

Novels of the Imagination: "Vendetta," "Thelma," "Ardath," and others—Religious Novels: "Barabbas" and "The Sorrows of Satan"—How the Latter was Written.

ROUGHLY speaking, Miss Corelli's novels group themselves into three classes—religious novels, novels of the imagination, and novels with a purpose. Occasionally the groupings overlap each other, and all are religious in their fervent reiteration of the gospel message. But "Barabbas" and "The Sorrows of Satan" can be bracketed together as definitely dealing with scriptural characters; "A Romance of Two Worlds," "Wormwood,' "The Mighty Atom," "The Murder of Delicia," "Jane," "Boy," and "The Master Christian" have a definite lesson to

convey, to which, as is inevitable, the exigencies of art must occasionally be sacrificed; while the rest—"Vendetta," "Thelma," "Ardath," "The Soul of Lilith," "Cameos," and "Ziska"—come under no particular classification, but form a band of striking, and often tragically beautiful, imaginative efforts.

"Vendetta" was written immediately after "A Romance of Two Worlds." It is the story of an Italian nobleman who was buried alive during the cholera days in Naples. He escaped, only to discover the infidelity of his wife, and in listening to the account of the awful vengeance he took the reader will quite grasp George Augusta Sala's statement, that he read it "with a wet cloth round his head and his feet in a basin of iced and camphorated water, but that though it made him shudder, he still continued to read." Among all the

lurid detail, however, two little passages stand out with a distinction of their own—the vision of the king moving among his desolate people, and that song of the nightingale which saved a man's life.

"Thelma," the little Norwegian princess, who, in the land of the midnight sun, met her English lover by the sea-king's tomb, is the gentlest and most lovable of all Miss Corelli's heroines. And Jarl Olaf, her father—in his youth the pride of Norse maidens—is finely conceived. There is a great scene in the third volume, where the old pagan listens to the dying confession of Lovisa Elsland, who murdered his wife.

"'. . . I can hear her quick shriek now—the crash of stones and the crackle of branches as she fell down—down to her death. Presently the child came running—it

was too young to understand—it sat down patiently waiting for its mother. I longed to kill it! but it sang to itself like the bird that had flown away, and I could not. But *she* was gone—*she* was silent for ever—the Lord be praised for all His mercies. Was she smiling, Olaf Güldmar, when you found her—dead?'

"A strange solemnity shadowed the bonde's features. He turned his eyes upon her steadily.

"'Blessing and honour be to the gods of my fathers!' he said. 'I found her living.'

"The change that came over Lovisa's face at these words was inexpressibly awful. She grew livid and her lips twitched convulsively. 'Living—living!' she gasped.

"'Living!' repeated Güldmar sternly. 'Vile hag! Your purpose was frustrated. Your crime destroyed her beauty and shortened her days—but she lived—lived for ten sweet, bitter years; hidden away from all eyes save mine—mine that never grew tired of looking into her patient, heavenly face! Ten years I held her as one holds a jewel—and when she died, her death was but a falling asleep in these fond arms.'"

It may be of interest to state that though the plot of "Thelma" is laid in Norway, which is most faithfully depicted, Miss Corelli has never visited that country.

The two novels which Miss Corelli loved most whilst writing were "Barabbas" and "Ardath." "Ardath" is, as Tennyson said, a remarkable work. It is forged out of steel and fire in its description of Al-Kyris, the city of the Snake, where Theos Alwyn finds himself back with his dead self five thousand years before the Christ. But it is spun out of very gossamer when he meets his beloved—God's maiden Edris—in the field of Ardath—that wonderful field whose starry blossoms lie white in the moonlight. And as an example of what Miss Corelli can do in the shape of wild and fantastic effects there comes the description of

a storm in the heart of the Caucasus mountains—

"Gradually the wind increased, and soon, with sudden fierce gusts, shook the pine trees into shuddering anxiety—the red slit in the sky closed and a gleam of forked lightning leaped athwart the driving darkness. An appalling crash of thunder followed almost instantaneously, its deep boom vibrating in sullenly grand echoes on all sides of the pass, and then—with a swirling, hissing rush of rain—the unbound hurricane burst forth alive and furious. On! on! splitting huge boughs and flinging them aside like straws, sweeping the rivers into riotous floods that swept hither and thither, carrying with them masses of rock and stone and tons of loosened snow—on, on! with pitiless force and destructive haste the tempest rolled, thundered, and shrieked its way through Dariel. As the night darkened and the clamour of conflicting elements grew more sustained and violent, a sudden sweet sound floated softly through the turbulent air, the slow measured tolling of a bell."

"The Soul of Lilith" deals with a man who, in the pride of his heart,

stayed a child's soul in its flight heavenwards in order that, through its aid, he might be enabled to pierce the mysteries of the Unknown. The soul yearned for freedom which came —in God's way—when the dawn of its womanhood brought love into the man's heart, and he cried "Arise."

"Ziska" is another soul, that of the wicked princess, who came back to earth after aeons of time, to exact vengeance on her murderer, the painter Armand Gervase, who in other times had been an Egyptian king.

The short stories in the collection, entitled "Cameos," are very unequal. Some of them, such as "Three Wise Men of Gotham," are trivial and artificial to a degree, but one—"The Hired Baby"—is touching enough. It tells how the wretched

A glimpse of the Winter Garden at Miss Marie Corelli's House, Stratford-on-Avon.

Liz of the London streets became all woman when the little blue-eyed baby, hired for begging purposes, lay warm in her arms. When the little waxen thing went back to God "who is our home" it took Liz with it.

In "A Romance of Two Worlds" there is a little sentence which, rightly considered, gives the keynote to "Barabbas." From it we learn that while the angels drooped their radiant heads, the heroine alone dared to watch with unshrinking gaze the swift advance of the Supreme Figure. And this is precisely Miss Corelli's own attitude towards the Gospels. Now, one may or may not consider them inspired in the ordinary sense of the word, but to most people their grand and reverent simplicity sets them apart as something sacred. We must all of

us in our own minds have filled in some details of the Great Outline. But these things mostly belong to the Holy of Holies of a man's soul, and as such are jealously guarded from the outside world.

In "Barabbas," however, Miss Corelli has offered us her own reading between the lines very candidly and unreservedly. Her motives were of the best; but, for all that, the nerves of certain foolish people suddenly quivered with the sensation of sacred things being ruthlessly laid bare. These people being mainly inarticulate, and only conscious of their discomfort, took the first word which came to hand —which happened to be a wrong one—and called the whole thing irreverent.

The present writer was once at a crowded meeting of Oxford under-

graduates. It was a political affair, and a man deservedly celebrated for his moral rectitude and philanthropic labours rose up to speak. Quite naturally, and certainly quite reverently from his own point of view, he used the analogy of Christ's crucifixion to illustrate some secular point. In an instant a jar that could be felt ran through the room, and the surprise of the speaker at certain sudden cries of "Shame!" was a curious sight. His offence was indefinable, but the unhappy undergraduates were in much the same position as Stalky and his compatriots, when the British flag was unexpectedly waved before their horrified eyes.

Now, Miss Corelli and the Oxford lecturer and the troubler of Stalky are equally innocent in the matter. Taste, as we have before had occasion to

remark, is a matter of opinion, and we must always bear in mind that Stalky's sergeant thought that little introduction of the flag rather a fine thing. And scores of people have held precisely the same views with regard to Miss Corelli's "Barabbas."

Canon Wilberforce wrote—"My verdict upon it is that it is a high-minded and very powerful effort to revivify, by the legitimate use of the imagination, a time-honoured history, by depolarising it from the conventionality in which it had become crystallised. The romance can, by no possibility, harm anyone, and it may cause many to re-read and reconsider the inspired records. God bless and teach and *use* you." And he assured her that she must not be disheartened at the scant mercy it received from the Press.

It may be noted that Canon Wilberforce offered to write a review of the book for the *Nineteenth Century* and was refused point blank, the editor stating that he declined to notice anything by Marie Corelli, whether good, bad, or indifferent. In this quarter Miss Corelli may perhaps fairly question the justice of her treatment.

"Barabbas" is a "dream" of the World's Tragedy, an "imaginative conception of what might have happened —no more," says Miss Corelli herself. "It was written in front of Guido Reni's 'Ecce Homo,' in a spirit of absolute faith, love, and worship." Now, all this is believable enough, and if Miss Corelli did not shrink from introducing new characters and motives into the heart of the Gospel story, and mingling Christ's betrayal with the imaginary amours of the High Priest, there is

nothing more to be said. For that sixth sense of fitness, which is at once a man's rapture and his pain, can be learnt from no outside source.

Moreover, the introduction of the new element was done of set purpose, the avowed object of "Barabbas" being "to bring the Divine Idea of the ages closer, as it were, to the eyes of the imagination, just as a painter strives to depict Him for the joy and solace of outward sight, and to invest the 'old, old story' with a suggestion of something new to arouse thought and contemplation."

One thing at least Miss Corelli has spared us, for which we should be deeply grateful. Throughout the book no single alien utterance is put into the mouth of the Chief Character. Where He speaks it is with the simple and loving words we have known and

reverenced from the beginning. In matters of biblical history, however, she has not been so careful. "While I wrote 'Barabbas,' I set aside all books whatsoever except the New Testament and worked from that and my own thoughts only," she tells us. This being the case, we must perforce hold Miss Corelli's thoughts responsible for certain statements which not only find no place in the Gospel narrative, but which go directly against it, while the artless mistake of supposing that Iscariot was the family surname, and so belonging of right to the sister of Judas—"Judith Iscariot"—may be put down to the setting aside of reference books.

The astounding statement that St. Peter was one with Judas in the betrayal of Christ is specifically set forth and belongs to Miss Corelli alone.

But the main idea, that the whole motive of the betrayal was to force Christ to declare His Divinity, is not, of course, original. The notion has been put forward by more than one *savant*, although with a more cautious regard for detail than is manifested in "Barabbas." "Judas purchased a field with the reward of iniquity," says St. Peter plainly, but Miss Corelli declares that he took payment from Caiaphas with the utmost reluctance, and that only in fulfilment of the legal custom. And it is a little difficult to accept Judas as a repentant disciple in the face of St. John's uncompromising epithet, and the stern indictment of Christ Himself, "Have not I chosen you twelve: one of you is a devil."

"I have been bitterly reproached by some journals for my description of the personal beauty of the Christ,"

Miss Corelli remarks in the *Idler*. And it must be admitted that in this particular instance her expressions have not been conspicuously happy. The Light of the World cannot be compared to a "mighty muscular Hercules," for instance, without losing something in the comparison. If, however, the idea of investing Christ with great physical strength is objected to on the ground that the Man of Sorrows drank of our cup to the full, and with agony and bloody sweat testified to the same, Miss Corelli would answer —"The greater the strength, the greater the agony. A weak man does not suffer so greatly as a strong one."

It does not need the rough refusal of Barabbas to have either part or lot with those who had forsaken Christ to tell us how unsatisfactory Miss Corelli finds the Apostles. Her dislike of St.

Peter and reiteration of his denial of Christ finds such persistent and unforgiving expression, that it might be as well to remember here that St. Peter, for that moment of weakness, made open confession and very manful atonement.

If "Barabbas" was a success, "The Sorrows of Satan," with its wonderful title, simply swept the public off their feet; and this deservedly, for the conception was a high and splendid one. Many conjectures have been put forward as to its origin. People have remembered certain utterances of Frederic Harrison's regarding the evil which sorrowed for itself, or have bethought them of Kundry in Parsival, who could only be saved by the rejection of a man whom she was eternally obliged to tempt. But after all Miss Corelli's explanation of

how the idea came to her is sufficiently simple—

"I don't think the idea strange at all. If you wish to know how I got it, it came in the first place from the New Testament. There I found that Christ was tempted by Satan with the offer of thrones, principalities, and powers, all of which the Saviour rejected. When the temptation was over I read that Satan left Him, and that angels came and ministered to Him. I thought this out in my own mind, and concluded that if man, through Christ, would only reject Satan, Satan would leave him, and that angels would minister to him in the same way that they ministered to Christ. Out of this germ rose the wider idea that Satan himself might be glad for man to so reject him, as he then might have the chance of recovering his lost angelic position."

The indictments which the book contains against the Press have been already discussed; those against Society will be dealt with later. At present we are only concerned with Miss Corelli's handling of a religious or supernatural conception, which is in itself almost an epic. Satan, of course, suffers from his modern dress, and from Miss Corelli's fatal insistence on personal detail. But when she drops such trivialities and rises to the height of her great theme we get passages of sustained beauty. Incomparably the greatest of these is the story of Lucifer's fall—

"Lucifer, full of wrath, turned on the Master of the Spheres, and flung forth his reckless defiance, crying aloud: 'Wilt Thou make of this slight poor creature an angel even as I? I do protest against Thee and condemn. Lo, if Thou makest Man in our image I will destroy him utterly as unfit to share with me the

splendours of Thy wisdom and the glory of Thy love.' And the voice Supreme, in accents terrible and beautiful, replied: 'Lucifer, Son of the Morning, full well dost thou know that never can an idle or wasted word be spoken before Me. For Free-will is the gift of the Immortals: therefore, what thou sayest thou must needs do. Fall, proud Spirit, from thy high estate, thou and thy companions with thee, and return no more till man himself redeem thee. Each human soul that yields unto thy tempting shall be a new barrier set between thee and heaven: each one that of its own choice doth repel and overcome thee shall lift thee nearer thy lost home. When the world rejects thee then I will pardon and again receive thee, but not till then.'"

And this passage of almost pure poetry, being perfect after its kind, shall stand alone without comment.

CHAPTER V.

Novels with a Purpose—The Aim of "The Master Christian"—Miss Corelli as Poet and Artist.

"I AM afraid a great many mistakes are being made which will lead to sad results hereafter," says one of Miss Corelli's heroines. And we may suppose that Miss Corelli shares this view, since she has certainly done her whole duty in making such mistakes very plain. When Art and the purpose she has in view occasionally jostle each other in her novels, it is Art which almost invariably has to stand aside. Thus, if "The Sorrows of Satan" was stripped of its indictment against the Press, against Society, against sexual novels, and against Swinburne, it might or might not preach so loud a sermon, but it would assuredly gain in action

and dignity. As a matter of fact, admirable as are Miss Corelli's intentions, it is her very overplus of zeal which more often than not defeats itself. Classes cannot be arraigned wholesale without a certain amount of unfairness. And in the novel under discussion the backslidings of the weaker brethren against whom Miss Corelli rails do not materially affect the position of the patient, hard-working band of pressmen, who, in fair weather or foul, do their day's work in the worst paid profession in the world with as much enthusiasm and as little grumbling as may be.

Nothing of all this applies to "Wormwood." It has its own purpose writ large; but in some inexplicable way this purpose becomes the vital part of a great artistic creation. Her delineation of the wretched absinthe

drinker is the most consistently powerful piece of work Miss Corelli has yet done. The story marches from horror to horror till the very crescendo of human devilry is reached. We follow the hero's grisly career till our very blood runs cold with loathing. We watch him brand the child-bride with open shame on her marriage morning, and shudder at each further step of his fiendish revenge. And yet, with the tragedy at its height, there is no situation which could not safely challenge criticism as being absolutely right and inevitable. To borrow a famous expression—it is like realising the absinthe mania by flashes of lightning.

Most things are relative, and if "Jane," in comparison with the above, seems tuned to a minor key, it is yet a sufficiently energetic protest against the vulgarity of smart

or "swagger" society. On learning that she had become possessed of twenty thousand a year in her own right, Jane left her picturesque cottage with its china and mignonette, and betook her dignified old-fashioned self to Mayfair for the express purpose of finding out of what stuff society is made. As a matter of fact, if she had only realised it, she might have acquired precisely the same information outside her own garden-gate. For the members of "smart" or any other society differ no whit from the ruck of their fellows except in the possession of larger facilities for self-indulgence. In the course of her probings, however, Jane discovered that the world "gorged" and "swilled" and "slobbered," and talked slang and comported itself generally in a fashion which, by no stretch of imagination,

could even be called questionable. So she shook the dust off her shoes and went back to her china and mignonette, after turning a royal gentleman out of her town house for an act of ill-breeding, which, even if it actually occurred, makes one regret the publicity it has been given.

"Delicia" was murdered by the brutal neglect and debauchery of her husband. "Beauty" Carlyon cannot, of course, be taken as the type of any particular class, and though Miss Corelli vouches that his prototype exists, we can only accept him as a unique specimen of blackguard. Delicia was an authoress, on whose fair head the crown of fame had been placed with love and worship by many hands. And the whole book is a fervent protest against the way in which a woman's artistic triumphs are sup-

posed to work against her in masculine eyes. Delicia's husband, with his hands resting idly in his breeches pockets, openly called her "unsexed" because she wrote novels, and it must have come as a surprise to most people that Miss Corelli evidently imagined his attitude to be shared by the rest of his sex. If this were so it was a grievous fault, as Brutus would say. But is it so? Is not the supposed masculine detractor who clamours for anything—barmaids, for instance—in preference to a woman of intellect rather a figment of Miss Corelli's brain? Would not most women who have entered the already overcrowded ranks of journalism, if it were put to them fairly, testify to receiving something not unlike chivalry in that rough arena where they have only asked for fair play?

"The Mighty Atom" is dedicated to "those self-styled Progressivists who, by precept and example, assist the infamous cause of education without religion, and who, by promoting the idea, borrowed from French atheism, of denying to the children in Board schools and elsewhere the knowledge and love of God as the true foundation of noble living, are guilty of a worse crime than murder." Though Miss Corelli is a little hazy on the subject of atoms and first causes and the like, investing the one with spinal cords and supposing that the other "comes from" somewhere, her motives, as usual, are entirely admirable. But there are certain human and beautiful things in poor little Lionel Valliscourt's life which get closer to the reader's heart than any problem of the Atom. Among them is his

friendship for Jessamine Dale, and that pretty baby's magnanimous offering of an apple on condition that he should let her bite "th' red bit oot." And even the poor little fellow's miserable end is not more pathetic than is his utter loneliness when his mother leaves him for ever, for what shameful purpose he scarcely knows.

"Boy" is a pathetic little study of the undermining of an originally fine nature by vicious home influences. In the end "Boy" made a gallant enough effort to straighten out the tangles of his wasted life at the front. And more people than his loving friend Miss Letty will treasure the picture of the golden-haired baby who was set in his high chair to act as a preventative to his drunken father's drunken rages, and who cooed at that disreputable gentleman—"Oh, poo sing! Does

'oo feels ill? Does 'oo feels bad? Oh, poo sing!"

In the earliest days of her writings Miss Corelli hinted that the Church and the clergy were among the "morbidities and microbes" of national disease. Her latest book, "The Master Christian," contains some six hundred odd pages of invective against religious hypocrisy of all kinds, with sly hits at the Church of England sandwiched in, to which even the above energetic language seems but as meat for babes. By a large section of the populace, who know nothing and care less for controversy, but who still maintain the Puritan traditions, the book has been received with enthusiasm as a "splendid attack" on an ancient enemy. Miss Corelli has before chastised with whips: the weapons she now uses are several kinds of scorpions. The whole book is

full to overflowing of those strange incongruities which make Miss Corelli's work a greater psychical curiosity than any she has ever discussed. The physical infirmities of the aged Pope are dilated on with excessive if not deplorable frankness: but the hand which did not shrink from writing him down as "a scraggy old man" was also capable of a passage of singular beauty, where Christ, standing on the steps of the Pope's throne, besought him to cast aside his temporal power and come out with Him. "But he will never come" Miss Corelli makes Christ add, in a spirit of gloomy prophecy.

It is an entire mistake to regard "The Master Christian" as a special invective against or attack on the Roman Church. The very fact that a Roman Catholic cardinal was selected

as a man of irreproachable and saintly life, worthy of the companionship and protection of the child Christ, should prove that no peculiar antipathy to Rome was intended. Miss Corelli is opposed to religious hypocrisy, whether in the Church of England or in any other Church. She prefers the man who frankly says he believes in nothing to one who makes outward show of devotion to Christianity and leads a life in direct opposition to all Gospel teaching. The man who goes to church, is a constant communicant, and says family prayers in his household and yet lives at feud with his neighbours, is hard on his dependants, and gives way to constant ill-temper and uncharitableness, is not to be considered beside the man who makes no public pretence, but does all the good he can unassumingly. Miss

Corelli objects to wealth and rank in Church matters, and repudiates the idea of Church dignitaries,—aiming, it is to be supposed, at the realisation of some form of simple Christian Socialism. She is not alone in regarding the poor cleric, living on a bare pittance and preaching the Gospel whilst half starving, as a greater man and nearer Christ than are the well-fed and prosperous bishop and archbishop. For herself, Miss Corelli belongs to no Church: all Churches which sincerely worship the Divine she considers sacred, and her whole creed is summed up in an effort to follow the commands of Christ Himself, rather than the words of His disciples. Religious hypocrisy, whether on the part of a layman or the priest who is always seeking his own worldly advancement, is in her view rank blasphemy, and "The

Master Christian" was merely intended as an attack on the humbug and wickedness of those who pretend to serve Christ while living in direct opposition to His plainly worded and simple commands.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw has just given utterance to the surprising statement that, having to write a play very hurriedly, he put it into blank verse, that being the easiest method of production. However that may be, there are whole passages in Miss Corelli's novels which, if split up into the necessary demarcations, would read as blank verse pure and simple. Here is one chosen from among many in "Barabbas"—

"I will confront the fiend in woman's shape —the mocking, smiling, sweet-voiced, damned devil—who lured us on to treachery. Judith sayest thou?"

But it is not of course for this sort of thing, but for the simple and fragrant little songs which ever and anon stray into her stories, to the reader's great content, that Miss Corelli may be truly accounted poet. From the palace of Princess Ziska floated the song of the darkness and the song of the lotus-lily, while from the Magdalen there came a little plaintiff lullaby—

"Better be a rose, the wildest one that
blows,
And safe in the shelter of the King's
gardén."

But sweetest of them all is the love song of Prince Ivan, which has been set to many tunes—

"As the billows fling shells on the shore,
As the sun poureth light on the sea,
As a lark on the wing scatters song to
the spring,
So rushes my love to thee.

"As the ivy clings close to the tower,
As the dew lieth deep in a flower,
As the shadow to light, as the day unto night,
So clings my wild soul to thee.

"As the moon glitters coldly alone,
Above earth on her cloud-woven throne,
As the rock-bound cave repulses a wave,
So thy anger repulseth me.

"As the bitter bleak frost of a night,
Slays the roses with pitiless might,
As a sharp dagger-thrust hurls a king to the dust,
So thy cruelty murdereth me.

"Yet in spite of thy queenly disdain,
Thou art scared by my passion and pain,
Thou shalt hear me repeat till I die for it, sweet,
I love thee! I dare to love *thee!*"

In dealing with Miss Corelli as an artist, all minor points group themselves round the two most prominent characteristics of her style—its superla-

tive and its non-evolutionary character. All her *dramatis personæ* are dowered with supreme gifts, whether of beauty or genius; and the gigantic nature of her situations and the exuberance of her language are indescribable. But from "A Romance of Two Worlds" to "The Master Christian" there has been neither retrogression nor advance. Just as none of her characters develop during the writing of her books, so none of her books differ, even ever so slightly, in either sentiment or diction, from the first specimen. The lines upon which she works have been so unconsciously and so rigidly adhered to throughout, that their overstepping would now seem a little miracle of its own; and though Miss Corelli feels that she has not yet done her best work, we must expect the difference to show in degree rather than in kind.

And if in this "best work" personalities and the like are hammered more firmly in, we shall scarcely grumble if we also get still more golden passages than "The Fall of Lucifer."

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