

## Illustrated Interviews.

LIX. — MISS MARIE CORELLI.

BY ARTHUR H. LAWRENCE.

*Illustrated by Photographs specially taken for this article.*



N beginning the exceedingly pleasurable task of recording the only "interview" yet published with Miss Marie Corelli, I confess that, for one special reason above all others, I could wish that it may be read by every one of the hundreds of thousands who form her great reading public all the world over, and who, like myself, have felt indebted to her for so many happy hours by reason of the brilliancy and magic power of her work.

It is a perfectly natural thing that those of us who are interested in any fine work should feel an ever-increasing interest in the personality of the worker, and it was on this basis, and on no other, that, after receiving a very courteously worded refusal, I ventured to urge my request on the gifted authoress. The fame which Miss Marie Corelli has earned has been entirely gained by the public recognition of her work. If, at any time, the "advertisement"

of reviews, paragraphs, interviews, and the like could have been of the slightest assistance to her, that time has long since gone by; and while I feel that this statement applies in no less degree to this

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article, I confess that I am animated by the hope—and this is the "special reason" to which I have already alluded—that it will be possible for me to do something to negative the extraordinary caricatures of the charming novelist which so many of my "friends" on the Press have so industriously circulated.

Prior to the publication of this "interview," one or two biographical articles concerning Miss Marie Corelli have been written by those who have met her, and countless other articles have been written by those who have known nothing about her, a statement which also applies to those who have written innumerable paragraphs emanating from certain journalists, who have made up in rudeness and vulgarity for what has been lacking in knowledge and wit. I have read the criticisms—and have been the personal recipient of verbal criticisms—of her work by professional critics, whose main qualification has confessedly been that they have carefully abstained from



*A Snap-shot of Marie Corelli and her pet dog 'Czar' in 'The Lounge' at 'The Royal'.*

[Miss Corelli is the right-hand figure.]

reading the work which they have pretended to criticise.

I shall feel happy indeed with the countless pleasant memories which are associated with my visit to the country retreat of Miss



Marie Corelli, and the many long conversations which I had with her there, if I am able to pass on—in some measure—the impression which I have received of her magnetic charm, rare strength of character, her refreshing sweetness of manner, and, not least, the intense womanliness which indeed one might have anticipated—but for our friends on the Press—as pertaining to the personality of one whose work tends to show forth these qualities, and which, added to her genius, have made her, as she is, the best read and most popular novelist of the day.

I have described Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire as Miss Marie Corelli's country retreat. It may not be generally known—I have not seen it mentioned—that the novelist is giving up her town house in Longridge Road, and that the house which she has occupied for the past nine or ten years will know her no more; and, indeed, for some time Miss Corelli has regarded her suite of rooms in the Royal Hotel, Woodhall Spa, as a home.

It was at the beginning of the year that Miss Corelli underwent an operation—of a similar nature to that endured by Sarah Bernhardt—but at the hands of an exceedingly clever lady-doctor, Dr. Mary Scharlieb; and though Miss Marie Corelli was veritably at “death's door,” as the phrase has it, the period of her convalescence at Brighton coincided, I noticed, with some particularly virulent attacks in the Press on the part of the exceedingly gallant jesters to whom I have already alluded; and when, in the early stage of her recovery, Miss Corelli objected to the suggestion that bulletins should be issued by way of relieving the trouble caused by the interminable calling of innumerable kindly inquirers, one of her doctors, Dr. Frampton, very truly remarked that his patient “could not even own to illness without being accused of self-advertisement.” Happily, however, Miss Corelli has now completely recovered, and at the time of my visit—the first week in May—I was delighted to find her in the best of health and good spirits, a quintessence, if I may say so, of the sunshine about her.

Miss Corelli's birthday is on the first of May, and no interviewer could have been given a more auspicious time for his visit. Springtime, and his fair hostess—whom he had heard described as a “termagant,” and I know not what else—sweetness itself. Moreover, to be prosaic, I had so arranged my arrival that I was in good time for afternoon tea—and the Scotch express is rarely, if ever, unpunctual!—and though if I were a great descriptive writer, and

had the happy knack which mainly pertains, I believe, to the lady journalist, of describing costumes and surroundings with inherent ease and good taste, I might be tempted to enlarge on “my first impression” of Miss Marie Corelli as she received me in her pretty drawing-room, I must content myself with the remembrance, and the mere statement, that I felt a sense of relief—if I may boldly say so—that here was no disillusionment: quite the reverse; and though I had not paid much attention to the quaint “descriptions” of those whom I knew had not met her, I certainly wish I had the ability to describe, what I should certainly like to describe—the vivacity, the personal charm and sincerity, the real feminine grace of her every movement, all too rare a charm, I think, nowadays. A more definite description than this may, perhaps, be gained inferentially throughout the article.

The accompanying illustrations may, perhaps, be explained at this point as furnishing the scene of the many walks and talks which I was subsequently privileged to have with the charming novelist. First, a view of the Royal Hotel itself; of the study, in which so many—to me—pleasant conversations took place; then one of the novelist's favourite walks, and the wondrously pleasant “Winter Garden,” which furnished so good an opportunity for a further talk after dinner. The inscriptions below all these illustrations are facsimiled from Miss Corelli's own handwriting.

It was in one of the Winter Garden lounges that, at my request, Miss Corelli permitted herself to be photographed one morning, in the brightest of weather, which prevailed throughout the time of my stay at Woodhall Spa. This most interesting portrait is the one which has been reproduced on the first page of this article.

Her own rooms all face the beautiful woods, which she can enter at once by merely crossing the road. Beyond the woods, as Miss Corelli told me—and I was soon enabled to verify the fact for myself—“are miles and miles of heather-covered moorland, over which blow the invigorating airs, impregnated with iodine, which make Woodhall Spa such an admirable retreat for those whose nerves are racked by the worry and fret of town life, and who need ‘bracing up’ to renew the fight once more.”

The Winter Garden, a corner of which is depicted in the first illustration, from a photograph taken for me by Miss Corelli's friend, Miss Bertha Vyver, is a thousand yards square,



wherein tall palms and flowering camellias flourish, and even grapes grow; and here the novelist is very fond of strolling about, and may be seen sometimes with a very charming little girl clinging to her arm, "Ida," the small, pretty daughter of the proprietor of the Royal Hotel, Mr. Came, who built the place, and who is well known for his taste and cleverness as an architect, being formerly the favourite pupil of the late Sir Digby Wyatt.

In the Winter Garden a band plays during the *table-d'hôte* dinner, and on two days of the week there is a dance for the residents and for all the visitors who care to join in.

I was interested to find Miss Corelli very enthusiastic also concerning the "Horncastle Amateur Orchestral Band," more especially as the keenness of her critical musical instinct is well known, largely due to the fact that she was educated for the musical profession, and had intended going to Leipsic to complete her education in music when the writing of "The Romance of Two Worlds" proved the turning-point of her career.

"I wish," she remarked to me, "that they could get such good players in some of our London theatres. These Horncastle men all love music, and play for the love of it; and it is quite absurd to think that the Germans are the only people who can be taught to play and sing in parts. The English are quite as musical—they only want someone to 'lead,' and a little encouragement. They play here in perfect time and tune, with *verve* and fire and feeling, and are a standing proof of denial against that oft-repeated parrot cry, 'The *un-musical* English!'

"One reason that I am so fond of Woodhall is that it is as yet an unspoilt place—fresh and sweet and restful; and, then, I have such a charming abode at the Royal. It is the only hotel I have ever been able to work in, with the one exception of King's, at Brighton."

I might be tempted to add that one of the

walks which Miss Corelli showed me brought us to the golfing ground, which is within a short distance of the hotel, to say nothing of the smoothest tennis-courts imaginable, croquet ground, and so forth; but one thing I must not omit to mention. My friends need not wander farther than Woodhall to hear the nightingale. Night and morning, and, in fact, during the better part of the day, the nightingales vied with each other, each trying to out-sing the other, hoping to win the affection of the lady-nightingale whom they were serenading.

"I determined," Miss Marie Corelli told



*The Royal Hotel. Woodhall Spa.*

me, "that if I lived through my serious illness this winter, to be at the Royal for my birthday, the first of May—and I am glad that my hopes were fulfilled. On May morning I opened my window here to see the bright sunshine, and to hear all the birds singing, and the first call of the cuckoo! My friends filled my rooms with flowers—so you see the whole business was quite a spring festival!"

Here the reader may imagine that tea was quite ended, and that I disappeared from the Villa Daheim to dress for dinner; but as I kept no diary (and if I had, it would have recorded nothing which is not well remembered), I need only say that it can be understood that in subsequent conversations many points came up for discussion, in no precise order, perhaps, for it would be an unhappy chat which could go along on preconceived lines; but whether or no Miss Corelli ever cares to have the presence of an interviewer inflicted upon her again, I ought to explain that the following inquiries were



somewhat rather more colloquially rendered, and occurred at intervals on different occasions. One could not have the hardihood to inflict such an inquisitional process at one sitting.

"My favourite amusement? Music, I think. It is the most impersonal of recreations. But for me it must be music in the open air, on the water, or in a quiet room. I do not like concerts, or large musical assemblies of any kind. The unexpected in music is music's greatest charm. I cannot bear to sit with a row of people in stalls, as if we were all sheep in pens, while we are waiting for the appearance of some gentleman in a white tie and tail-coat, who assures us that he is a 'Friar of Orders Grey'; or a lady in a low evening dress, who works her whole body and her whole song steadily towards the top note, and rests upon it with a thrilling scream. I do not call this sort of thing music at all. In fact, I dislike the trouble of concert-going as much as I dislike the bother and invariable disappointment of theatre-going."

"Then you find theatre-going disappointing?"

"Most assuredly. It is not as if we had any great actors worth seeing. They are all mediocre. Irving is an artistic student of things dramatic and poetic, but he is not a great histrion. Ellen Terry is nothing but a very graceful 'comédienne.' Forbes Robertson is, I suppose, our greatest rising actor, and I admire his voice and perfect elocution. But he never rouses me to the least emotion or enthusiasm.

"Do you really think," Miss Marie Corelli continued, "that there is anyone on the stage worth going out to see on a cold night, for instance, when your own room, with its blazing fire and cosy chairs, invites you to remain and read books full of beautiful thoughts and classic wisdom? I would rather stay at home with Camille Flammarion's latest volumes, or Clifford Harrison's admirable 'Notes on the Margin' essays, than see the most famous mime that ever pretended to be what he is not, aided by grease-paint and footlight-glare."

"So, then, I take it that you don't believe in acting as an art?"

"Do you call it an art? Well, I suppose it is, but you must own that it is on the lowest rung of the ladder. Even monkeys mimic men, and that is just all that actors do. The more they mimic, the cleverer the monkeys are. I like the real, true men; the imitations are irritating!"

"And amongst modern writers, who are your favourite authors?"

"I have no particular favourites; I find something good or charming in all of them. Of course, none of us can attain to the magic utterance of grand old Sir Walter Scott, and my beloved Charles Dickens, whose books never fail to cheer me in all my 'dark hours'; but I do not, like the professional critic, hunt for faults in my contemporaries—I prefer to find good qualities. I like Rudyard Kipling's short stories, but I don't think the name of 'poet' can justly apply to him, not yet, at any rate, and not as long as he writes what he must know, in his own mind, is mere jingle-verse; but two of his stanzas I carry always in my memory, and I heartily wish he would enunciate more of such splendid speech:—

When Earth's last picture is painted and the tubes  
are twisted and dried,  
When the oldest colours have faded, and the youngest  
critic has died,  
We shall rest, and, faith, we shall need it—lie down  
for an æon or two,  
Till the Master of all Good Workmen shall put us to  
work anew!  
And only the Master shall praise us, and only the  
Master shall blame;  
And no one shall work for money, and no one shall  
work for fame—  
But each for the joy of the working, and each, in his  
separate star,  
Shall draw the Thing as he sees It for the God of  
Things as They Are!

"The joy of the working," Miss Corelli added, "yes, that is the only true joy in the profession of literature!"

"Your fight with the critics has passed into a proverb," I remarked to Miss Corelli, one day; "how did it begin?"

"They began it," replied Miss Corelli, with a smile. "They threw the first stone—had they not done so, I should not have required to defend myself. When I first started on my career, with the still popular 'Romance of Two Worlds,' I had an unbounded faith in the generosity and conscientiousness of literary people who had already made their mark, and who could therefore afford to help others up the hill. That faith was quickly destroyed. Without even troubling to read what I had written, they 'went' for me, as the phrase goes, and, resenting the deliberate injustice of the attack, I 'went' for them in return. I know it is considered much more 'womanly' to sit down lamb-like and take all the kicks and blows with the meekness of a patient Grizel. And in certain parts of the world you may still see carts drawn by a woman and an ox yoked together, while the



man-driver sits aloft and curls his whip round with a stinging blow on woman and ox equally. This is just the sort of attitude some men assume towards women in art. I do not speak for myself alone—I speak for all my sex.

“According to certain preconceived masculine notions of ‘pure womanliness’—one ought to be quite glad and thankful to be kicked and whipped by the ‘nobler’ sex. But then, you see, I do not feel that way, and I do not admire the lethargic character of ‘patient Grizel.’ And so, being attacked, I defended myself. And it seems I won. At any rate, the enemies I have now are of so slight and trumpery a character, and have so

“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.”

The recollection of this notice, and the way in which this proceeding put to the test, and, to my mind, largely displayed the artificiality, of the “advertisement” which “reviews” are supposed to give to a book, and the characteristic courage of the proceeding, came back to me very forcibly as I strolled through the woods with the charming novelist one bright, sunshiny morning; and as that particular book has been a greater success than perhaps any other book of our time, I thought of the mighty reviewers whose dignity had been considerably hurt by this action, and



*Marie Corelli's Study at 'The Royal'.*

little power to injure me, that it is not worth while drawing sword against them. But, I repeat, had they not begun the contest, it would never have taken place at all. As it is, I am glad of the fight—it has done me good; and it has also enlightened the public as to the manner of the critics' methods. The public is always the umpire, you know, and it has certainly so far decided in my favour.”

It will be remembered as of comparatively recent date that the Author *v.* Reviewer question, to which Miss Corelli alluded, was brought to a head by the following notice which was printed on every copy published of “The Sorrows of Satan” :—

“SPECIAL NOTICE.—No copies of this book are sent out for review. Members of the Press

contrasted the imaginary picture which was drawn of a woman who could safeguard herself in this way and the actual woman before me, slight in figure, so prettily dressed, and the pretty dress so gracefully worn; the soft, golden-brown hair clustering over the forehead of the fair woman who is dainty and pretty without loss of dignity and womanly strength—the contrast was so piquant that I could not repress, and had no occasion to repress, a smile, as I made some inquiries upon this point, and Miss Corelli replied :—

“Oh, yes, that's all over now. My books will never be sent out for review again,” she added, cheerfully, and without the slightest tinge of bitterness.



"You see, by not sending the book out for review, I simplified matters very much. The critics gave sufficient evidence of the fact that they had not read my previous book, 'Barabbas,' and so for the future I save them any further trouble, and my publishers a good deal of expense."

"And which books do your public like most?"

"'Barabbas,' which was supposed to be reviewed, and 'The Sorrows of Satan,' which was not sent out for review, have been the most popular. Over a hundred thousand copies have been sold of each—there is but a very slight difference in the sale of the two books, and, of course, they are still selling."

"Are you personally acquainted with any of your contemporaries in literature?"

"No. I have had letters on matters of business from Sir Walter Besant and others, but I have never met any of them. Lord Tennyson was the only great man who ever encouraged me in my work, and this he did by a personal letter of praise shortly before he died. I suppose, however, that I may call Mr. Clifford Harrison a 'contemporary in literature,' for he is a most charming writer, although his literary work is, as yet, not sufficiently known to the public. He is certainly one of my kindest friends. Mr. Stead is answerable for the absurd rumour that I depicted myself as 'Mavis Clare,' in 'The Sorrows of Satan,' a mistake which he afterwards withdrew, with an apology 'for that and every other injustice' he had done me. Mr. David Christie Murray has, more recently, taken up Mr. Stead's error, and, I hear, has 'gone' for me in one of his papers, or series of articles, or something, entitled 'My Contemporaries in Fiction.' Oddly enough, I never knew he was a 'contemporary' at all, until he thus announced it. I have never read anything he has written, so I cannot presume to judge him; but I would certainly never state that I considered he had depicted himself as the hero of one of his own stories, unless I knew him personally and intimately, and had some right to comprehend his characteristics."

It was the sight of the huge "post" which was brought into the drawing-room one afternoon for Miss Marie Corelli, together with the fact, which I was permitted to discover, that a considerable part of her correspondence is from entire strangers, which prompted my question: "A great many people write to you about your books, do they not?"

"Don't speak of it! You have no idea what a mass of strange letters reaches me from all parts of the world; it is quite a business to get them answered; in fact, some are never answered at all. The desperate love-letters from amorous swains—entirely unknown to me, of course—go into the fire at once."

One such epistle at least had come by that post, and I glanced through it before it met with its well-merited oblivion. I found it was from an officer on one of the big liners, and after the startling adjuration, "My darling sweet Marie," it began with a reproach for his first letter having met with no answer, and was couched in a magnificently emotional strain throughout!

"Then there are the people who tell me the whole history of their lives in several sheets of closely-written and crossed letter-paper, and they ask my advice as to how to go on—these are very difficult to deal with. Then come the would-be translators of my books, the would-be dramatists, and the autograph-hunters. Their name is legion; nothing daunts them. They leave their books at my door—when I'm in town—with the statement that they will 'call again'—in the coolest manner, and they do their utmost to make me devote the rest of my life to the monotonous business of merely signing my name!

"Then there are the anonymous letter-writers, a large class by themselves, and whose efforts are generally limited to abusing either myself or my friends. Some of these assure me that they are sorry for me, that I am going straight to perdition, and that if I will only read a tract entitled 'Stop on the Way,' or words to that effect, I may yet manage to reach Heaven, as it were, by the skin of my teeth. 'Let me implore you,' says one feeling correspondent, 'to reconsider your position in the spirit of I. Timothy!' Then 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! And quite recently, I have had a letter all the way from Cape Colony, calmly demanding a violin. Here it is," and Miss Corelli showed me the following ingenuous



appeal. Of course, I omit the name and address:—

DEAR MISS CORELLI,—Please send me one of your old violins. I want so much, and my mother cannot afford to buy one. I saw in a book a picture of one of your rooms, and in it I saw a beautiful violin and harp, so I thought I would ask you for one. Please don't be cross.

"But, of course," Miss Corelli continued, "there is the other side of the question: the

It is from a young man about to enter the Church of England ministry, and in the course of his letter he writes: "When I think that I am but a unit among the millions, living and yet unborn, to whom your words are, and will be, the breath of life, I thank my Maker that, amid the sin of the world, one should be raised up to point us back to God; one should be granted courage and



*Another Glance of the Novelist's Study.*

beautiful, helpful, gracious letters I receive from people, who are good enough to say 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 sympathize with Lionel and Jessamine in 'The Mighty Atom'), come all sorts of loving and kindly greetings for which I am deeply grateful."

Everyone acquainted with Miss Marie Corelli's work is well aware of the moral purpose which it inculcates, the anti-pruriency, anti-sensualism, and, not least, anti-scepticism which she enforces so powerfully. In this regard I thought one of the letters which Miss Corelli showed me exceedingly interesting, but when the novelist acceded to my request that I might publish a sentence or two of it, she said, laughingly, "But I warn you that people will say I wrote it myself"; but I think I may risk this kind imputation.

wisdom to say, and say with no uncertain voice, those things which are true, and noble, and right. That you suffer many things because you dare to do so is commonly reported, and doubtless truthfully, since the proclamation of righteousness is ever a brier-strewn pathway; but some day all men shall bless your name and call you good."

"Perhaps the most interesting part of my correspondence," Miss Corelli exclaimed, "comes from India. Numbers of the native Indian Princes and Rajahs are in constant communication with me, and appear to be very much affected by, and interested in, 'Barabbas,' which has been translated into Hindustani.

"Nothing amuses me more than to find some angry, non-successful man abusing me in the Press, and telling the public that I only appeal, in my books, to readers in 'Camberwell and Brixton'! It is very



funny, indeed ; but the public know pretty well how to take such statements. Of course, Camberwell and Brixton must be included in the London radius ; and I believe the Prince of Wales, who has always been most kindly in his appreciation of my books, has property there ! But I venture to think I may count thousands of friends in America, Australia, and, indeed, wherever the English language is spoken ; and the Continental peoples pay me the compliment of constantly translating all my novels into their different languages. 'The Mighty Atom,' translated into Russian, has just been published under the auspices of the Holy Synod in Russia. I count among my 'Royal' readers Queen Margherita of Italy, the Empress of Austria, and 'Carmen Sylva,' the

ments which serve as some compensation for many of the inflictions—the persistence of the interviewer amongst them—which popularity may entail.

When discussing with Miss Corelli the rare skill and ability of the lady-surgeon who attended her—Mary Scharlieb, M.D. and M.S., of Harley Street, whom Miss Corelli described as "one of the bravest and cleverest of women"—I was interested to find that my hostess complained of the brusqueness prevalent in a section of the medical profession. Miss Corelli gave me an instance :—

"One very eminent gentleman said, when consulting with my step-brother as to the pros and cons of the question, 'Once I get her into my surgical home I will be a match for twenty Marie Corellis!' However, I



Queen of Roumania, and I think it will hardly be said that these are unintelligent women !"

I think the reader will agree with me that Miss Corelli is in no need of "testimonials," and so, with apologies to her, I quote a few words from another letter, before touching on another subject. "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 your poetical imagination, with which your works overflow."

Miss Marie Corelli has certainly committed one great crime—she has attained popularity ! I imagine, however, that such letters as I have quoted are in themselves human docu-

### A Favourite Walk

preferred to trust myself to a woman rival in his own profession, and my gratitude to Mrs. Scharlieb, not only for her brilliant skill, but for her tenderness, sympathy, and untiring care, will be a life-long tribute."

Finally, I asked Miss Corelli to tell me about her future work.

"Nothing will be published this year," Miss Corelli told me, "not even an article. If all goes well, my next book will be published in the spring of next year. I began it just before my illness, and so far only seven chapters are written. Curiously enough, the last words I dictated to my secretary, before my illness, and which came at the end of the seventh chapter, ran : 'You will soon



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 Librarians

## The Sorrows of Satan.

Do you know what it is to be poor? Not poor with the arrogant poverty complained of by certain people who have five or six thousand a year to live upon, and who yet swear they can hardly manage to make both ends meet, - but really poor, - downright, cruelly, hideously poor, with a poverty that is graceless, sordid and miserable? Poverty that compels you to dress in your one suit of clothes till it is worn threadbare, - that denies you clean linen on account of the ruinous charges of washerwomen, - that robs you of your own self-respect, and causes you to shrink along the streets vaguely abashed, instead of walking erect among your fellow-men in

REDUCED FAC-SIMILE OF A PAGE OF MISS MARIE CORELLI'S MS.

be well.' It was an unconscious prophecy. No, I won't tell you the title of the new book; even the publishers never know that until the typed MS. is in their hands, and all I can tell you about it is that it will be about the length of 'Barabbas' and 'The Sorrows of Satan,' and I am afraid it will excite the clergy of all denominations a good deal."

Some further information which Miss Corelli gave me will be new to the public.

"I have written a dramatic version of 'Barabbas,' but I understand that the Lord Chamberlain takes exception to it on the score that it touches too closely on the Passion. But I need not tell you that the

interest, so far as the characters are concerned, is purely secular, and the heroine, Judith, the sister of Judas Iscariot, is, of course, quite an imaginary character."

Miss Corelli told me that where the references made in it are not secular, they are wholly Scriptural, and anyone knowing Miss Corelli's work will not need to be told that there is nothing in the play to hurt the most susceptible taste, so that I imagine that if any objection is entertained in censorial quarters it will be quickly withdrawn. Certainly the play, written in this case by the authoress of the book, would draw all London and the provinces, and it is greatly to be hoped that



no objection will be upheld against such a play, accentuated as such an opinion would be by the fact that, as against so noble a conception, so many plays of questionable taste are permitted to pass. No doubt any imaginary objection on the part of the censor will be soon swept away.

It should be mentioned that Miss Corelli does all her work in the morning between ten and two. Pencil notes are made, to a large extent, out of doors, and in the course of one walk Miss Corelli showed me a rustic seat in a sunny corner of the pine woods which she regards as her out-of-door "sanctum," and the manuscript of the books used to be written carefully by the authoress for the printer, as shown in one of the illustrations; but latterly the novelist has dictated the final draft to her secretary, who, after a copy has been submitted and corrected, proceeds to type-write the three copies required, one being retained by the novelist, and the other two finding their way into the hands of the English and American publishers respectively.

Soon after my visit to Woodhall, the news came of Mr. Gladstone's death, and when discussing the personality of the great statesman at a subsequent visit, which I paid Miss Corelli during her short stay in town, I was exceedingly interested to find that, on two occasions, Mr. Gladstone called personally, and without previous notice, on Miss Marie Corelli, much to her surprise; and while entertaining the veteran statesman at afternoon tea, during which he conversed with her on the subject of her work, she smilingly ventured to ask him, in the presence of one or two friends, why he had honoured her with a visit. The reply of the Grand Old Man was repeated to me by Miss Vyver, who was present on that occasion. "Because," said he, "I was curious to see for myself the personality of a young woman who could write so courageously and 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."

"Mr. G." was all life and animation during his visit, which lasted nearly three

hours. The conversation touched on a very wide range of subjects, on all of which he displayed a wonderfully intimate knowledge, and everything he said evidently proved of the profoundest interest to Miss Marie Corelli, the value of his opinions being heightened by the characteristic earnestness with which his opinions were uttered. This was between three and four years ago, and his last words to the novelist were: "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."

As the result of a conversation I have had with Miss Marie Corelli on the subject, I am glad to be able to assist in giving currency to her authoritative denial of the suggestion which has been made in the Press that the title of her next book will bear the blasphemous and revolting title of "The Sins of Christ." At the time of writing, this statement has been given a publicity which utterly untrue statements so often achieve. As I have already stated in this interview, seven chapters only of her new book are written; it will not be published this year, and no title has even been thought of, nor is it ever communicated to anyone—even to the most intimate friend—before publication.

There is much more that might well be written, but I feel bound to point out that Miss Marie Corelli's imperturbable sweetness of manner and unflinching good humour are the natural outcome of strength of character. It is no effort to her to be kindly, charming, and gracious—she is naturally so; and in regretfully bringing the pleasant task of writing this article to a conclusion, I prefer to do so by quoting a remark which was made to me on the first day of my visit to Woodhall Spa, by one of those charming, quite grown-up, but high-spirited, "quite English" girls, whom no doubt it is a pleasure to most STRAND MAGAZINE readers to meet. This description applies to just the type of girl not the least of whose attractions is a readiness, even to a disconcerting degree, to say what is actually thought! In reply to some references which I had made to Miss Corelli, the young lady in question exclaimed, "Why, yes; who could help loving her? She's so charming—and she's so good!" I doubt if, after much thinking, anyone could have epitomized one's impression of the famous novelist more correctly.