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**BOOKS WE HAVE "STUCK IN."**

A lady recently suggested to Andrew Lang the topic, "Books we have stuck in," she herself frankly admitting that the "Pilgrim's Progress" is one of these books. She never emerged from the Slough of Despond—never saw the land of Beulah, nor had a view of the Delectable Mountains. Mr. Lang says (Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly, November) that while he could not forgive her, her remarks pricked his own literary conscience, and he fell to thinking of the books that he had stuck in. He does not speak of mere modern books, in which we all stick blamelessly and "swatter out" (Kailyard style) on the home side of the bog. He acknowledges having stuck in many of these. He was even bogged in "Dombe and Son," in "Little Dorrit," in "Our Mutual Friend," in "The Light That Failed," in "Count Robert of Paris," in "The Professor," and many others. He does not see why one should be either proud or particularly ashamed of such misadventures. Not everybody, he reasons, can read the same modern novels; and we should remember that when we have said "It may be excellent, only I can't read it," we have not criticised nor crushed the work in question; we have only illustrated our own limitations. To quote:

"The fault may be ours, not the book's. 'Don Quixote' is a masterpiece. Granted. But I have often stuck in it, and so did Alexandre Dumas. If any one can read right through the 'Divina Commedia' of Dante, he has something to be proud of: but the service of that epic is crowded with 'the bodies and the bones of those who strove in other days to pass,' and stuck in it! Sir or madame, have you read all the poems of Dante? Have you ever gone through 'Paradise Lost' from 'kiver to kiver'? I decline to make any confession on this point, but I have many a time stuck in 'The Lord of the Isles'; also in 'Rokeby.' Also 'The Faery Queene,' I doubt if anybody ever did read all of it in our day, except Mr. Saintsbury. 'Endymion' (Keats) very few have read through; the task is not impossible, but it is most toilsome and dismal. That most readers stick in 'Don Juan' and 'Childe Harold,' I am tolerably assured; many fail to penetrate 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' and, of course, 'The Anatomy of Melancholy' is not meant to be read in a dull, plodding manner from end to end. There be those who have read all through Tolstoi's and Mr. W. D. Howell's most earnest outpourings, but these men and women must unite a strenuous habit of application with great natural gifts for study. They should devote themselves to nothing more frivolous than pastoral theology, and Mr. Balfour's book about religion and scientific characters must be child's play to them. I admit that I stuck in it, also in the 'Enneads' of Plotinus, and the complete works of Pico, Earl of Mirandola, and in many novels of M. Emile Zola."

Little Brother (whose sister is playing cards with a gentleman)—"Mr. Smiler, does Minnie play cards well?"

Mr. Smiler—"Yes, very well indeed."

Little Brother—"Then you had better look out. Mamma said if she played her cards well she would catch you."

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