

well-received, "Land at Last" having had the advantage of appearing in the same volume of Temple Bar with two of the most popular novels of Miss Braddon and Mr. G. W. Wills. As a story "Black Sheep" strikes us as being a great improvement on its predecessors. The plot has the interest derivable from a murder scene of some originality—rather a rarity in these days when even the murderers of real life are so wanting in new ideas. The interest of the plot turns on the way in which the murder evidence is thrown upon the really guiltless hero, one George Dallas, who living over "fastly" has got into gambling debts to his disreputable friends Mr. and Mrs. Routh, and into disgrace and stoppage of allowance with his mamma and step-father. Mr. George Dallas is the ordinary type of young men about town in London, with which modern novels of London life have made us very familiar, too indolent to work with any settled aim at a profession, much given to amusement and dissipation, and easily decoyed by the fair Mrs. Routh's influence. Mrs. Routh and her husband belong to a class of dramatic personæ who have indeed done good service in the novels of a generation past, but are scarcely possible in a state of society where gambling as a temptation has ceased to exist. Routh has an enemy whom he wishes to get out of the way; he murders this man (the murder being of course duly witnessed by a London street boy, who will turn up at the proper moment in evidence), and Mrs. Routh manages to put the diamonds stolen from the murdered man in the place of some diamonds given by George Dallas's mother to supply his necessities, and persuades him to go abroad to sell them. Whereon George Dallas goes to Amsterdam, and we have an amusing description of the quaint old Dutch City, and some capital broken English from a Dutch diamond merchant quite in the best manner of the "Flaneur." Meantime the Rouths prosper and appear as occupants of a house at the West end,—Mrs. Routh occupying herself in drawing the meshes of suspicion most closely around George Dallas. On Dallas' return to England he too rises in the world, obtaining a good position as a writer for the press in London, and being beloved by a young lady with large estates and a *penchant* for literary men. But on a sudden the novel London detective of the Inspector Bucket type appears on the scene, and of course fixing suspicion on the wrong track, arrests George Dallas for murder. Just then Mrs. Routh's husband, who has committed as she knows, having been his confidante, all sorts of atrocities, murder included, without at all alienating her affection, commits the one unpardonable sin of admiring another lady. They quarrel—and meanwhile Nemesis, that is the irrepressible London street boy, comes forward to declare the guilt of Routh. Both Rouths commit suicide, and virtue in the person of the very uninteresting Mr. George Dallas is triumphant.

The scenes from London Bohemian life are well drawn, but the character most elaborately described and for which the reader's sympathy is chiefly sought from first to last, that of Stewart Routh's wife, we hold to be an impossible one. Having under some strangely exceptional circumstances nursed Routh when