EAST & WEST

Volume I New York, December, 1899 Number 2

Night-Wind

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

Like some great pearl from out the Orient,
Upheld by unseen hands in its rich weight,
An offering to adorn a queen's proud state
That some dependent princeling did present,
The moon slow rises into night's dark tent.
The pulseless air with longings vague befreight
Now quickens 'neath her gaze, now doth inflate
The still-poised midnight clouds in heaven pent.
With jealous haste he draws them o'er her face,
And by his right forbids all other eyes
To note her beauty and to praise her grace;
Then up on lover's wings to her he flies
Impatient for the joy of her embrace;
And to the earth are wafted down his sighs.

Comments

PERHAPS the one article in the first number of EAST AND WEST which attracted the most attention was Miss Edwards's "The Eclipse of Poetry." This very interesting and suggestive essay elicited not only considerable praise, but at least one complete refutation as well. Miss Edwards claimed, it will be remembered, that poetry was dead, and that its demise was due to the coldness, not of critics, but of the unappreciative world at large. Our correspondent, on the other hand, will have it that poetry is not dead, but sleeping, and that whatever indignities have been done to the Muse are not to be laid at the door of the much-maligned public, which is just as eager as ever it was to welcome the true poet and to accept his wares. In support of his contention, he instances the enormous popular success of "Cyrano de Bergerac" and of Mr. Markham's Lucretian poem, "The Man with the Hoe." Now in this contrariety of opinions, dear readers—and here we are about to make our point—lies the making of an excellent controversy. And *that* is just what we want for this department of EAST AND WEST—a good, lusty, self-supporting controversy on this or any other subject of equal literary interest. If anyone has such, let him bring

it forward. If he would enter the lists as challenger or in defence of a favorite theory, this arena, well-sanded and spacious, with seats for an infinite number of spectators, is at his pleasure and disposal; provided only, of course, that he will recognize us as mouthpiece for both parties, umpire, and stage-manager, with power to declare contests closed at discretion, and to bring on a new attraction when the old shall have proved wearisome.

* * *

The essay on "American Literary Commonplace," in this number of EAST AND WEST, is certainly suggestive; and in spite of its rather cynical and pessimistic tone, which we by no means endorse, we are glad to present it to our readers as at least a partial expression of our own views. There is one important consideration to be borne in mind while reading it, concerning a matter which the author has neglected to cover quite adequately. It is that the problem of the commonplace, however important sociologically and economically, and, however interesting through the laws—imitation, supply, and demand, etc.—involved in its production, is, after all, only secondary, except as it bears upon and influences the production of real literature. Taken by itself as a curious modern phase of the economical problem—and so the writer seems rather inclined to take it—it bears about the same relation to the destinies of true art that the liquor problem and the question of a "dry Sunday" bear to ethics. What we are interested in as lovers of letters, is always the best that is doing at the present day; and in our hands criticism should be the instrument to unearth it. If we turn our attention for the moment with the author to a study of the condition of the commonplace as an element in the pen and ink activity of to-day, it is simply because we feel that by a reasonable recognition of two standards in modern writing, and by putting the commonplace upon an honest commercial basis, stripped of all illusions and false artistic pretensions, we shall not only lighten the task of criticism, but also at the same time do the greatest possible present service to the true literature and the sincere literary endeavor of the period. That there are those we faithfully believe; and we refuse to let the immense mass of modern commonplace discourage us, or blind us to the fact that now, as ever, do men produce books born of honest inspiration and of aspirations for more than money and cheap popular acclaim.

* * *

Last year all three awards, in the Century prize literary competitions for college graduates, were made to Bachelors of Arts (how charmingly modern femininity wears the old scholastic distinction!) from girls' colleges in the East. The announcement to this effect caused some astonishment and carried widespread chagrin to the breasts of college boys. This year the tables are partially turned. Again, to be sure, it is a girl, Miss Marion Warner Wildman, of Western Reserve University, who carries off the palm for the prize poem, "A Hill Prayer;" but the prizes for the essay and the short story go, respectively, to Mr. Henry Justin Smith, of the University of Chicago, for "The Poetry of William Blake: An Opinion," and to Mr. John M. Oskison, of Leland Stanford Jr. University, for "Only the Master Shall Praise." Incidentally it is interesting to note that the scene of success has shifted from East to West.

Is there any real significance in the fact that the prize poem has now, twice running, been submitted by a girl? The world's greatest poetry, with but few exceptions, has, of course, been written by men. How is it then, that, from our universities which may justly be deemed the horticultural hotbeds of American letters, the experience of the wide world for ages

should be reversed? Are our coming poets to be all Sapphos, Mrs. Brownings, and Christina Rossettis? Or is it that a dying out of the male line from Homer and Milton is to put a premium on poetesses? The truth seems to be that at the age at which our young poets are here submitted to competitive test, a fair and final judgment cannot be made. Up to a certain point and up to a certain age, the woman has the advantage over the man, in the possession, by virtue of her sex, of certain qualities which go to the fashioning of good verse, and which share in the earlier maturity of womanhood. She is naturally endowed with feeling for music, delicacy of touch, fineness of sentiment—all the graces that we call "poetic." The higher qualities of poetry, on the other hand, strength, depth, and directness of thought and feeling, these are more distinctively masculine and of correspondingly later development. So that while college boys are struggling ordinarily with structure and the difficulties of self-expression—those of them, that is, who are not ashamed to whirl the wall-flower Muse—their academic sisters, six to one, are gaining full acclaim for their graceful, finished versifying.

Nectar

By Clarence Urmy

In a golden bowl I brew
Leaf of rose and violet dew,
And the essences of things
Natal to Pierian springs:
(Bird-song, brook-song, breeze a-blow,)
Sweets that in dream-gardens grow;
Spray that leaped the harbor bar
Amorous of the twilight star;
Bubbles of delight that float
From a seraph's liquid note;
Bloom from Joy's low-bending bough;
Cupid, drop a kiss—and now,
Sweetheart, here's a health to thee,
Drink the draught, Sweetheart, with me!

The House of Voiceless Cries

By W. C. Morrow

IT was about an hour before sunset that my heart, suddenly chilled with the terror that filled me, stopped its beating as I gazed upon a wonderful house standing just within the edge of the forest that skirted the city on the south. The strangeness of my fear lay in the fact that I had often seen the house before, and had never found terror in its aspect. Had not abundant experience made me know that every sudden impression like this proceeded from a substantial source, and demanded an intelligent response in my conduct, I might have put aside this sudden and almost overwhelming sensation.

Many a time had I seen this queer house, but never before had its singular face stared and screamed at me in that strenuous way. Nor had it ever occurred to me before to note a singular resemblance between the front of the house and a human face. But here it was upreared before me, not only a gigantic human face, but one with eyes staring, and mouth stretched to the utmost in the act of screaming voicelessly in unspeakable terror. I had seen the fronts of houses somewhat similarly designed, and that there was nothing strikingly original in this one. There was no porch. The entrance, flush with the wall, would have been commonplace had it not been for a grooved pilaster on either side, supporting an ornamental architrave above the door. Higher were two round windows, and between them and the door was a narrow rectangular window, doubtless to light the stairs within. Perhaps, had I stayed to reason, I should have reflected that the low position of the sun, and the effect of its rays striking athwart the front of the house, produced an illusion that transformed the house-front into a screaming human face; for the door was certainly thrown in deep shadow, and the flutings in the pilasters were brought out with uncommon sharpness, giving them the appearance of the perpendicular wrinkles that are formed when the mouth is opened wide; and perhaps, too, I should have reflected that from the same cause the left side of each round window was cast in a curious crescent shadow, giving the windows the appearance of eyes turned to the right toward me. But I saw only a black, wide-open mouth, wrinkled down the sides, and terror-rounded eyes staring in agony toward me. And I saw, what I had never observed before, that there were arched copings above the round windows, and that they were now eyebrows raised in the general expression of appealing terror, and that streaks, looking to me to be tears, but no doubt caused by the rains in washing the dust from the arched copings, ran down the face of the house. The one thing that absorbed me now was an overwhelming sense of duty to answer the silent cry.

Without any further thought I opened the gate, passed up a short, gravelly walk, and tried to open the door. It was locked. On the right was an old-fashioned bell-pull, which I exercised so vigorously that I could hear the faint tinkle of the bell half smothered in the rear. Presently the door was cautiously unlocked, and then opened a few inches. An old woman's sharp, hard, suspicious face peered out at me. The look of apprehension upon it—the apprehension that guilt may inspire—was not needed to lend strength to my courage.

"What do you want?" she querulously asked.

"I want to enter," I answered, putting my hand upon the door.

She instantly tried to close it, but I interposed a shoulder, and forced my way within. She stood back, eying me in fear.

"It has come at last!" she moaned. "I knew it would; I knew it would!"

"Come," said I, taking her by the arm and leading her into the drawing-room, the door of which was immediately near; "let us go in here and talk it over."

She obeyed, but began to sob whiningly and to complain.

"Now," said I, forcing her into a chair, and seating myself directly in front of her, "what have you to say for yourself?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," she moaned. "And I have kept it so long, so long! How did you find it out?"

"From the cry," I answered.

"The cry! You heard it?" she gasped.

"I saw it," I explained.

She seemed not to comprehend my words, but sat all the time looking steadfastly and warily into my eyes, like a trapped animal pondering means of escape.

"Now," said I, "make whatever explanation you can, and make it as quickly as possible."

"Oh," she pleaded, "I meant no harm! I know you are an officer of the law, and I knew the people would suspect and tell. I am not to blame. Before God I am not to blame! Do you understand that? The judge will believe me when I tell him everything. It couldn't be helped. I did the best I could, and now—" She was rapidly becoming excited. Her head turned aimlessly from side to side, and she looked at all the objects in the room one by one as she complainingly proceeded. "—And now it must all go for nothing! Won't you have mercy on me? I will show you the room, and you may see for yourself. I have nothing to conceal. Do you understand that? Nothing whatever to conceal."

As she thus rambled on in a half-demented fashion I noted the native elegance and refinement of manner that lay beneath her stumbling exterior. It was now evidently a matter of patience and tact on my part to arrive at the heart of the mystery that I felt must be haunting the house. While listening to every one of her disjointed words for a ray that would light my way to further action, I gave alert attention to any other possible sound that the depths of the house might yield. Only a dead silence filled it. Was she entirely alone? Why had she jumped to the erroneous conclusion that I was an officer of the law? What was there to conceal that the law should not know? Why should she be excusing herself, and protesting her innocence? And there was that within me which still had an ear for a cry for help, the source of the silent cry that had issued from the face of the house.

I must have been giving too much heed to that, and too little to the meaningless speech of the woman; for all at once, with a suddenness that found me unprepared, she sprang upon me with a knife, the cold metal of which, as she struck with all her might, I felt upon my body; and at the same moment I saw her swallow something that she slipped into her mouth. Large and strong though I was, the suddenness and fierceness of the blow and of her impact upon me sent me to the floor. With incredible agility she leaped back, threw up her arms, and exultingly shouted:

"I knew how to reach your vitals, you dog—and my own! O God!" she added, falling rigid to the floor.

The poison that she had swallowed must have had a marvellously quick action; for, by the time I had recovered my feet and knelt beside her, she was in a convulsion that meant instant death.

In another moment she was dead, her eyes staring wide at the ceiling, and her jaw drawn down into a striking semblance of the door in the house. There was this, then, that I had done: I had caused the death of a woman, who, before taking her own life, had sought mine, and had died believing that the thrust which went only through my clothes and chilled my skin had been fatal.

I rose in profound perplexity and dismay, and a clamorous conscience began to make demands. The silence that now pervaded the house was terrifying beyond all endurance. I strained every hearing nerve for a sound. There was only a vast, all-absorbing silence. But there were duties to be discharged. The astonishing conduct of the woman had only lent strength and substance to the silent cry from the face of the house.

I drew forth a bunch of keys from the dead woman's belt. The carpet was soft and thick, so that my cautious footsteps gave out no sound. I left the drawing-room, and closed the door. Then I began to explore the house.

There was but one habitable room on the ground floor, and that was now guarded by the dead; the others were bare of furniture, and contained only dust and rubbish.

I proceeded quietly up the stair, pausing at every step to listen. It seemed a singular thing that the tragedy in the drawing-room, with its accompanying loud speech from the desperate woman, had roused no activity in the house. Was this a mystery of life, or of death? In the upper hallway I listened as I proceeded slowly, deciding to try none of the closed doors unless I should hear a sound; and then if no sound came, to try them all.

Soon I heard the low, soft crooning of a woman's voice within a room. I silently tried the door. It was locked. With infinite patience, to assure silence, I tried the keys until I found one that unlocked the door. Then I softly opened it, and looked within. Sitting on the floor, facing a window, and with her back toward me, was a woman. Her hair, long, black, and wild, almost completely hid her body, but I could see that she was clad in a coarse gown. The floor was bare, except for a disorganized assemblage of rags about and underneath the woman. There was no article of furniture in the room; there was nothing whatever except a tin platter, which held some fragments of coarse food, and beside it a tin cup. The woman was swaying forward and backward, holding something in her arms that I could not see; and to this she was crooning, in a singularly gentle and melodious voice:

" Go to sleep, go to sleep, little one. Born in a prison, with the sound of chains and your mother's voice to soothe you—ah, dearest one, life is dreary, so dreary! But when the sun shines, the birds sing in the trees; and when it sets, we lie down in our rags and dream. But some day they will come, my dearest, they will come. And *she* knows they will—sh—! we must whisper that. Oh, the years that we have been here, my little one, my precious! And she is so proud, so proud! Will you be as proud as your grandmother, dearest? Now, now, go to sleep, go to sleep. If I hadn't forgotten how to sing, I would sing you a lullaby; but the song is in my heart, my dearest, and so are you, and there you may nestle together. Yes, they will come, they will come. I say that ten thousand times a day. It is for saying it that she hates me, little one. It is to hear me say it, and to beat me for saying it, that she slips into the room so softly, so softly! But how can they come, my dearest? How will they know? I do not cry out, for that would mean a beating with the chain—for saying they will come I am beaten merely with a stick. But I do not need to cry out, my dearest; for a cry goes forth from my heart that some day will be heard to the ends of the

earth; and then, my dearest, my little one, there will come great armies, with banners and drums and cannon, and they will take the house by storm, and bring us forth into the light and life of the world. O my little one, my precious, sleep, sleep, sleep! Are you not in my arms, the arms of your mother? And the cannon will blaze and roar, and a mighty shout will ascend to heaven. Then the walls of this prison will come crashing down, and our deliverers will seize us in their strong arms and bear us away, away, to liberty and life!"

From the gentlest manner the woman had now grown excited, and was swaying wildly as she sat.

"They will come, they will come!" she cried, half laughing, half crying, and wholly hysterical.

I drew nearer, going to one side, that I might see her child; I found that it was a doll, made of the rags of the pallet. The woman was now pressing it to her face, and wetting it with her tears. I walked round in front of her, and quietly said:

"They have come."

She started violently, and looked up dazed and frightened into my face.

"I have come," I said, with the kindest manner, "to take you away to liberty and life."

She clutched the doll close to her breast, and gazed at me in startled silence; and then I saw again, as her lower jaw dropped and her eyes strained to their utmost width, a singular resemblance to the face of the house. And what a strange picture she made! A young and beautiful woman, her every feature a refined and youthful duplicate of the ones that lay stark in the chamber below; eyes in which the innocence and purity of childhood were touched with the softening grace of womanhood; a manner that showed inherent pride struggling through a haze of humiliation and despair. And so the mystery of the house that cried out without a voice had been solved—a mother whose pride, stronger than her humanity, had concealed and guarded here a lunatic daughter, lest the law should reach forth a hand to seize the shame and send forth a voice to proclaim it; a mother who had gone out of the world with murder in her heart and suicide on her soul, when, as she thought, the law had thrust a shoulder in at the screaming door.

"Come," I said, extending a hand.

She slowly disengaged one of her hands, and gently, yet tentatively, laid it in mine.

"Rise," I said, and she weakly complied. As she did so she forgot the instinct of shame that had made her keep something concealed, partly with the rags, and partly with the wretched skirt that she wore; for the ominous clanking of a chain drew my glance to the floor, and there I saw the body of the shame itself. The young woman was chained to the floor, into which a staple had been driven to receive one end of the chain, the other being padlocked to one of her ankles; where it encircled her ankle the skin was discolored a purplish hue, from numerous old bruises.

As she stood in silence, breathing fast under the inspiration of wonderful things that were stirring her soul, I found a key that fitted the padlock, and so released her. Then, taking her by the arm, and speaking reassuringly, I led her to the window, through which the red rays of the setting sun were streaming.

"That is the world," I said; "it is life and liberty. Come with me."

. . . . .

I had never ceased to deem it an evil fortune in my life that the house which I so much dreaded should stand in the edge of the forest that skirted the city on the south; for it was in this forest that I liked to stroll alone, and the road that ran past the front of the house was the pleasantest of all. It is true that I had never again seen upon its human face

that terrible voiceless cry for help that had greeted me some years before, though I had looked upon it at the same hour of the afternoon, when the rays of a low western sun, striking athwart the front, brought out the wrinkles of the fluted pilasters, and cast a crescent shadow upon one side of each of the circular windows; but the house tugged at memories that were tragic and melancholy; and there is enough of sadness in the things we meet, without linking to their potency the sadness of things that we have left behind.

But here I was again, approaching the house, and conscious of the fact. In a little while I should turn a bend in the road, and thus come face to face with the house. I should study the grotesque architectural fancy that unwittingly had made it in the fashion of a human face, and again I should ask what could have been the strange power that had put the expression of a cry for help into it, or implanted within me, for that juncture alone, a capacity to receive it. And the strange old woman whose knife had left upon my body a spot that forever would feel cold—it was better to turn from her to the brighter side, and behold my lovely young charge, made so by my appointment as her guardian, gradually emerge from the cloud that had enveloped her mind, and, under kindly and intelligent care, stand forth eventually in the full radiance of competent womanhood. It was better still to think of her recent happy marriage to my best friend's son, and of the bright and beautiful home that she had made, and of the warm sweet place therein that should forever be mine when it pleased me to give up the lonely life that I had always led.

I recalled the one great secret that lay between her and me, and the odd turn that it took one day, before she had loved and married. She had been perfectly recovered for months, when she came to me in the strangest, most shamefaced way, and asked me if she might trust me to the end of the world—trust not alone my silence, but my sympathy as well.

"That is a useless question, my dear," I protested. "Worse than that, it implies a lack of the full confidence that I thought existed between us."

"No, no, my dear old friend," she cried, kissing away the look of trouble that likely she saw creeping into my eyes. "No, no, not that; but what I have to say, what I have to ask of you, is so—so silly, so—so childish—I—I fear, my friend, you will not think me as well as you would like."

"Oh, but you are perfectly well, my dear!" I declared. "Nothing that you could——"

She closed my mouth with her warm, dimpled hand.

"But it is so, *so* foolish!" she declared, hiding her face in my shoulder.

"Possibly it would seem foolish to any but me," I said. "But remember who I am, and remember that you may trust my silence and sympathy to the end of the world."

She drew her arms about my neck, and with her face still hidden in my shoulder, she made her confidence.

"You remember, dear friend, the poor old rag doll that I loved so well when—when I was not myself?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever know what became of it?"

"No; I had never thought about it."

"Well"—and she buried her face deeper—"you will forgive me, won't you, when I confess that I have kept it by me all this time, concealing it from all, even you? You can't imagine what a solace it was to me, and how much it helped me to get well and strong. I am well and strong now, and my poor pet does not belong to my present life; but it has been my faithful companion and friend; it has filled an aching emptiness in my heart. I want to bury it now, my dear friend; and I want to bury it at the

place where my sufferings were so great, for there it belongs, and there the last of it will perish and disappear with all the rest. Will you go and help me, dear friend, and not think me foolish, or weak, or ill?"

Yes, I would go, and go we did. It was I that dug the small grave in the weed-grown garden behind the house, and it was she that put flowers on the mound and wept while I waited. It was she that wrote upon a board, which she placed at the head of the grave, the name of her doll, with her own surname added.

But all that was before she had been fully sobered by love and marriage. And this is getting far from the day about which I was writing just now, the day that had started this train of memories. I had expected to find the house, abandoned since the day of the tragedy, now, with battered windows and an air of decay, wearing its customary commonplace aspect; but instead of that, the moment I came upon it after passing the bend in the road I was startled out of all self-command to behold again the mouth wide open, and sending forth its voiceless cry for help, those strange, forbidding wrinkles down the sides, the wide-staring eyes turned toward me, and traces of tears down the agonized face. I did not even pause to consider the time —an hour before sunset—nor the effect of the level sun-rays striking athwart the front. I saw, or rather felt, only the terrified silent appeal for help that shone in every lineament of the hideous visage; and without reflection, I went straight forward and pushed open the yielding door.

I paused within the threshold, for excited voices sounded on the floor above.

"This is a frightful deception that you have practised upon me!" I heard the familiar voice of a man exclaim—the one man in all the world most strongly bound by every sacred obligation to forbear, to understand, to be patient.

"Yes, yes, it is true, so true, so true!" moaned the dearest of all voices in reply. "But I could not help it, I really could not. I meant no harm to you, but you have been kind to me, and my conscience will not permit me to hide the truth from so noble a man, so good and kind a husband. Yes, it was here that my baby was born, here in this room, and we slept on a pile of rags."

With a bound I went up the stair, to explain the hallucination, for it was clear that my poor ward had relapsed, and that she was living again the terrible days of the rags and chain; but before I could arrive upon them, she said something that turned me to stone where I stood.

"I must confess everything," she continued, half sobbing. "I never loved you. It was my guardian that I loved with all my soul, with all my heart; and I married you because you loved me, and he did not."

"And who was the father of your child?" her husband asked, with a singular cruel hardness for which I could have slain him.

"My deliverer, my guardian!" she answered aloud and triumphantly. "Who but he could have been? It was here, in this room, that he came to see me as I nursed it; it was here that he found me chained; it was from this room that he led me out into the world, into life and liberty. And when our poor baby died we brought it to this house, he and I; and he dug the grave, and we laid our baby away, and I put flowers on the grave. Come, let me show you."

All eagerness and excitement, her eyes blazing, and her soft beauty sharpened and hardened, she swept past me, her husband following, his step leaden, his jaw dropped, and his face the hue of ashes. I followed them weakly. How could I disclose myself now, since she had made the declaration of her affection for me? How could I be sure that her conduct at this critical moment would be of a kind that, with my explanations,

would reassure her husband, to whom she had been married for so short a time? What in all the world could I do but follow them unseen now, and stand ready to serve her in need to the end of the world? And there uprose the one secret between her and me, the secret of the doll's funeral, the one secret that her husband had never shared. How could it be explained to him now, when his heart was broken, his idol shattered, by her declaration of her love for me? And how would it be possible in her presence to straighten out the strange tangle that her words had made, when she would stand beside me to protest its truth?

I followed them into the weed-grown garden at the rear of the house, and stood amid the concealing shrubbery while she showed him the grave. There were now but dried skeleton stems of the flowers that she had thrust into the soft earth, and the little mound had sunk; but, as though it had been written in the indelible ink of the Fates, shone black and bold the name that she had written on the head-board.

"This is the grave of our baby," she moaned, falling upon her knees beside it; "and that is the name of my little one written by my own hand upon the board." And then she fell to sobbing piteously.

A look of unspeakable anguish twisted the young husband's face into a mask. Did he understand that she was demented? Ought not he to have suspected it when she doubtless began her confession at their home, and then brought him to the house to disclose the evidence? Is it true that youth is all folly, impatience, and recklessness?

I could bear the strain no longer. Why had the silent cry from the wide-open mouth of the house summoned me if there was no duty for me to perform? Once before I had felt the courage to respond; once before I had shown the tact to succeed. My duty then was done. This was one infinitely more awful, more dangerous, but— I walked straight up to him and cut the line of his far-set vision. He looked at me blankly a moment, and then started.

"You see that she is ill," I said; "do not be misled."

Upon hearing my voice the stricken girl rose, and there could be no mistaking the unveiled light and gladness that filled her face, and shone as a radiance about her. As he stood looking from one to the other of us, hard, cold, and unyielding, he saw her approach me with a smile upon a face that had been pinched with anguish before; he saw her place her arms about my neck and nestle her face in my shoulder, and sigh with the content of a child that had been lost and was now found. And he heard her say, as she looked up into my face and caressed my cheek:

"My lover, my deliverer, my husband!"

He and I were looking steadily at each other, and the fathomless reaches of hell would not have measured the depth of the gulf that lay between us.

"You are my father's friend," he finally said, in a small, distant voice; "and whatever may be true, or whatever may be false, you have been *her* friend, and henceforth must continue to be. I had brought this to kill her and myself here," he added, producing a revolver, "after she should have shown me the evidence that she promised. Your intrusion has saved her life." And treating with scorn my demand that he stay and hear the truth, he stalked wearily into the house, and closed the door. To this day, calm and contented, as I sit beside her couch and listen for the wing-beats of the day that shall come and seize her in its flight, she does not know how he died.

In the Orchard

By Charlotte Lowry Marsh

Oh little, sweet love, mine own little love,
When the apple-boughs were a-blowing
Did the pink-blushed petals drifted above
Set your own cheeks a-glowing?

Came there a sunbeam all unaware
That, tangling itself in endeavor
To kiss, little love, your bonny brown hair,
Was caught there forever and ever?

Did a little wild bird sing low in your ear
The secret of song revealing,
That made the melody tender and clear
Into your voice come stealing?

American Literary Commonplace

By C. M. Francis

IT would require a very wise man to define precisely the nature of the commonplace in any art, and in literature the task is especially difficult, the whole matter being of the intimately subjective, *non-disputandum* sort. Everyone knows that the superfluous book is published and that it engages the attention of the poor, tired human mind; and almost everyone will declare that the human mind is somewhat the worse for it. But, unless he is a very absolute person, like Mr. Carlyle or Mr. Ruskin, he will not take it upon himself to say where the line of exclusion should be drawn. In an exalted and aristocratic mood, one is apt to feel a pang at the multiplication of literary commonplace, but after all is not this the point of view of Alice's carpenter, who " wept like anything to see such

quantities of sand"? Carlyle and the carpenter, it seems to me, had much in common. Were that inspired curmudgeon living in the United States to-day how he would tear his adjectives over the excess of printed things! How his German compounds would fly! "Back to thy yard-stick, thou kicker-up of word-dust," he would say to some hard-working literary man. "Thinkst thou that an upholsterer made the heavens? Is there an auction of the stars? World-sickness from infinity of jabber such as thine"—and so forth. But we cannot all be Carlyles, and some of us are not sorry, for looking at things from the pedestal of the absolute has its inconveniences. The more practical and comfortable persons down on the level realize that since the majority of people are commonplace, the majority of books should be commonplace also; and they accept the fact in a philosophic temper.

It is not then with the design of mounting any Delphic tripod that the present article has been undertaken, but with the aim of viewing so far as possible in a rigidly objective manner certain aspects of literary commonplace. At first sight this may appear a rather unpromising field; but this is merely because of its novelty, the dull and the commonplace and the usual being precisely the things that men avoid writing about, lest they catch the color of what they work in. Certainly the most common form of literature, the bulk of what is sold and read, deserves analysis as well as the exceptional and striking. Of course this is viewing literature in an ordinary and not in an idealistic way; but the latter is wholly unsuitable for our present practical purposes.

The man who describes, however roughly, the most common forms of literature in his own day and in his own country does a needful work. If he can show what kinds of writing are read by the greatest number, he does something toward explaining what so many sociologists insist on calling the social mind. The psychology of the crowd cannot be understood without some very careful study in this field. How does the social law of imitation apply to it, for instance? How far may repetition go without wearying the mass of readers, and are there any ideas or situations that invariably please, irrespective of the form in which they are expressed? We are studying men in masses nowadays, and literary criticism will have to lay aside its supercilious absorption in the exceptional if it keeps abreast of things. What would our descendants learn of the intellectual pleasures of the great body of Americans to-day by reading fifty years from now a history of literature, modelled on those in use at present? A few prominent names, a fanciful description of some tendency or clique or school, and many long and eloquent tributes to great works—matters which concerned only a small fraction of the reading public, and these for only a small fraction of their reading time. It would tell them nothing of the popular taste and offer no means of comparing the prevalent literary standard of one age with that of another. The study of the usual in literature is essential to an understanding of literary tendencies.

To the producer for the present literary market such a study has, of course, an immediate practical value; for if a man wants to sell a certain class of goods, he must first ascertain what characteristics the goods actually sold have in common. This purely practical view is taken, if not avowed, by the majority of writers in the United States to-day. Artistic ideals have nothing to do with the matter. It is the production of salable goods for a definite market. Commonplace writings are not the unintentionally dull work of men who have a mistaken view of their own talents. They are done with deliberate purpose and often by those who are capable of better but less remunerative work. The production of literary commonplace is a gainful occupation whose outlook from the

economic point of view is exceedingly promising, since the market widens with the cheapness of publication and with the extension of common-school education. New classes of half-educated consumers will come in to swell the demand for what is inferior in literature, just as the opening up of Africa has swelled the demand for cheap and tawdry articles of commerce. There has never been a time when financial success was so easy to the literary man as at present, and it will become easier still in the future. There is a growing demand for inferior goods, and men may earn an honest living by making them, whether they are candy cupids or soap-box Sapphos or short stories for a syndicate.

But there is one kind of literary commonplace which owes its success not to its qualities, but to its source. It is carried along by the momentum of the author's reputation. In regard to this a word is needed by way of admonition to unsuccessful competitors. The younger man who has not yet made his name is apt to chafe when he sees his elders waxing fat on the proceeds of words which could not by their own worth make their way into the cheapest corner of the field of print. He forgets the poetic justice of it. Let him once call to mind how these same authors had to work and wait before they came into their kingdom, and he will not begrudge them any of the joys of despotism when they have reached the throne. For my part, I never read a supremely foolish interview with a well-known author without a warming of the heart; and whenever I hear the chink of good gold coins on his triumphant counter in exchange for worthless wares, I glory in the delicious equity of it. As an instance of the sort of thing that a man is entitled to say by virtue of his literary rank, note the following remarks which a prominent writer made to the question "What do you fear most?" propounded by an enterprising interviewer who published the answers in a magazine:

"I should say that the greatest number of us most fear poverty and death. . . . Young people fear death more than their elders. . . . I think that as we grow older we fear death less, while our fear of material loss increases. . . . Regarding the effect of fear upon the character: a great pressure of fear might, I think, result in caution; if enduring too long, perhaps in timidity and cowardice. . . . You know there are things which we fear for others but which we do not fear for ourselves. We fear these things for others because we believe they may be wanting in the foresight which we suppose we ourselves possess abundantly; that they may be incautious; that they may not think and act as we should think and act in their place."

It is easy to ridicule the childishness of it and to sneer at the public for taking it seriously. Nor is the case at all exceptional. The silly sayings of prominent men are gathered with infinite pains and read with eagerness. The reason for it is obvious, and the moral justification complete. The passage just quoted, for instance, sprang from the brain of a man of distinction and of acknowledged talent, and the public is interested in that brain even when it is in absolute repose. He had done strenuous work in the past, and there was a time when he was underpaid for some of the best of it. Now he has fairly earned the right to say as foolish things as he likes. It is a triumph of prestige for a man to be able to print an essay to the effect that fear results in caution and, if enduring, may lead to cowardice. It is time's way of redressing the balance of his early days. So viewed, it is both reasonable and right. In trade, goods are first judged by their quality, afterward by their label. In the literary field the same law obtains, and the man who could not find a publisher for some of the best work of his brain, may, after he has made his mark, almost obtain space-rates for his snores. Thus in the long run things are evened up.

Such is the philosophic attitude toward interviews like this. It is one of the most admirable forms of commonplace. It is a sort of reprisal on the public, and the celebrity who publishes it often does so with conscious irony. Shall there be no privileges of preëminence? Nobility exempts as well as obliges: and a writer of the first rank has earned any profits that may accrue to him through the medium of literary flunkyism. Therefore, let all who wear the hodden-gray of literature deliver themselves from envy and uncharitableness. Rank is merely petrified opinion, but it has its logical consequences. The only question worth asking is whether it is rank based on achievement or on inheritance, on divine right or on wind. One should thank his stars for an aristocracy of talent, whenever he sees a sign of it, and for all the privileges that it confers, when he sees the right man enjoying them. So runs our little moral.

But this form of literary commonplace is a thing apart and governed by its own law—the law of the dynamics of success. It is enjoyed not on account of its hackneyism, but in spite of it. It may and often does fall short even of the meagre requirements of current literature. It has far less social significance than that great mass of writing which is loved for the very reason that it *is* dull and undeviating and ceaselessly iterative. The impressive social fact is that the average American writer sinks his originality and merely supplies certain classes of goods for the market: short stories which are little mosaics of well-tried situations and phases; impressionist sketches imitated (judiciously, of course) from the French; plays confined to traditional grooves in dialogue, business, and plot; and poems with a deliberate dash of unintelligibleness to counterfeit depth. These are the writings which are chiefly in need of analysis. Their most striking feature is the closeness of their resemblance to each other. In no other country in the world, which ranks with ours in intelligence and wealth, is there so much that is essentially identical in pure literature. The general level of what is written elsewhere may be higher or lower, but the diversity is infinitely greater there than here.

A priori this is just what we should expect of a young democracy too much absorbed in life to give the best of itself to any art. Our triumphs are economic. In that field we are alert, resolute, and enterprising beyond all others. That is where our heart is and where our best qualities are displayed. At the end of the year in which we fought the war with Spain, we found not only that our withers were unwrung, but that we had distanced every other nation in the development of our industries and in the increase of our foreign trade. As a people we are primarily business men, and since we have specialized along this line, it is most natural that we should show this bent when we attempt other things. The economic motive leads always to the study of demand. We should therefore expect to find our writers business men first and literary men afterward. We should expect to see them surveying the literary market in a cool, conservative business spirit, and adapting their goods to its needs with a ruthless suppression of any little *penchant* for self-expression they may happen to have. They want success, and success at once; not the mere pleasure of planting in a few minds a big unmarketable thought. And what better business reason is there for hoping success for a book than the presence in it of the very things that have already won success. Hence it comes that a people which in some respects is more vigorous in its individuality than any other, is in literary matters the most conventional and imitative. The industrial ideal has given us literary artificers, not artists.

The short story seemed ten years ago to be an exception to this rule, and there was, in fact, a distinctive flavor in several of the short stories written by Americans at that time. Since then the few

readers, who appreciated this distinctiveness, have read American short stories in sufficient numbers to be able to generalize with some assurance. At the rate of five a month, and this is a low estimate for the average consumer, six hundred short stories would have been read—a very fair basis for induction. Let anyone ask himself what proportion of them showed any novelty either in motive or in execution. They fall into certain groups, and in each of these groups the stories apparently might have been written by the same person. A complete classification is impossible without a somewhat painful review of the whole six hundred, but certain types stand out prominently. The local color group is especially conspicuous, and the humorous stories in this class are the most striking in their machine-made uniformity. Here a humorous effect is sought by the use of quaint or grotesque expressions. They are not as a rule character studies, but merely the development of incidents in dialect. The characters are sketched roughly and with reference to some salient trait, and the incidents are selected from a limited number of obviously comical things. The dialect carries the story. Not long ago fully fifty per cent. of the American short stories were of this sort, in which not the author's art, but his note-book was predominant. A few pioneers had happened to employ dialect in a legitimate way as subsidiary to their artistic aims. Their success had the undesired effect of founding what proved to be an actual "hain't" and "d'ruther" school, in which dialect was not the means, but the end. In proportion to the amount of effort expended upon it, this has been one of the most lucrative lines of commonplace in recent fiction, for the selling feature was conspicuous and easy of imitation. Uncle Silas and his cider barrel, Miss Euphemia's cat, the Deacon's courtship, the inevitable dialogue between the two old New England ladies, etc., underwent many variations, but in essentials were repeated by the thousands. The average reader was as well pleased with the mediocre as with the best. The literary economist perceived this and turned out identical stories with the ease and mechanical precision of a huge factory. We had little essays in kodak realism from every State in the Union. Simple variations in externals cheated the reviewers, and they said solemn things about local color, as if that were an artistic ideal all by itself. They spoke of sectionalism and subtle tendencies and close observation at first hand and other profound matters, without stopping to consider whether nine-tenths of the stories in the local color group were not fashioned after existing models with only such variations as a prudent business man would feel constrained to introduce. And if the reviewers were deceived, think of the average reader. To him the crudest kind of reproductive devices have the effect of realism—devices in literature which correspond to that of introducing a real threshing-machine or a live baby on the stage. Essential novelty displeases him, if he notices it at all. Superficial novelty is his delight, but he must be standing on good solid familiar ground to enjoy it. The homely language, the obvious humor, and the grotesque incidents of the local-color stories appeal to him. In other respects there must be identity with what he is used to. Long after the few active-minded persons have grown weary, he continues to enjoy.

Very familiar facts, these, and yet writers on American literary tendencies fail utterly to see their significance. In the first place, this attitude of the popular mind is what gives the commonplace in literature its prompt success. As a result of it the commonplace is the most promising financial field for the literary man to-day. It tempts men into it who have capacity for better things. It puts a premium on compilation as opposed to composition. It completely reverses the artistic canon and requires that a man shall not think what he has to say and how best to

say it, but what people wish to have him say and in what form they expect him to say it. It draws ten commonplace books from him instead of one good one. He writes badly not because he lacks literary talent, but because he possesses business sagacity. He writes with a divided mind, the better half of it being on the public.

If, instead of pounding away at realism, romanticism, nationalism, provincialism, and other mystic matters, the critics would study the commonplace in connection with the peculiar imitativeness of the American literary man, they might make more plausible forecasts of our literary future. The sanguine see all sorts of glorious things in prospect—a truly national literature, a literature of native force and distinctiveness, following somehow in the wake of national expansion. Their reasoning is simple. By acquiring the Philippines we shall attain national self-consciousness; and, national self-consciousness once attained, it follows as the light the day that we shall produce great writers. It is not convincing. Nor is there much comfort to be had from the assurance of others, that because we have gone so long without great men we are bound to have them soon. " About time for a genius," they say, more wistfully than wisely. " The ingrained idealism of the American nature needs clear and commanding expression," says Mr. Hamilton Mabie. It needs it, therefore it will get it, is the essence of his argument.

Such dream-language makes very little impression on one who has studied the ever-widening domain of the commonplace in American literature. There is every reason to think that the iterative quality will increase rather than diminish. Besides the constant additions to the number of half-educated consumers already mentioned, there is the fact of specialization to be reckoned with. The specialist is an important factor in the literary demand and a factor that obstructs artistic progress. By the law of probabilities, if you hear of a man merely that he is a highly trained, skilful, and successful specialist in some one line, you have a right to presume that he is lacking in other lines. In general culture, even in the art of enjoying life, there is an antecedent probability that he will be below the average. If his success is due to exceptional talent, nature is economical and exacts pay from some other part of him. If it is due to exceptional industry, one faculty is probably developed at the expense of others. This is safe as a general statement, though the exceptions are numerous and obvious. Now the time of a man's life, during which he may devote himself to learning how to live and how to enjoy, is being cut down every year. With the disappearance of the American college, which is inevitable, technical work will probably begin at the age of eighteen. Of course a young man may take " culture studies " in the university, but competition will prevent many from doing so. Every succeeding decade promises to drive the technical studies down a peg nearer to the years of infancy. We Americans are too shrewd economists not to appreciate the importance of the division of labor, and we will carry it as far as any other people in the world. At all events the lengthening and narrowing process in education is certainly on the increase with us, and it will as certainly lower the literary standard.

The very fact that we are a strong and progressive nation points the same way. A community cannot remain strong and progressive without intense specialization in the industries and professions. Industrially we owe our superiority to this cause. Note M. Levasseur's recent comparison of the industrial methods employed here and there in France. At the same time a high degree of social uniformity is essential to a democracy like ours. We hear much of the evils of arraying class against class. Decisive and harmonious social action is an element of national strength; but you cannot make

men think uniformly for purposes of politics and think differently for purposes of art. Here, then, are the conditions of the future: A narrower education, beginning earlier in life; a larger body of specialists in all industries and professions; a social mass with greater homogeneity in thought and feeling; a nation with a splendid economic record behind it and absorbed in plans for economic triumphs in the future. What will the literary man do with these promising materials? The probability is that he will exploit them along the line of least resistance; and then as now the promptest and surest road to success will be by way of the commonplace. What is there that should raise the standard? The overflow of men's lives will be even scantier than at present. The more discriminating taste that comes from thinking over books will be found among a smaller proportion of the people. For these, of course, the real works of art will continue to be produced, and the weight of their influence may be sufficient to impose some of them on the crowd. But the daily literary consumption, the great mass of what is read, will have fewer artistic qualities than at present.

Even now the popular demand is so uniform, that it would be a feasible plan to establish training-schools for literary producers. It is by no means as unpractical as it seems. Compare the qualities, for instance, which one hundred short stories of the second rank have in common. Their elements are not indefinable, nor is their mechanism especially complex. There is nothing about them to lead you to say that one author could not have written this or the other that. A careful recombining of the elements with an avoidance of anything like verbal plagiarism would, I believe, give a resultant story quite as good as any in the list. It would probably find a publisher, since it would have about it those reminiscences of success which a publisher always values. Artistic gifts, of course, are untransmittable, but the production of literary commonplace can be taught just as surely as the making of any other article can be taught. Vanity alone prevents a man from telling others how he came to succeed in it. He could call the youthful aspirant to his knee and tell him many things that would help him to achieve the same results.

It is dishonest to discourage the man who wants to earn his living by writing. The whole field of hackneyism lies open to him. It is infinitely hospitable. There is always room for one more, and it pays. To the majority of readers literary commonplace is the breath of their life. They buy it from day to day in increasing quantities. They will pay for it pretty nearly all that is asked. From their standpoint the note of imitation against which the critic warns the young is precisely the thing to be preserved. The critic warns the young man from the point of view of the few and possibly of posterity; but the young man is apt to have his eye on the many and on the present, and in such a case who can honestly tell him that the outlook is discouraging? No young man sufficiently normal to be at large, should find anything discouraging to his chances of success when he surveys the printed matter bought and sold in the United States to-day.

There are two classes of literary workers: the transmuters and the transmitters. With the former this paper has no concern. They are the men whose minds leave an impression on what passes through them. Their function is to please the few by a force that is elemental and beyond analysis. The transmitters, on the other hand, leave things exactly as they find them. They are needed by society for purposes of repetition. They are nature's hectographs. As such their office is most useful, for in the earlier stages of instruction iteration is necessary. They supply the kindergarten material for the less advanced. In this country the demand for their work is on the increase, for as time goes on

there is an increase in the number of those who are at the kindergarten stage. In literature as in farming, the extensive, rather than the intensive, system of culture prevails in a new country.

The young man whom the critic discourages should bear this in mind. So far as ideal success is concerned the critic is probably right. No amount of industry will make him one of the transmuters, and he may as well recognize from the start that the identification of genius with a capacity for taking pains, is a fiction invented as a solace for the meanly endowed. But as a transmitter of tame, familiar things his prospects are good, and he is justified in disregarding the warnings of his elders. If he is without any especial talent there is just one warning to which he should give heed. It is, Avoid the pose and cleave unto the platitude. The pose is not profitable in the long run; the platitude is always profitable.

The advice of the more experienced writer is likely to be lacking in frankness. It assumes that an imponderable something, which is called literary merit, is a determinant of success, and it ignores the broad and promising field of literary endeavor in which this quality has nothing whatever to do with success. In view of what is actually published it is preposterous to dwell on the difficulties in the way of a young writer. The very negative side of him, the absence of those qualities which the few prize so highly, may be one of the chief elements in his success, by smoothing his way and giving him a larger audience. When he is fairly started he has little to fear from the critics. The old-fashioned slashing criticism that slaughtered infants has passed away, and in the United States criticism is now almost motherly. The reviewer is a very busy person with a memory impaired by the habit of reading with intent to forget. The familiar ring of things often escapes him; at least he seldom analyzes a piece of work to find out what is new and what is copied from others. His attitude toward American writers betrays a pleased surprise that they should be able to write at all. The mere fact of print is justifying. If he can find nothing else to say for it, he will remark that the author's attempt is praiseworthy, or that it is the sort of book that will no doubt please those who are inclined to that sort of reading. Commonplace is seldom attacked on the ground of its commonplaceness. The only test of artistic power is the solvent criticism that separates a work into its elements. This test is not applied. As an analytical chemistry it involves the use of acids; and the acids of criticism are hard to handle, because the author squirms and the critic loses his head.

American reviewers are, again, more concerned with substance than with form, with the moral lesson than with the artistic quality—a fact which of itself lets down the bars to mediocrity. External points of likeness between writings are of course remarked. The resemblance in motive of Kipling's "Brushwood Boy" and Du Maurier's "Peter Ibbetson," for instance, will not escape them; but the unconscious reproduction of another's style, as in the case of the latter writer's imitation of Thackeray in long passages and almost to the very phrases, is passed over with little comment. There is also a schoolman's deference to authority in classifying authors and in cataloguing the qualities of their work. Zola, for instance, is set down in the books as a realist or as a naturalist. Reviewers, therefore, will have it so, even when they are pointing out the peculiar moral thesis that each novel is designed to prove, and showing how those unfleshed allegories, the characters, are manipulated to prove it. There is, in fact, very little American criticism, and the general result of the haphazard writing that often goes under that name is to place a premium on commonplace.

Of the fact that unconscious imitation

is singularly potent in American literature, there are many signs. Why are the critical few always peering at the horizon line if the original writers are among us? Why do the most sanguine of them go on importing their novelties from abroad? Why all this talk about the great American novel which is always to come, and why this feverish applause of each young man of promise, who continues merely to promise? As to American play-writing the less said the better. To desire literary merit in a play is to set yourself down as a visionary person ignorant of what constitutes a good play. Literary commonplace is entrenched on our stage more impregnably than anywhere else. Again, ask any literary man to tell you how many men in his profession really fit their words to their own thoughts. He will give you instance after instance of success by compromise, success by adaptation and imitation. The policy of magazines must be respected; traditions observed. Self-expression is bad finance, unless one's talent is a very big one. Better write much and live well than do the few fine things that will not pay bills. Hence the man with a little talent differentiating him from the rest of the herd, hides it and writes like a sophomore—writes on everything, cleans out his own stock of ideas, and falls back on other people's; but always writes, for it pays him.

The writer of commonplace is generally an unconscious compiler. He involuntarily reproduces what he admires or what he thinks others admire. Present conditions make it hard for him to do otherwise, for it is the day of over-much reading and of reading without fixity of attention. A hundred little ideas and phrases stay in the memory and are mistaken for one's own. One's skull becomes, in fact, a cave of echoes. People read beyond the capacity of their intellects. Only the strongest minds can recast the vast material that they work upon. Think of the enormous areas of print that owe their existence to the example of a single man of talent. Take the Charles Dudley Warner manner, for instance; how it dominates those columns whose writers strain after what they conceive to be the light, agreeable, semi-detached attitude toward men and things. They grit their teeth and say, "Now I will be graceful and genial, but at the same time thoughtful and world-wise." And then with many "by-the-ways" and "as-I-was-sayings," they fill up their little corner of chat, or comment, or on-looking, or view-pointing, with hesitating assertions of the self-evident, or elaborate rebuttals of the unbelieved; reproducing their prototype only in externals. The mere dilution of Mr. Warner affords the means of subsistence to many a worthy soul.

And a hundred similar instances might be cited from current literature, but my purpose has been not so much to prove the prevalence of the commonplace as to point the way to a proper study of certain of its aspects. The importance of imitation, both as a social factor and as an influence in artistic development, has not been appreciated. Socially speaking, literary iteration is necessary, and the men who follow it as a trade are useful citizens. It will be as foolish to lament the twentieth historical novel, by Mr. Stanley Weyman, or the fiftieth serial story by Mr. Marion Crawford, as to quarrel with the number of steel rails or school arithmetics. Artistically speaking, however, a higher standard would be desirable, for it would spare trouble to the few. Such a higher standard can come only by way of a more careful analytical criticism which gives a warning to those who will heed it—the sort of criticism that while admitting the social necessity of imitation makes the fact of imitation very clear. It will not keep the commonplace writer from his own, but it will indicate his commonplaceness in a manner that will prevent him from entering the wrong house. It will allow him no delusion as to the character of his

clientèle. It will show what is purely mechanical and factitious in each new work, and explain how popular effects can be obtained. It will thus aid and encourage the literary novice at the same time that it gives a useful hint to the excusably *blasé* reader. The new critics will remember the large number of very weary readers who, incited by the halloos of reviewers, have joined in uncomfortable stampedes in the past. They will spare them whenever it is possible.

A Karnak Cat

By Henry Rogers Remsen

There is a little story,
That often comes quite pat,
Of a dear English lady, trusting,
Who bought a Karnak Cat—
"Old terracotta, made of clay
Poor Israel baked on that sad day
When Pharaoh took their straw away."

The pride of all her household
This gem of olden time;
Her friends pronounced it "true antique,"
A poet made a rhyme
About "his ancient idolship,"
Until one day it chanced to slip,
And, falling, split from ear to hip!

Alas! for all its sacredness!
The mould was plain enough,
Of sham red terracotta
Where the paint was cracked and rough.
And so the Karnak Cat was new—
A thing of plaster, paint, and glue!
I think it served her right, don't you?
Ah, yes,
And yet
Don't we nurse Karnak Kittens, too?

The Influence of Gemini

(Vignettes of Washington, No. I)

By Guy Somerville

THE Secretary of State in those days was young and beautiful—something which has not been usual with Secretaries of State before or since. Also, he was fabulously rich, and a bachelor; and, if anything further be wanting to a complete understanding of his popularity in Washington society, I have only to add that he was a devil by nature, and my very intimate friend. This is the gospel of his entrapment and reclaiming, of how he was obliged to forswear sack, and marry and rear little Secretaries of State for the future needs of his country, and keep a place at Lenox.

That final Season was a late one—not that the leaves remained unduly long upon the trees, but the diplomatic reception at the White House did not take place until the middle of January, and in Washington the Season waits for this. At that time, Madame Wassini had just begun to give "things." Persons who did not like Madame Wassini were wont to say that her guests were not always either the glass of fashion or the mould of form; but, as that charming woman once told Nesbitt—Nesbitt of Texas—when he sought to prune down her visiting list, "To be good *form,* in these days, is not nearly so important as to be some one of *substance;* and, as for a glass of fashion, who do you suppose, dear Mr. Nesbitt, would dally with such a temperance drink, when he can come here and have Veuve Clicquot? And, if he likes, he may have it in a tankard." Which Nesbitt did, and the next year he was the floor leader of the House. But there was no nexus between these things.

It was at the Wassini's, and the night was the third of March, that the Secretary of State saw first the handwriting on the wall. He came to me when the feast had gone the way of all feasts, and we walked down Massachusetts Avenue arm in arm. Those were days when we were all agreed that the Secretary of State was *the* Secretary, and when we called him, consequently, "Sec:" for short, and not in thinly-veiled admiration of his chronic dryness.

"Sec," I said.

"Yes," he answered, absently.

"Give it a name," said I.

He started slightly, but was firm.

"Not another drop to-night," he said. "There's a cabinet meeting in the morning."

"If you're not dry," quoth I, "why do you think?"

Then he dealt me a sudden blow.

"Old chum," said he, "I'm in love."

"If you have been so vulgar," said I, "as to be carried away by the wife of the Brazilian Minister——"

He held up his hand protestingly.

"Not that," he said, with a shudder that was faultless.

"Oh, well," said I, "if it is the Bulgarian Chargé d'Affaires——"

"It is not," he said, "the Bulgarian Chargé d'Affaires."

"Let us drink," said I, nonplussed. "Who? in the name of the Continental Congress!"

Then he threw his cigar at the Vice-President's porte-cochère, and he told me the things that follow.

"There are two," he said, "and I do not know which She is. Two maids drive

out each afternoon on the road that leads to the Soldiers' Home, and they dress in gray, and are beautiful, and twins. Each afternoon, for some time past, I have by chance been riding somewhere in the direction of the Soldiers' Home. I do not know who they are, or from where, but I am in love with one of them, and, as they are exactly alike, it is, of course, impossible for me to know which. Tell me which, and, if you like, you shall go to Lisbon in the morning. I would say Madrid, but there are mobs; and the only other vacancy is Stockholm, which you would not like, because you are a confirmed bachelor, and the people there make matches."

Said I, thoughtfully, "The maids *are* in truth much alike."

He started. "You know them," he said. "Tell me who they are and I will make a vacancy at Paris."

"In a sort of a distant, far-reaching way they are almost friends of mine," I said, easily.

"Introduce me, and, if it be not for the Act of God, the Senate, or other hostile tribes, you shall have London."

"The one," said I, "is Lady Stanford Merton, whose husband you may remember in connection with the reciprocity treaty of a few years ago. It is his second wife, and she has sent him to look for the South Pole. The other is her sister, Miss Winthrop, of the Downs, Belsingham, Werts. Her first name is Bella, and she is surnamed the Bad. Bella-the-Bad: which sounds like a town in India."

"It sounds," said the Secretary of State, "like the report of a mercantile agency. I think I am in love with the married one."

I grew uncomfortable as to my collar and tie. "I feel," said I, "decidedly sticky. It is astonishing how sticky you get. I think you must be mistaken about its being Lady Merton. Sir Stanford is phenomenally jealous, and he has fought eleven duels."

"Now," said the Secretary of State, "I am quite sure. Here is where I turn in. May I offer you a bunk? You shall have the mattress that is stuffed with Pan-American protocols."

But I wouldn't, because the whole United States had slept on those protocols, and they were passing hard. So I went on to the club; and that night, as I laid me down to rest, I said a prayer for Lady Stanford Merton, her immortal soul.

The next time I saw him was after one of the Bachelors', while leaving La Wassini at her house in Iowa circle. Just across the circle was the Merton residence, and another carriage drove up as ours clattered away, and the Secretary of State came out of it, and reached into it again, and took out Lady Merton and Miss Winthrop. I knew Lady Merton by the purple gown I had seen her wear the evening before at the Blares' dinner; and I saw her go up the steps first and leave him at the bottom with the other.

There was a lamp upon the corner, and by its light, as I am a truthful man, and live by the wits of my buried father, I saw the Secretary of State bend low and kiss Miss Winthrop's hand. Not as a Frenchman or an Austrian might have kissed it, but as only an American can, and an American gentleman, and one very much carried away.

"It will be in the 'Post' to-morrow," whispered La Wassini in my ear, and I could see she was shaking with laughter. "Mon Dieu, the good Secretary! If it were not such bad form, I would already throw at him my slipper. Is it not Venus and the young Paris?"

"He is giving *her* the fruit," said I, puzzled. But they took no notice, those three across the way, and presently Miss Winthrop also went up the stoop, and both ladies said good-night, and the Secretary raised his hat and the big door banged and he left them.

It was in New York, the next week,

whither all Washington had gone for the Show. La Wassini had three entries, all her own, and when at the end of things she had as many ribbons, her glee was as the glee of a child. Together we walked, the morning after, down Twenty-third Street; and there met us the Secretary of State, and his face was the face of a cherub who has discovered the store-room of the Seraphim, and stolen some of their jam.

"All hail to thee, Benedick that is to be," said I.

He laughed a little consciously, and colored, seeing La Wassini. He had never colored before, his whole life long.

"It's secret," he said.

"Of course," said La Wassini.

"I hardly expected," I added, "that you would care to proclaim it just yet from the Monument."

"I am afraid," said he (and he gave me a black look), "that you have looked over my shoulder, and seen my hand."

"Not nearly so plainly," broke in La Wassini, "as *you* have looked over a certain other person's shoulder, and seen *her* hand."

"At any rate," said I, "I have never touched——"

"Or kissed"—broke in the Wassini.

But we both stopped because he looked so shocked.

"It was the Bachelors' claret," he pleaded. "It is insufferably heady. And —and Lady Merton has such a *very* nice hand."

A light broke mercifully in upon La Wassini and me.

"Lady Merton," said she, suddenly, "has nothing whatever to do with it."

"I think," said I, though I was choking with laughter, "that the Bachelors' claret must have been Chambertin."

We saw a very strange look come over his face.

"You mean——" said he, suddenly.

To play with him would have been the act of a Filipino.

"It was Miss Winthrop," we said, with, I think, one voice.

It had been a dark sort of day, but just then a big beam of sunlight shot through the clouds, and by its light I saw that the Secretary of State looked very sick. For a moment he stood there stunned in the brilliant sunshine, and no one said a word. Then,

"How do you know," said he, quietly; but I could see that his courage had gone from him.

"Bella Winthrop," said La Wassini, "has no purple gowns. And then—*peste!*" and she shrugged her shoulders. "We were at school together at Beauvais, and she was very, very naughty."

I laid my hand on the Secretary's shoulder. I loved the man.

"Tell us the worst," said I. "What have you done?"

"Curse that wine," he said, with something that has half laugh and half sob. "I suppose I have asked her to marry me, but I never knew it—never, till now."

La Wassini looked scandalized.

"Brace up, for Heaven's sake," I whispered. "There is Orlikoff, the Russian Chargé, and he is coming this way." Even as I spoke, he joined us and bowed, and I knew he had heard my warning.

But the Secretary of State was saying, in an even tone, "With pleasure, Madame. It will be no trouble at all. Shall I get it at Altman's?"

La Wassini was as quick as he.

"You will get it," she said, laughing, "if you do not get it at Altman's."

Orlikoff said, in his heavy Russian way:

"An affair of something to be sold and delivered, not?"

"No," said I, "you are wrong. It is an affair of something that has been sold already, and there is no way to deliver it."

"I wonder what is it?" said the Secretary of State, unwarily.

La Wassini tapped him lightly on the sleeve.

"Tag," said La Wassini.

BOWDOIN COLLEGE LIBRARY

Lines Written Among the Turrets of Milan Cathedral

By Percy Wallace Mackaye

Among the sky-paths of a sculptured forest,
Which, like a wilderness of darkling plumes
Upon an ancient Lombard's smithied helmet,
Clothes the dim, cloistral mind of the cathedral
In far Milan, I lost my moonlit way.

In that domain of reconciliation
Between the earth and heaven, art has so wrought
That Fancy is a realm substantial
In mellow-gleaming marble; and Nature herself,
Within those vital integuments of stone,
Seems to respire, and drink of her own breathings
From the quick night-winds and the vivid stars.

Breathless, I paused, and listened. Spires on spires,
Like frozen cypresses, thronging the night,
In exquisite intricacy, threw down
Their shadows round my own. And thence I saw
How that aërial forest was enchanted.
Far from a covert, hidden from the moon,
Sprang forth a silent-barking harpy, spurning
The cliff, from which he hung, with rabid heels;
And still he drew no nearer, like a bough
By winds contorted, or a yawning stump.

But hush! O Beauty! Are the sylvan fauns
Changed to bright angels in this skyey wood?
Nymphs to dim saints, satyrs to pensive knights,
And Dian's spring to the sweet Virgin's shrine?
For, see! from yonder silent, spindling spire
A creature has emerged, and there—and there—
Another—and a throng! a stellar people,
Seraphs and wingèd dreams! The forest seems
To rustle. 'Mid its petrid firs of pearl,
The chiselled bark, parting, gives pale birth
To heaven's own host—this choir of quietness,
Where a star sings in every angel's ear
Preludes of incommunicable prayer.

Breathless, I paused, and knelt. Against the north,
A form of wind and light-foot loveliness,
Stayed, by the eternal touch of art, upon
Her swift ethereal way toward the peak
Of Matterhorn—a form of grace, I say,
Tiptoe upon an ardent pinnacle,
Spake to me where I aspired: " Sweet youth, why art
Thou come to us? Say! dost thou yearn to be
A voice in the eternal choir of quietness?"
And pressing hard my beating heart, I bowed.
" Descend, then, youth, to the bewildered world,
And by this kiss I burn upon thy brow,
Walk as a star through the murk noon of men,
And love thy Love as God Himself loves Beauty."
And with that kiss I came unto my love.

The Drama

THREE RECENT COMEDIES

Peter Stuyvesant, The Tyranny of Tears, Miss Hobbs

It is interesting to note that of the six plays which, perhaps, have thus far attracted the most attention during the present season, three are dramatized novels, while the other three are comedies, primarily, of character. Reserving until later all discussion concerning the significance (if any) of the almost simultaneous appearance of " Becky Sharp," " The Only Way," and " Children of the Ghetto," we shall here attempt to point out the value of " Peter Stuyvesant," " The Tyranny of Tears," and " Miss Hobbs."

We have called these three plays comedies primarily of character, because it is in each case some foible in the character of one of the important personages in the play that is the prime basis for the comedy element. In the first it is the headstrongness of the old Dutch Governor; in the second, it is the selfishness of the tearful Mrs. Parbury; in the third, it is the narrowness of the marriage-hating Miss Hobbs. They are, of course, all three of them, comedies, in part, of situation as well, while " Peter Stuyvesant " might rightfully be considered also a historical comedy of manners.

Judging the play by Mr. Matthews and Mr. Howard first from the point of view of the comedy of character, the decision seems to be that the authors have succeeded in creating, in the Governor of New Amsterdam, a figure that is endowed with the qualities requisite for provoking good-natured mirth. No vindictive laugh can be aroused by such a character, for there is in it none of that hypocrisy, or hollowness of form, which, as Fielding long ago said, and Molière and Sheridan long ago showed, alone might serve fittingly as the object of ridicule. Mrs. Tisbet Bayard, Dr. La Montagne, the various officers and councillors, and the two pairs of lovers, all are well drawn, and would seem to assure successful comedy as the result of their characters being acted upon by that of the Governor, and interacting one upon another. Yet it must be frankly admitted that " Peter Stuyvesant " is not so interesting as might have been expected. The various personages are individually attractive or amusing, as the case may be,

but they fail to combine well. The scenes lack vitality, and we do not follow the plot with real absorption. The fault may to some extent be ours. The life of Broadway surges around us, and the excitement of a great city is, however unconscious we may be of it, in our veins. We are end-of-the-century New Yorkers, having little in common with the sedate burghers of an age long past. This is all true, and yet it seems easier to explain the fact that " Peter Stuyvesant," though very enjoyable in parts, is not interesting throughout, by calling attention to the lack of novelty in many of the situations, and to the obvious conventions several times employed.

There are certain indispensable stage conventions which, from their very hyper-obtrusiveness, like the purloined letter in Poe's tale, are little likely to be noticed. But a playwright can afford to indulge only very judiciously in the less inevitable conventionalities of dramatic construction. The fundamental rules he must observe, the crucial scene or scenes —the keynote to the play—what Sardou called the *scène à faire*—must be well wrought; the psychological effect of the various incidents—their mirth-provoking, their tension-causing or tension-relieving capacity, must all be taken into account. But, beyond this, the great dramatist must strike out into the less common paths. He must be unwilling to let any of his characters indulge in soliloquy that would have remained unspoken in real life, in order to let dangle clearly before the eyes of the audience certain threads in the woof of the plot. This device, so fatal to dramatic illusion, is used in " Peter Stuyvesant." And the playwright who resorts to the familiar moves in the old game of cross-purposes must not wonder if some of the complications appear artificial.

The plot is one of intrigues rather than of real life and passion.

Yet, despite a lack of originality and finish in construction, and an insufficient amount of real action, " Peter Stuyvesant " was worth writing; it is a pleasant, wholesome American play that shows the authors not gaining any great goal, it is true, yet pointing distinctly in the right direction.

It is interesting to compare a play like " Peter Stuyvesant," at times imperfect in construction, with a play so close-knit as " The Tyranny of Tears." Mr. Haddon Chambers employs only six characters; yet they suffice to keep the interest from flagging throughout the greater part of the four acts. There is absolutely no body to the piece, and it will probably sink out of sight as soon as the season is over; in the mean time it affords a few pleasant hours, by means of its compact and natural action and its clever dialogue. In one place, it is true, the naturalness is sacrificed to the compactness, and Mr. George Gunning, the far-travelled and somewhat cynical bachelor, asks the poor young typewriter to become his wife long before in real life there would have been any likelihood of his doing so. But with this exception, Mr. Chambers shows excellent workmanship from the point of view of the mechanism of play-writing. We wish that all this skill and cleverness were employed to less ephemeral ends.

By means of a certain amount of self-control, all mention of the actors in " Peter Stuyvesant " and " The Tyranny of Tears " has been avoided. The object of this department is to study the drama in itself, and though, of course, in doing this a play's value for the stage—its " actability "—must be considered as well as its more purely literary value, the good or bad qualities of any individual actor need here not be taken into account. We have, therefore, not alluded specifically to the intelligent humor of Mr. Crane or the gentlemanly naturalness of Mr. Drew. In discussing " Miss Hobbs," however, with any amount of fairness to ourselves, it is impossible to omit mention of Miss Russell. If we were to say that Mr. Jerome's is an unimportant play, ac-

cording to all canons of dramatic art, the many people who have found it one of the most attractive of recent pieces would marvel at our words. And yet it is greatly the charm of a young actress, and the well-merited popularity of an old actress, to which the success of "Miss Hobbs" may be attributed. Literary value, real thought, purpose, or result, there is none. Potentiality to amuse, a certain light grace, a rippling stream of entertaining speech—these are the substitutes offered us. Moreover there is skill in construction; and, though we see an old stage trick in the finding by Miss Hobbs of the book in which is recorded the bet concerning herself, the good account to which later the incident is turned leads us to overlook the author's lack of constructive originality in having introduced it.

What we are led, then, to expect from these three recent comedies is this: For some time, at least, the chief purpose of the playwrights will remain one merely of amusement. The audience, after a day's hard work, will continue to go to the theatre solely for pleasant relaxation. Cleverly constructed bright plays will afford this relaxation. Later it may dawn more forcibly upon the public mind that comedy can be significant as well as entertaining. National characteristics, national events may then be more often introduced; things worth ridiculing may later be ridiculed, and we may in time have our Sheridans, our Molières, and our Augiers. There can be no art without significance, no great achievement in any branch of the drama unless there first be purpose other than one only of amusement. There is here no idea of didacticism or preaching, but of the inherent lasting value of all great art. Until the plays put on our stage present some essential significance of some kind, whether national or universal, we cannot be satisfied; yet in the mean time let us take all the pleasure we can get from the graceful, unimportant, amusing productions of the present day. They are, at any rate, cleaner and brighter than much with which we have had to put up in recent years. *George S. Hellman.*

Reviews

STALKY & CO. By Rudyard Kipling. The Doubleday and McClure Company.

For an American, whose idea of English school-life is derived largely from "Tom Brown at Rugby," a comparison between Mr. Kipling's "Stalky & Co." and Thomas Hughes's classic of immortal memory, will seem inevitable. The Rugby of those days, the days of Arnold and of Clough, was often accused of making men prigs, and, through excess of moral and religious training, morbid and incapable of action. This may be partly true, and undoubtedly, in the case of an Arthur Clough, too fine an edge was put upon the highly tempered blade with which the youth was expected to carve out his fortunes in the world. But, however this may have been, it would be a very unusual critic who should find in "Tom Brown," the mirror of Rugby, any trace of the mawkish and "goody-goody." The predominant note, that which has made it endure, is a fine and attractive manliness—a spirit of natural breeding and nobility like nothing to be found in this new exponent of English school-life, "Stalky & Co." Not only in the academy of Mr. Kipling are the spiritual ideals of honor and of chivalry absolutely lacking, but even on the purely physical side of boyhood, when one would expect to find Kipling supreme in the idealization of the hardy virtues, Dr. Arnold's boys seem far manlier than Butler, Stalky, and McTurk. At Rugby there was no end of foot-ball, cricket, and fighting, with just enough of mischievous mis-

demeanor to indicate truthfully the natural bent of boyhood for trouble. In "Stalky & Co." there are sneers for the traditional games of the Briton, and often in this long-sustained record of brutal fagging, mean-spirited and venomous trickery, we long unspeakably for something that never happens—a good, manly stand-up fight for the settlement of openly resented grievances. Guile is the chief lesson that Mr. Kipling teaches in these stories: the value of doing a thing cautiously and with the least possible open declaration of intention and motive. Expediency is the new Golden Rule, and besides, the highest moral teachings are a sort of rude justice the essence of which is revenge and reprisals, and a sort of begrudging, unsympathetic assistance of the weaker party. In "The Moral Reformers" the new morality is exploited very clearly and on its highest plane. Two "crammer's rejections" make life miserable for little Clewer. At the instance of the clergyman of the school, and not through any love or deep pity for the victim, who is a "dirty little brute," Number Five Study undertakes his rescue. This is accomplished by a trick through which Sefton and Campbell, the two persecutors, are thrown into the hands of Stalky & Co., who proceed to ply them with all the tortures that devilish ingenuity and bitter bygone experience can devise in a spirit of simple savagery masking as a righteous visitation of justice. The other great virtue with which readers of Mr. Kipling are familiar in the heroes of his other tales, is cleanliness. This is seen in its constructive stages in "An Unsavory Interlude," in which accusations of personal neglect are turned to the torment of the accusers by the intrusion of a dead cat under the floor of one of the houses, all to the accompaniment of the foulest language in English since the days of Swift. In short, the whole atmosphere of the book is ugly, compact of sheer brutality, vulgar coarseness, and a spirit of malignant meanness that do not show out in mere summaries of Mr. Kipling's plots. It is impossible to gain, without reading the book, a really adequate notion of the unyouthful boyhood and precocious corruption of Mr. Kipling's pictures of British school-life.

To argue in justification of these stories that a young boy is an animal and that left to himself or placed amid debasing influences—and such are the influences exerted by masters like King and Prout—he will remain an animal, developing upon that side, is to say nothing to the point. For the child is father to the man, and each boy has in his nature a higher something that needs but to be caressed to be awakened. In just one appreciable point does Mr. Kipling attempt to make us aware of this fact, and that is in "The Flag of Their Country." Here he endeavors to show a patriotism that is above cheap display of shoddy sentimentalism and of calico flags, too sacred for profaning speech. This ideal is very high and noble even in exaggeration that transcends our comprehension and belief, as, for instance, when it is said of the Union Jack: "They had certainly seen the thing before—down at the coastguard station, or through a telescope, half-mast high when a brig went ashore on Braunton Sands; above the roof of the Golf-club, and in Keyte's window, where a certain kind of striped sweetmeat bore it in paper on each box. But the College never displayed it; it was no part of the scheme of their lives; the Head had never alluded to it; their fathers had never declared it unto them. It was a matter shut up, sacred and apart." But this patriotism bedded in shamefaced, savage pride, is too fine a blossom for the soil it springs from.

Of course, these pictures are idealizations: they form a complete exposition of the training that Mr. Kipling deems necessary for the British conquest of the world. It does not need the poem with which the book opens to tell us that from this peculiar moulding of the boy nature

he believes is to be acquired that especial kind of character in the man, which alone can accomplish the building of empires. Nor does it need more than a knowledge of Mr. Kipling's imperialistic ideal, to make the innate glory of a system fruitful of such magnificent results, follow as an inevitable conclusion. Mr. Kipling gloats over the picture as he draws it with unctuous richness of slang, dirtiness, and cunning immorality. For is not the school the microcosm of the colonial empire? Are there not to be seen here in the making, those particular qualities which we have learned to look for in the Cecil Rhodes of imperialism—calculating aggressiveness, sublimated finesse, contemptuous disregard for old-fashioned standards of right and wrong, and a cynical unscrupulousness in the undeviating working out of a heaven-appointed end?

Old Rugby boys only recently raised a monument to the memory of Tom Hughes, who in reflecting the life of his school became for Englishmen the embodiment of the virtues it represented. Whether or not a new generation of the English will ever erect a monument to Mr. Kipling, with the same love and veneration, it is difficult to say. It is certain, however, that Mr. Kipling's monument will partake in the general crumbling nature of the material welfare of his race for which he stands, and to which he here sacrifices in the bud, all the more permanent qualities of character which alone so far have made England great among nations.

WRITINGS OF IDEALISTS

THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT. By Hamilton Wright Mabie. Dodd, Mead & Co.

LETTERS OF EMERSON TO A FRIEND. Edited by Charles Eliot Norton. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

To the steadily continuing body of idealistic literature in America the latest work of Mr. Hamilton Wright Mabie is no mean contribution, and deserves more than a passing comment. Though the too frequent use of the words "Christ" and "God" and "divine" make us fear lest the author border too closely on "the sermonizing of self-consecrated priests concerning mysteries no mind has clearly grasped," there are many chapters containing noble lessons nobly put; and though the book presents no detailed scheme in structure, there is throughout a similar loftiness of tone and oneness of purpose.

"The Life of the Spirit" has for its thesis the value of the spiritual in man's life. Patriotism, courage, honor, helpfulness, friendship, beauty—these are among the subjects with which Mr. Mabie deals. His point of view is always the same. Seeing in religion, ground for belief in the immortality of what is spiritual, and finding in the results of modern science confirmation rather than refutation of this belief; confident that what is good in man must from the very logic of the universe be most permanent, Mr. Mabie is enabled to express views many of which, in spite of their lack of novelty (for Idealism is a single and ancient creed, however numerous be its prophets) will to the sceptic once more be suggestive, and to the sympathetic, once more be inspiring.

By Idealism, whether used in reference to writers of literature or to men in the ordinary walks of life, is meant not any creed of visionaries and byword of practical folk, but, rather, faith in the significance and permanence of noble qualities, and belief in a purpose toward good in the universe, as evidenced by this permanence. This is an off-hand definition, allowing of modification and additions, but it suffices to show that Idealism is a creed for the many rather than for the few. Whatever concerns the great idealists is of permanent interest, because they are identified with what is most permanent in life; and in this way may be explained the lasting regard for everything con-

nected with Emerson, the greatest of our literary idealists. The "Letters to a Friend," recently edited by Charles Eliot Norton, are welcome in that they cast more light on the character of a man we revere. They are, most of them, notes so slight that the simple, clear style is seen little more than in outline; yet they contribute toward illustrating again Emerson's views on friendship, so that even through the meagre substance of these letters we seem to hear him teach us once more that "the only way to have a friend is to be one."

In dealing in the same review with writings of Emerson and of Mr. Mabie, we are willingly associating the living author with the great dead. It may, however, be not amiss to suggest that while only the intellectual few can be the literary exponents of Idealism, it is not alone to the intellectual few that they must address themselves. Christ made his teachings interesting through parables, and hid the law in the poetry of imagery; the long line of great moral writers from Marcus Aurelius to Maeterlinck made the beauty of their words or the sparkle of their epigram relieve the didacticism of their thought, and, above all, they made their appeal so humanly intimate that, however diversified their audience, all felt themselves personally addressed. From these points of view of what may be called the accessories to idealistic literature, Mr. Mabie will, we are confident, be willing to yield in rank to Emerson and others of his superiors.

RECENT SHORT STORIES

SAND AND CACTUS. By Wolcott LeCléar Beard. THE POWERS AT PLAY. By Bliss Perry. THE LION AND THE UNICORN. By Richard Harding Davis. Charles Scribner's Sons.

If the short story is to be the literary form of the future, superseding the novel, as the novel superseded the written play in popular favor, it is natural that we should take up each new volume in this class eagerly, in the expectation of finding the modern masterpiece. What this will be like when we do come across it; what, indeed, is the real nature of the short story, are matters in much dispute. Or, to give the question as it is ordinarily stated, does the short story exist as a form of art fundamentally different from longer prose fiction, or is whatever difference there may be, a simple one of length? One thing seems certain; if the short story is a legitimate form of art, it must deal with the material common to all previously recognized forms. It must treat of life and human experience dramatized, intensified, made typical, universal, significant. It is thus obvious that in this sense there can be no fundamental difference between the short story and other literary *genres*. The only permissible difference is one of treatment, and consists in the greater condensation or in the higher degree of artistic selection demanded by the rigid exactions of length. This puts the short story on a par with the drama in a comparison with longer, fuller forms of composition. The real question seems to be whether the high degree of selection and condensation necessitated by the physical requirements of the short story can be actually practised without impairing the importance and significance demanded of any work of art. And because we have great dramas, as well as great novels and epics, there seems to be no reason why there should not be great short stories as well. Only, of course, the degree of artistic skill required is extraordinarily high, just as it takes the master-hand to make great dramas. The danger is that in seeking to gain in small compass the unity that exists in all art, and which is especially important for the short story which depends for its effect largely upon the totality of its impression, the author is too likely to substitute for the higher unity of novels and epics, the inferior, superficial unity of sin-

gle, striking episodes and surface impressions. Indeed, this has become practically the ideal of most modern short story writers, and accounts for the almost universal identification of the short story with the sketch of local color in man and nature.

Mr. Wolcott Le Cléar Beard's "Sand and Cactus" is a typical example of this local color realism. These stories deal with the life and scenery of the Southwest—strange, colored, and violent. Mr. Beard is usually ingenious in his endeavor to parade his materials entertainingly. But our curiosity is soon satisfied with this rather monotonous, because primitive and narrow, range of purely physical savagery; and finding little insistance upon that "one touch of nature," our interest flags at even the most *outré* inventions of the author.

In "The Powers at Play," Mr. Bliss Perry comes closer to the ideal of the short story, despite two or three bald failures such as "Madam Annalena" and "The Incident of the British Ambassador." In "His Word of Honor" and "By the Committee" we recognize the true artistic method and motif. The powers referred to in the title of the book, are the external forces of destiny, which is neither more nor less than the complex of human action; and the internal force of individual character determining at once the degree of each man's subjection to fate, and forming an integral element in the common destiny. These are the elements in all tragedy and comedy, and they enter in a striking degree into "By the Committee," which, with its well-knit and logical construction and careful characterization is one of the best stories we have seen for some time.

A third writer who comes before us is Richard Harding Davis with "The Lion and the Unicorn." Probably there is no other writer of short stories to-day so talented as Mr. Davis. He has a wonderful facility and a wide range. While having no very deep or subtile knowledge of human nature, he has something more than a surface acquaintance with the thoughts and feelings of various men and women. Yet his obvious lack of sincerity, his continual striving after striking effect, makes it impossible to give his work very serious consideration. He employs his talents simply and solely in the writing of pretty magazine stories, which he turns out with machine-like regularity and perfection. Through all his work one feels the repression rather than the expression of his powers. Each story is suggestive of a well-made, well-acted, and admirably staged, but altogether artificial play. His people are the play-actors of a highly trained stock company, stepping out of one set of parts into another as easily as the author-manager shifts his sets of scenes. Everything smacks of the play and its conventions, and there is rather the illusion of the stage than the convincing reality of life. And here, of course, the man of letters is selling his birthright. It seems a pity that a man who can so cleverly simulate eloquence and deep feeling in a story like "The Man with One Talent," should abandon trifling and give free rein to his powers, producing something less finished and harmonious perhaps, but with more of vitality in it. And Mr. Davis can do this if he wishes.

A HISTORY OF LITERARY CRITICISM IN THE RENAISSANCE. By Joel Elias Spingarn. The Macmillan Company.

This volume traverses a field which has hitherto been systematically ignored by historians of literary criticism. The mediæval times were indeed dark ages in the theory of art, but neither they nor those of early Renaissance were so black that their gloom was irradiated by no shaft of light. It is this fact that Mr. Spingarn demonstrates. His exposition of the surprising extent to which Italy was the seed-ground and nursery of the thought of Philip Sidney, Boileau, and

their immediate predecessors in England and France, stimulates here for the first time a curiosity which, again, it is the first to satisfy.

The author offers a discussion of the theory of poetry from its mediæval beginnings in the ascetic Christian Church, to its rehabilitation in accordance with the *dicta* of the Stagirite.

The gap which long existed between the *Poetics* of Aristotle and Horace's *Ars Poetica* in antiquity, and the comparatively modern *Defence of Poesy* of Sidney, is here closed. The volume therefore takes on a double aspect. In its opening pages it presents a picture of an attitude of mind, of a popular feeling toward literature, for there was no criticism at the dawn of the Renaissance. In its place there was a consciousness that all fiction was to be regarded as subservient to theology and the Church, that the criteria that literature was to be judged by, were purely moral criteria. But the discovery of the *Poetics* of Aristotle introduced at once an entire change in the point of view. A criticism was then set up with canons of its own. The evolution of literature became a distinct science. From that point onward the author is concerned not with the place of letters before the people, but with a more technical subject—the successive modification of a specialized study, which was the legacy of Greece to modern Europe.

The account of the rise and particular phases of scientific criticism in Italy is, indeed, the most novel feature of the volume.

A presentation of the theories of Italian criticism, as a whole, has been a desideratum. Hence few of the persons in the succeeding chapters are familiar. Trissino, Dolce, Cinthio, and Tasso are there, it is true, but the great majority of names, though freely used by the critics of their day, are now forgotten in Tuscany itself, and the works for which they stood are even more obscure. In the interest of clearness, therefore, a topical rather than a chronological order is observed in the exposition. The general theory of poetry in Italy, the theory of the drama and of the epic, and, lastly, the successful establishment of the classical tradition, modified as it was by the romantic spirit, are severally unfolded. The poetic theory of the sixteenth century, in short, is reconstructed in its entirety.

The elucidation of the ideals of the Italian writers is followed by a similar examination of the progress that they made in France and England. Here, of course, the matter is in no sense new. The distinctive feature is the interpretation of French and English writers in accordance with the spirit of their Italian predecessors, and, more strikingly, in the demonstration of the dependence of the northern nations upon the Adriatic peninsula. This has always been recognized in the main with sufficient clearness.

In the case of Neo-Aristotelianism from Pelletier and Ascham to Boileau and Milton, it needs no heralding, but how absolute and servile the dependence was in many of its features, has not, perhaps, been understood. The integration of the national movements, Mr. Spingarn makes very plain. The indication of the primacy in time of the Italian over the northern critics, in matters of detail, is, it should also be said in passing, admirably sure, and, sometimes, as with the antecedents of Sidney's thought, is very striking.

In dignity and power the book is worthy of the subject which it treats. The scholarship is thorough and convincing, though the directness of the style, together with an unfailing emphasis upon essential points, tends to obscure a minute and careful grasp of unusual detail.

J. G. U.