

action and the vesting of ownership (*dominium*, possession might be elsewhere) in the case of industrial property in the state does not necessarily involve absolute democracy. The very conception of the state as a person shows that it does not. Indeed we are strongly of opinion that as state aid and state control and even state ownership is more and more introduced, as it is certain to be, the great political discovery will be the necessity of doing away with the rule of numbers if the machine is to work at all.

TWO SYMBOLISTS.

"Poésies de Stéphane Mallarmé." Bruxelles: E. Deman. 1899.

"Histoires Souveraines." Par Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. Bruxelles: E. Deman. 1899.

CERTAIN writers, in whom the artist's contempt for common things has been carried to its utmost limit, should only be read in books of beautiful and slightly unusual form. Perhaps of all modern writers Villiers and Mallarmé have most carefully sought the most remote ideal, and seem most to require some elaborate presentation to the reader. Mallarmé, indeed, delighted in heaping up pretty obstacles in the reader's way, not only in the concealment of his meaning by style, but in a furtive, fragmentary, and only too luxurious method of publication, which made it difficult for most people to get his books at all, even for unlimited money. Villiers, on the contrary, after publishing his first book, the "Premières Poésies" of 1859, in the delicate type of Perrin of Lyons, on ribbed paper, with old gold covers, became careless as to how his books appeared, and has to be read in a disorderly crowd of volumes, some of them as hideous as the original edition of "L'Eve Future," with its red stars and streaks, its Apollo and Cupid and grey city landscape. It is therefore with singular pleasure that we welcome the two beautiful books which have lately been published by M. Deman, the well-known publisher of Rops: one, the fullest collection of Mallarmé's poems which has ever been published, the other a selection of twenty stories by Villiers. The Mallarmé is white and red, the poems printed in italics, a frontispiece by Rops; the Villiers is a large square volume in shimmering dark green and gold, with headpieces and tailpieces, in two tints, by M. Th. van Rysselberghe. These scrolls and titles are done with a sort of reverent self-suppression, as if, for once, decoration existed for a book and not the book for the decoration, which is hardly the quality for which modern decorators are most conspicuous.

In the "Poésies" we have, no doubt, Mallarmé's final selection from his own poems. Some of it is even new. The magnificent and mysterious fragment of "Hérodiade," his masterpiece, perhaps, is, though not indeed completed, more than doubled in length by the addition of a long passage on which he was at work almost to the time of his death. It is curious to note that the new passage is written in exactly the style of the older passage, though in the interval between the writing of the one and the writing of the other Mallarmé had completely changed his style. By an effort of will he had thought himself back into an earlier style, and the two fragments join without an apparent seam. There were, it appears, still a hymn or lyric spoken by S. John and a concluding monologue, to be added to the poem; but we have at least the whole of the dialogue between Hérodiade and the Nurse, certainly a poem sufficiently complete in itself. The other new pieces are in the latest manner, mainly without punctuation; they would scarcely be alluring, one imagines, even if punctuated. In the course of a few centuries, we are convinced, every line of Mallarmé will have become perfectly clear, as a corrupt Greek text becomes clear in time. Even now a learned commentator could probably do much to explain them, at the cost of a life-long labour; but scholars only give up their lives to the difficult authors of a remote past. Mallarmé can afford to wait: he will not be forgotten; and for us of the present there are the clear and lovely early poems, so delightfully brought together in the white and red book before us.

"L'insensibilité de l'azur et des pierres," a serene and gem-like quality, entirely his own, is in all these poems, in which a particular kind of French verse realises its ideal. Mallarmé is the poet of a few, a limited poet, perfect within his limits as the Chinese artist of his own symbol. In a beautiful poem he compares himself to the painter of tea-cups who spends his life in painting a strange flower

"Sur ses tasses de neige à la lune ravie,"

a flower which has perfumed his whole existence, since, as a child, he had felt it graft itself upon the "blue filigree of his soul."

A very different image must be sought if we wish to sum up the characteristics of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. An uncertain artist, he was a man of passionate and lofty genius, and he has left us a great mass of imperfect work, out of which we have to form for ourselves whatever notion we can of a man greater than his work. Our first impression, on looking at the twenty stories which make up the present selection, was that the selection had been badly made. Where is "Les Demoiselles de Bienfilâtre"? we asked ourselves, remembering that little ironical masterpiece; where is "Le Convive des Derniers Fêtes," with its subtlety of horror; "Sentimentalisme," with its tragic and tender modernity; "La Reine Ysabeau," with its sombre and taciturn intensity? Story after story came into our mind, finer, it seemed to us, in the artistic qualities of the story than many of those selected. Second thoughts inclined us to think that the selection could scarcely have been better. For it is a selection made after a plan, and it shows us, not indeed always Villiers at his best as a story-teller, but, throughout, Villiers at his highest point of elevation; the man, whom we are always trying to see through his work, and the man as he would have seen himself. There is not a collection of stories in French of greater nobility than these "Histoires Souveraines" in which a regal pomp of speech drapes a more than regal sovereignty of soul. The Villiers who mocked mean things and attacked base things is no longer there; the idealist is at home in his own world, among his ideals.

THE PRIVATE SECRETARY.

"Recollections by Sir Algernon West." London: Smith, Elder. 1899. 21s.

ON laying down these pleasant and amusing volumes it is easy to understand why Sir Algernon West was such a success. In 1851 he entered the Inland Revenue Department as a temporary clerk at 6s. a day, and it seems but yesterday that he quitted it as Chairman and a K.C.B. But men never understand what they have done themselves. On an early page in the first volume the author says, with explicit reference to Mr. Dodson, afterwards Lord Monk Bretton, and with plainly implicit reference to Mr. Childers, "through life I have often wondered at the success of some men whose qualifications did not seem to justify it." Yet Sir Algernon need not have wondered, if he had strictly examined himself as to the secret of his own advancement. Sir George Cornwall Lewis observed, with his profound, if cynical, sagacity that "every man was able adequately to perform the duties of an office which he was clever enough to get." Nothing is easier to preach, and nothing is harder to practise, than the gospel of getting-on. Make yourself pleasant to the world, and the world will make itself pleasant to you, is the formula, which sounds simple and obvious enough, but is in reality not so. Its meaning has been thoroughly grasped by Sir Algernon West. Unconsciously he reveals himself in these recollections as one born to be liked, used, trusted, and finally promoted, by his fellows. In the two volumes there is not a note of querulousness or egoism. There is no obtrusion of disagreeable domestic struggles—only once a cheery reference to the *res angusta domi*—though in his early days he must have suffered from impecuniosity. His modesty about himself seems perfectly genuine, and quite unaffected by the fact that for many years he was not only Mr. Gladstone's right hand but a sort of universal referee amongst the great ones of the earth. Though "bred in the kennel" of the Whigs (his