

The Outlook

109 FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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NOTES

SOLON

LORD SALISBURY. "Let us have rifle-clubs everywhere. Also let the young maidens fetch their fathers' dinner-beer!"
 BRITISH WORKING-MAN. "Now, if you arst me, I tell yer Salisbury can take Stead and ole Sir Wilfrid, and beat 'em on their own pitch."

LORD SALISBURY was on Tuesday at the height of what the *Times* calls "that spirit of critical detachment which is one of his principal characteristics." It is difficult to conceive of the state of mind of a British Prime Minister who after all these years of restrictive liquor legislation can declare from his place in Parliament: "You wish to prevent a certain number of people from getting drunk; therefore you are asked to prevent four, five, or six times as many who are sober consumers from having an opportunity of the free indulgence to which they have a right." That "free indulgence" phrase will glare at us from every hoarding before the next election is done with, and the result will certainly not advance the cause of sane and moderate temperance legislation. For our part, we earnestly hope that, despite Lord Salisbury's gibes, some one of the forty-two peers who brought the Ministry within three votes of defeat on Tuesday will before the Session closes place a Bill before Parliament. Out of the ninety-nine recommendations of the Commission, seventy-seven were in substance common to both reports, and if enacted would go far to remove some of the crying scandals of our present licensing system.

THE Lord Salisbury of Wednesday was happily less inclined to "free indulgence." Dealing, in presence of the Primrose League, with the military reorganisation which must follow hard upon our experiences in South Africa he spoke as becomes a statesman. Behind our Navy we must be ready with a well trained, thoroughly equipped, and fully munitioned land force sufficient to repel all attack. This is not to be attained, Lord Salisbury tells us, by go-as-you-please rifle-clubs, or by free-and-easy volunteering. The Bisley picnic is not the enlarged ideal we have to strive after. It must be an efficient force that will save us, welded together into a whole, and movable with swiftness and certainty to its place of action, and fitting into one large and comprehensible scheme of national and local defence. The days of the military dawdler are over; in future he must be an officer as a man is a merchant or a barrister; he must have learned his profession and be proficient and eager in it. Mr. George Wyndham, also, gave some most interesting and reassuring figures bearing on the military readiness of the British peoples. For the last seven months recruiting for the Regular Army has been at the rate of 60,000 men a year, for the Militia 40,000, while the Volunteer force has increased by 30,000. What further proof is needed of the nation's willingness to respond to real necessity? Mr. Wyndham referred to Lord Salisbury's speech as an assurance that the Government would do all that was called for to foster the necessary scheme. It cannot be, therefore, that the War Office will fail to profit by a set of circumstances so favourable for setting England above the fear of invasion or external disaster.

THAT the Tsar loves Englishmen is put beyond all doubt by his having shared his ideals with Mr. Stead and his estates with Mr. Hooley—so at least that enterprising gentleman himself assures us. The Tsar might have made a happier choice amongst us; but, on the other hand, the proof of his love for us consists in the very fact that, like the rain, it falls on the unjust as well as the just. But though the Tsar loves Englishmen, his love does not play any discoverable part in the relations between Russia and England. It does not, for example, make Count Muravieff more truthful in his diplomacy or General Kropotkin less resolved to push forward the Russian frontiers at our expense. True enough, Russia has not intervened on behalf of the Boer Republics; but there are two reasons why we owe no thanks for this. In the first place, the Russian Censor has permitted the Russian Press to lead the Continental clamour against England, and thus, by egging on the Boers with false hopes of intervention, has powerfully contributed to prolong the bloody struggle. In the second place, the Tsar's Government has diligently taken occasion by our embarrassments in South Africa to make Persia a Russian dependency, to perpetrate a most mischievous demonstration against Herat, and to wring from China yet another railway concession which will have the effect of bringing Mongolia, as Manchuria has already been brought, within the frontiers of the Russian Empire.

If the *China Gazette* be accurately informed, Russia's new concession from China was signed as lately as April 14 last. Under provisions which make China a nominal partner in the undertaking, it empowers the Russo-China Bank to construct and manage a line from Kiakhta, at the south end of Lake Baikal, across the desert of Gobi to Peking. Russia will thus acquire a much shorter route to the Chinese capital, a route, too, which will be invulnerable against any European Power; but it may well be doubted whether, from an engineer's point of view, the desert of Gobi is easier country than that eastward of Lake Baikal to the watershed of the Manchurian river system. The best that can be said for the new route is that it follows the old caravan track between Russia and China. Apart from such difficulties as Nature and Finance

THE SYMBOLISTS

SYMBOLISM, as Mr. Symon notes in the Introduction to his striking book,* would have no special value in the writers of our day if it were not also found, in one shape or another, in every great imaginative writer. The essential distinction between the old symbolism and the new is that the latter has become conscious of itself and, as consciousness tends to generate intellectual force, so intellectual force is prone to develop a body of (more or less coherent) objective doctrine. The new symbolism came most carefully upon its hour. The direct impulse of the Romantic movement had ended in Flaubert and Leconte de Lisle; impeccability of form had been polished to the last point by Gautier and M. José Maria de Heredia, and the miraculous dexterity of Théodore de Banville came to be regarded as wearisome and uncanny by the younger generation.

Oh ! qui dira les torts de la Rime ?
 Quel enfant sourd ou quel nègre fou
 Nous a forgé ce bijou d'un sou
 Qui sonne creux et faux sous la lime ?

As Classicism had given way to Romanticism, as the work of the Romantics had been completed by the Parnassians, so Symbolism was a protest against the rhetoric and the impassivity which were freezing into lifeless conventions. It is among the ironies of literary history that the chief insurgents against the oppressive supremacy of form should themselves be masters of formal expression; that the new humanising and spiritualising of letters should (in a Buddhist spirit) perfect form in order that form might be annihilated; and that the removal of one hierarchy should end by establishing another with pretensions no less imperious and pressing.

It is another stroke of irony that the new dynasty should be founded by one whom we must reckon as, in many respects, a madman. Some critics, more ingenious than persuasive, have found early intimations of symbolism in Maurice Scève's "Délie objet de plus haute vertu," a poetic enigma of the sixteenth century; while others would have us see the beginning of the new influence in Baudelaire:—

La nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
 Laisser parfois sortir de confuses paroles ;
 L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
 Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Mr. Symons is well within his right in naming Gérard de Nerval as the first practitioner in the new kind, though it is doubtful if Gérard's symbolism was conscious in intention. It is hard to think that Gérard was ever conscious—in the literal sense—of anything. His theories of reincarnation, his dabbings with the Kabbala, his "geometrical proofs of the Immaculate Conception" are characteristic in their incoherency. He took pleasure in leading a lobster by a blue riband through the Palais Royal, in identifying an old apron string as either the girdle worn by Madame de Maintenon or as the Queen of Sheba's garter. He was very tired of life, as he says; but it is a question if he ever knew it save as a turbulent dream. His last madness, according to his own view, was to believe that he was a poet; and to most among his contemporaries "El Desdichado" and "Artémis" probably seemed mere exercises in insanity. In truth he was not a great poet in the common sense of the word; but he has moments of greatness, lines which might have served Verlaine for a model, imageries and rhythms which Mallarmé has not outdone, and a hundred unmethodical anticipations of a method which was to find its acceptance a generation later. It has been given to few men to exercise a more abiding influence, but the influence has been mostly subterranean, and has been overlooked by more than one distinguished historian of French literature.

* "The Symbolist Movement in Literature." By Arthur Symons. London: Heinemann. 6s.

Historians, in fact, rarely dream for any length of time *dans la grotte où nage la syrène*, and this partly explains their indifference to most of Mr. Symons' subjects—to Villiers de l'Isle Adam, for instance, whose "Axël" is the symbolist drama, and who introduced (so to say) the literature of exceptions. It is a common reproach against Villiers that he is "unsympathetic," that he lacks pity (and, therefore, pathos), and it seems as though he gloried in the charge. It is not very clear that he combined "occultism" with the profession of Catholic belief; but it is quite possible, for though he dedicates a story to the Pope, is versed in the fathers, and delights in ecclesiastical pageants, his Catholicism is envenomed with an intellectual disdain, a hatred of the rabble's stupidity which is the most anti-Catholic sentiment in the world. He inherited his creed as an appanage of his splendid name; but in all essentials he remains an unsectarian mystic and an embodied protest against the methods of universal suffrage applied to literature. It is hardly surprising that he had to wait so long for fame. The "Premières Poésies" naturally passed unperceived; but it is not very creditable to criticism that "Morgane" and "La Révolte" and "Les Contes Cruels" fared scarcely better. Mr. Symons apparently counts the "Histoires Insolites" among the writer's more indifferent work, and one is reluctant to dissent from the verdict of so shrewd and sympathetic a critic; yet, surely, "Les Amants de Tolède" ranks with the best of Villiers' work. And that work consisting in the creation of "the art of the Symbolist drama and of Symbolism in fiction" has a unique significance and value.

Not so with Arthur Rimbaud, whose individual performances, as we might expect from a boy who ceased writing at twenty, are of secondary importance. The incidents of his life, his "travellings" in myrrh and frankincense, in ivory and gold, are here correctly given for the first time, and his life is more interesting than anything he wrote save the "Bateau Ivre" and the too-famous sonnet. Intellectually he survives in the person of the old Parnassian, Paul Verlaine, the foremost exemplar of "the literature of corruption"; without Rimbaud we should not have the Verlaine that we know. Possibly Mr. Symons, little given as he is to the trivial anecdote, lays too much stress on the poet's passions, crimes, imprisonment, and beggary. It was, assuredly, not in the least "needful that all this should happen, in order that the spiritual vision should eclipse the material vision." The subject cannot be pursued here, but this explanation leaves out of sight the personal responsibility of the sinner for his sin, and it even throws some indirect suspicion on Verlaine's sincerity. However that may be, there is nothing of Verlaine's moral paralysis in Góngora, from whom, as M. L. Xavier de Ricard reports, the modern poet loved to trace his literary descent; still less is his enervating faculty for self-pity to be found in López de Ubeda or in Ocaña. These aberrations of conduct have little to do with art, and it is solely with Verlaine's art that we are concerned. Unlike Mallarmé, Verlaine was no theorist and was never obscure. He escaped from Parnassus to Bohemia, elaborated the purely sensuous effect of words, and, in the search for fresh musical effects, he became a liberating influence. *De la musique encore et toujours; Pas la couleur, rien que la nuance*: these are his watchwords. The dangers of the method are obvious, and in the lesser Symbolists music melts into a moonlight where thought is a superfluity, just as the *nuance* evaporates into sheer indefiniteness, just as the new prosody tends to something not very far removed from anarchy. But there remains a certain body of acquisition—the abolition of *la rime riche*, a subtler mode of expression, an ingenuous simplicity of effect, and a new technique which amounts to the discovery of an additional organ of utterance.

Enough has been said to give some idea of the purport of Mr. Symons' admirable volume. We need not agree with him in thinking that Symbolism has replaced all

previous literary gospels, and that "the bankruptcy of science" is a fact. Science is not and, in the nature of things, never can be bankrupt except in the perplexed spirit of M. Brunetière; it is mysticism's closest and best ally. Neither need we believe that the literature of the future is to move forward on Mallarmé's lines. Why should it? Symbolism will pass to where the old moons go, after doing much less than its friends hoped and its opponents feared. And, at all events, it will never find a more accomplished, acute, and appreciative critic than Mr. Symons.

NEW LEAVES

LONDON: Thursday.

A POET has well sung of "the lone of soul" that,

"Stoned by continual wreckage of his dreams,
He in the crowd for ever is apart."

There is a deeper loneliness, and it keeps dreams at bay; by an inward presentiment of wreck. Charlotte Brontë represents the genius of this loneliness. She expects good things to end; is indeed almost painfully surprised that they begin. At the age of twenty she writes to a friend, "I was struck with the note you sent me . . . it showed a degree of interest in my concerns which I have no right to expect from any earthly creature;" and at twenty-one she feels warned "pretty intelligibly" that she is "getting past [her] prime." Then come those terrible bereavements, for whose remorseless sequentiality I can find no better parallel than those to which it is said the late Dr. Tait owed his promotion to the see of Canterbury. But she meets them half-way, though she says of the cruellest, "Nature shrinks from such thoughts. I think Emily seems the nearest thing to my heart in the world." Anne goes next, and, as she foresees this parting, Charlotte's piety cries out, "Fortitude is good, but fortitude itself must be shaken under us, to teach us how weak we are." Her own death came just as she had learned the taste of domestic happiness, and one can verily hear her dream—perhaps her only dream—stoning her as she whispers to her husband of five months' standing, "Oh! I am not going to die, am I? He will not separate us, we have been so happy." To Charlotte's prescient readiness for suffering was added a submissiveness almost Russian (she refused Mr. Nicholls, at the age of thirty-seven, solely to humour her father), and a reticence almost supernatural (her brother Branwell died without knowing that she or Emily or Anne had published a line). Her shyness which made personal intercourse with a stranger a positive tax on her health was accompanied by great sensitiveness to criticism, especially criticism that took the form of an imputation of coarseness. It seems difficult to think of any criticism finding a vulnerable spot in the tragedy-haunted woman living alone with her father in the Haworth parsonage overlooking the graveyard. But humanity is often more voluble over little things than big ones.

It is time, however, to pause to say that my remarks are *à propos* of the new edition of Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1), which worthily concludes the Haworth edition of the *Life and Works of the Brontë Sisters*. Mr. Clement Shorter is responsible for an introduction and notes. For his work I have little but praise. No trace of egoism mars it. It fills up many lacunæ and adds much interesting material. One looks in vain (morbidly, no doubt) for new details concerning the disgrace of Branwell Brontë. The letter on page 594, in which Charlotte remarks that she has not read the works of Balzac, is probably out of sequence, as in a letter to Mr. Lewes, on pp. 483-4, she enters into a criticism of the author in question.

The qualities of Mrs. Gaskell's biography hardly need recapitulation here. The novelist whose courage and delicacy alike triumphed in "Ruth," who understood the charm of quietness as well as the pathos of solitude, and who, moreover, knew and loved the woman she was writing of, was, on the whole, ideally fitted for the task the Rev. Patrick Brontë invited her to take up. She might have attempted a masterly discreetness. She did not, and her book lived and stung. Its pain is relieved by her sanity of view, and the space accorded to the literary interests which undoubtedly brightened her heroine's life. It is not a sufferer for the time being who is enraged because Thackeray's Lady Castlewood peeped through a keyhole. One is glad that Charlotte enjoyed the relaxation of such rages. Oneself gets into a mild rage on reading in one of Mr. Shorter's notes that Mr. A. B. Nicholls thought so poorly of a portrait group of the Brontë sisters by their brother that he cut two of the figures (Charlotte

and Anne) out of the canvas and destroyed them. There is only one portrait of Charlotte Brontë known to exist.

It was, I believe, in the *Christian* that I recently saw a complacent paragraph announcing an inclination on the part of a sceptical public to return to a belief in the personality of Satan. It is difficult to say to what extent this improvement in orthodoxy is due to writers of fiction, but we know that even ladies have not shrunk from portraying—

"Him the almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky."

The latest depicter of Satan is Mr. Austin Fryers, who in *The Devil and the Inventor* (2) presents us with a curious compound of the debonair cynic and the coal-eating fiend of vulgar legend. The inventor receives help from Satan on the understanding that, under certain circumstances, the latter shall be entitled to remove a cupful of his blood, with the chance of capturing his soul in the long run. As the safety of the inventor was contingent on the success of his enterprises, he showed singular obtuseness in making the bargain, for, of course, the wily fiend felt no compunction in destroying the inventions as soon as they were perfected. That is why "the soundless piano" is still merely a suburban dream, and it supplies a sufficient reason for the fact that we cannot send a parcel from London to Manchester through a pneumatic tube in twelve minutes. It is a pity that Mr. Fryers has tried to do too much. Nothing could well be flatter than his account of a voyage to the North Pole on a Polar motor, and his attempt to work in a sort of St. Elizabeth *motif* into his extravaganza produces an incongruous effect. By way of compensation the devil says some clever things. "You can do as you wish, and that is Hell," he remarks; adding, "the pleasure is the punishment." In the "land of Luthany" the pleasure is fortunately the reward, and this reminds me that in *Pieces and Sonnets* (3), by H. R. North, there is one really memorable sonnet. It is the *cri du cœur* of a writer who has yet to distinguish between prattle and sprightliness and who scans defectively, but who in that cry and two other sonnets (III. and VII.) shows he has "the one thing needful." Here it is:—

"When I have thought on star-fooled lovers past,
How all their loves and passions are gone by,
Without one word, except some craftsman try
To lift his voice above the fearful vast;
O when I learn our love shall no wise last,
But with our bodies be extinct and die,
New ages wax and wane, nor care how I
Loved, suffered, sank, despaired, nor one thought cast
On you, Immortal, pale I turn and sick:
Why lack I means, why lack I skill, to bless
What since has past, while others by a trick
Their fair immortalise, who felt it less?
Shall undreamed ages read their lovecraft through,
And it be in the dust how I love you?"

Talking of poetry, I read in Mr. Charles J. Billson's contribution to *Popular Studies in Mythology* (4) that "Finnish verse is remarkable for its singular rigidity of form. . . . Many critics have been astonished to find such elaborate grace on the lips of men whom we should call uneducated." Personally, I find the "Hiawatha" metre in which I understand the Finnish national songs are composed rather tedious, but passion can thrill through the sleepest metre. Sings the Finnish maiden of her lover:—

"Gladly would I press his fingers,
Though his hands were full of vipers . . .
Hang upon his neck how gladly!
Though his neck had death upon it."

No. 6 of these "Popular Studies" is a revised reprint of Mr. Alfred Nutt's address on the fairy mythology of Shakespeare. Mr. Nutt is a keen critic, and if all lovers of Celtdom were as well read as he, and had as quick an eye for analogy, the faint and slightly disagreeable odour of preciosity and exclusiveness would disappear from a certain "fringe," and no one would be a penny the worse.

The work entitled *Passmore Edwards Institutions* (5) is the kind of thing which we would all of us like to present to the

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