LITERARY SUPPLEMENT TO THE NEW AGE

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REVIEWS.

NOVELS.

Half in Earnest. By Muriel Hine. (Lane. 6s.)

In a recent interview Miss Hine confessed to dividing her time between the writing of stories and playing bridge. "Half in Earnest" is a variation of a familiar "plot." Woman aspiring to independence, illegitimate child, marriage to an accommodating nonentity. We have already several times discussed this subject. Miss Hine makes merely one more recruit to the ranks of writers who seem sent by the Furies to deprave further the taste of people cursed with a love of sentimentality and bathos.

Joanna and His Reverence. By Max Barling.

(Simpkin, Marshall. 6s.)

When we found a grinning girl's face on the cover of this book and a pretty clergyman's as a frontispiece, and when further we discovered the first chapter to be all a long conversation between the theological gentle- man and his dog—to the effect that the Reverend Hubert would never, never marry, even to pay his debts—we knew he would marry, and that the lady would pay his debts. The book ends with Jo's childish prattle to her reverend guardian. "But Gardy, supposin' when I grow up I want to marry you, too?" "Well, you can if you wish." "Oh!" (drawing up her little boud of a mouth) "but that would be bigamy, you know, and they would put you in prison, in a dark hole!"

The Laird of Craig Athol. By Frankfort Moore.

(Constable. 6s.)

We notice this book with pleasure. The style, though scarcely distinguished, never falls below a sound second level. Mr. Moore sees his objects. His characters mostly move and talk like people (we except the heroine and her aunt—the mother is livelier), and they would put you in prison, in a dark hole!"

The Portrait. By Ford Madox Hueffer. (Methuen. 6s.)

Mr. Hueffer's opening chapter is in form similar to that of Mr. Moore's. Characters converse and disclose the situation, and quaintly enough, some of the details are identical. There are in both chapters the head of a great house, a tailor and a brutal ancestor. But Craig Athol is a place, and Mr. Hueffer conducts us merely into a Wardour Street atmosphere of eighteenth century tags, rags and bobbins. Sword-knots, linsey-woolseys, three-cornered hats, "I protest," "Monstrous" and dilapidated oaths all over the place! Whereas Mr. Moore's initial conversation leads right on to the dramatic development, Mr. Hueffer's second chapter collapses into a dreary description of past events. The story is trivial, concerned with a wager made by three gentlemen binding themselves to discover, and, if unmarried, to marry the model for a certain portrait. Obviously, these are three inverted or stage fools. They are conducted through their adventures with that air of banal arrogance which Mr. Hueffer would have us believe lifelike of his period. In fact, however, the treatment is not even like the best stage tradition of the eighteenth century, which declares itself to have been as essential as beauty. There is in "The Portrait" a young man who is probably meant to do duty for a wit; and it is precisely when "Mr. Roxand" has got to be got into action that we see how much too much Mr. Hueffer depends upon accessories. His "character" jumps out of the scene altogether, and sword-knot, hat, oaths and all fail to convince us we are not in Sim Tappertit's workshop. The book is false and wearisome, false in subject and wearisome in its pretentious style. It is what may be called a novel of accumulation. Mr. Hueffer lacks the instinct of precision, his words are grander than his ideas, and the richness must be united to temperance, or the effect is vulgar. One might suppose from Mr. Hueffer's portrayal of eighteenth century life that the persons living there were all vile-tongued licentious, overdressed crew; but it was in this century that fancy moved under the sway of taste; the wits ruled; in science, the academic faculty came into being, and over literature also method laid a restraining hand. Mr. Hueffer's production ill-compares in taste and method with the compositions of the eighteenth century writers themselves.

No. 19. By Edgar Jepson. (Mills and Boon. 6s.)

Mr. Jepson seems to have despised of his century. Like Palacio-Valdes' writer, unable to find anything interesting in the reality of the epoch, he prefers to represent it imaginatively. That is not to say that the characters he chooses to depict do not exist; indeed, the very ones which will almost certainly be doubted are real—those objectionable charlatans of the occult, persons steeped in every form of perversion. These creatures themselves are monstrous affections of it is painful to see a practised writer dabbling with stuff of this sort, sacrificing to the Furies, like so many others, while English fiction is the disgrace of European letters. Mr. Jepson is one of our most delicate satirists, and we shall allow to him his amusing "villain." It is of the light, swift, in- genious order familiarly styled "ripping." The dra- matic introduction of the rightful Laird is accurately timed, and with manly toleration Mr. Moore dismisses, after a light punishment, his amusing "villain." The author's comprehension of the latter is almost uncanny.

Mrs. Skeffington. By Cosmo Hamilton. (Methuen. 6s.)

The chief character in this novel is not Mrs. Major Skeffington, who is a soldier person's ideal of a "corker" and a "tip-topper," but Mrs. Thynne, one of the "bird type of woman, safer when caged, filled with delight when people whitelashed to her and gave her lumps of sugar; utterly miserable and depressed when not ad- mired and talked to prettily." We are asked to care a rap, through thirty-seven chapters, whether this puppet gets divorced; we don't. The story is the thinnest of thin comedy, with risky situation, faithful friend, dresses, catchwords and wedding curtain, all
done true to the lighter stage. These paraphernalia will not suffice for a novel. The only living and meaningful sentences are those expressing the author’s political views. In these he becomes psychologically if not literarily interesting. For instance, he would like to have people get off their legs at Limehouse, and pour forth streams of etc., etc., and such like “dreadful little vulgar, self-seeking cads.” Fancy bothering to write that for the Boudoir!

The Elm-Tree on the Mall. The Wicker-work Woman. By Anatole France. Translated by M. P. Willcocks. (The Bodley Head. 6s. each.)

In his essay on Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold wrote:—“In many respects the ancients are far above us, and yet there is something that we demand which they can never give.” Arnold, after his manner, leaves us to discover for ourselves, if we may, what that something is. Personally, we worked it out to be the modern sense for exploration; the ancients were content to connect emotion and action, but we want to know the source of emotion, the idea which sets our feelings flowing. Lately we came across an essay by M. Paul Bourget wherein we believe to be a conclusion similar to our own is concisely expressed. M. Bourget, writing about M. Anatole France, remarks: “We desire, nowadays, to understand and feel, while we feel and act, even while we dream.” Perhaps the whole difference between the English writers whom we find so foreign to read and so woful to criticise as fellow-countrymen, and the French, is that to be really in our own country, to make us feel at home, may be measured by the fact that these continental people have determined to see and to show us ideas in relation to life while our own writers have merely the spasmodic actions of imaginary characters above us, and yet there is something that we demand which they can never give.”

According to Mr. Wood the bump of locality of the average Englishman is not calculated to produce a sensation in the foreign bosom. He has observed that the Londoner knows as little about the whereabouts of Galicia as he knows about the whereabouts of Yorkshire. Mr. Wood has overlooked one important fact, namely, that what the Londoner lacks in the phrenological department he makes up for in another anatomical department. When he wishes to locate a place he usually does it with the aid of his stomach, and is apt to remind that Brazil is the place where the nuts come from, and likewise Yorkshire is the particular spot where the pudding comes from that they give you with “roast.” If we remember rightly, one English journal set its readers guessing by offering guinea for the best attempt to locate Fleet Street. Quite 90 per cent. of the competitors replied, “A noted place for chestnuts,” showing conclusively that the Englishman is always loyal to his chief source of inspiration. If M. France has differed but to do invade us with his book, we feel the passion of this writer both to understand and to express what he understands in the simplest manner. Whether he is depicting a learned professor, or a tramp, or a foolish woman we get the portrait keenly determined of the Frenchman to behold men and things that we are beholding; that equipped and armed for the struggle, that is ready to dodge, that possesses the mind that Brazil is the place where the nuts come from, and in a word is not under one cover. The covers, however, are not grudge having to harbour two more of them.

OTHER BOOKS.

A Corner of Spain. By Walter Wood. (Evelleigh Nash. 5s.)

The introduction by Major Hume is the most important part of the book. He pays a deserved tribute to the history of the place and so makes Galicia intelligible to the untravelled reader. The effective illustrations in colour and line by Mr. Frank H. Mason are also more successful than the text in enabling the English reader to form a clear idea of the natural beauties of this country. It is a mistake to mix such illustrations with photographs.

On and off Duty in Annam. By Gabrielle M. Vassal. (Heinemann. 7s. 6d.)

Mrs. Vassal’s vision of that little known Indo-Chinese territory, Annam, was seen during her residence there with her husband, a French army doctor, who had been offered a post by Dr. Roux at the Pasteur Institute at Nhatrang, and preferring bacteriology to other medical work, had gladly accepted it. Ordered East, they left Paris somewhat depressed when their type of sympathy and tolerance, if not of outright defence, had been so grossly hanged on their heads. Ordered East, they were agreeably surprised to find that Paris itself
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had preceded them and was waiting to welcome them. At Saigon, one was reminded of a fashionable garden fête, for the dresses were worth of Paris itself." Evidently the Morgue had got mislaid. After sampling the delights of this fashionable centre, which included a Chinese quarter noted for its dog’s-meat sausages, they moved on to their destination, an Annamite fishing village, where more of the busy inter-rupees sampled them. The process of getting used to the insects and domesticities in their new quarters was a fairly trying one, and helped to exhaust their small stock of patience and philosophy. Perhaps of the two the nervous side, the veterinary section, would have seemed most unpleasant; for it was possible to circumvent the ants, flies, cockroaches, moths, snakes, scorpions and other trifles in the zoological order, with various catch ‘em alive devices, the servants being made to understand that they were not using the household lazy men for turbans and loin-cloths, they were helping themselves to the poultry and provisions generally. Then their habits were uncommon. They preferred to wash up the crockery under the table. They used their mouths to squirt water over the shirts and collars when they were dressing them. The cook formed his rissoles by the simple method of rolling them up and down his bare body with his hands, and ornamented the cakes with sugar which he had first chewed to a jelly pulp. The author refers to the instances that these discoveries cured her of an appetite for rissoles and sugar cakes. We can believe it. But her life in Annam was not all cockroaches and discomforting domesticities. She found time to investigate and note interesting facts about religious rites and superstitious beliefs, about the social position of women, the practice of polygamy, about agriculture, botany and zoology, about the work at the institute, about the habits and customs of the savage hillmen, and to record a tiger story or two worth the telling. The author relates her experiences in such a fresh, interesting, convincing manner, and her descriptive writing calls forth here and there such vivid pictures, that we feel we should like to go to Annam and sample its attractions for ourselves. The feeling is increased by the many photographs of people and scenery which the book includes.

Nature Study. By John Rennie, D.Sc., F.R.S.E. (Clive. 3s. 6d.)

In strongly commending this useful survey of the aims and methods of nature study to the notice of teachers and students alike, we cannot do better than quote from the conclusions in its favour which Professor J. Arthur Thomson sets forth in his valuable introduction. As to aims he reduces them to three, knowing and loving, educating, and in the practical lessons from Nature and sums them up as follows:—"The aims of skilful teachers I have seen nature study prove itself of value in school (a) in developing sensory acuteness and love of nature, (b) in instructing in the wonderful method of science and nature-environment; have, in fact, made little or no contribution to the present nature-study movement, either in nature lore, nature literature or nature interest. Therefore your book makes but little appeal to the naturalist in me. Apart from this, there is a great deal of information of the right sort stored away in it. Your descriptive pen is vivid, and I like your picture of the Scottish Bay of Naples. The geographical photos, diagrams, appendices, indexes and glossaries will be helpful to me. But to be complete your book requires a map. You should not compel me to consult Bartholomew each time I desire to make a reference."

The Master as I Saw Him. Pages from the Life of Swami Vivekananda. By Nivedita. (Longmans. 3s. net.)

In this book Sister Nivedita tells the story of her meeting with the Swami during his first visit to Europe and her subsequent conversion to his teachings. The Swami, it will be remembered, was one of those wandering Indian scholars and teachers who in recent years have made their way to Europe, seeking to disseminate the doctrines of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. Their mission is to teach the Western nations to throw away the obsolete creeds and rituals and forms of worship in favour of a simple, universal faith free from all philosophical or theological confusion. In this way they seek to promote that world-wide movement in the direction of the coalition of all nations into one form of religion, thus forcing Anismism and Toteism, Zionism and Judaism, Mahomedanism and Sufism, Confucianism and Zoroastrianism to yield to one broad principle which includes all other principles that bind and regulate man’s relations with the supreme power. This religious pantheistic leanings, is new, and has found adherents in Plato, Socrates, in Spinoza, in Hegel, and Schopenhauer, and Wordsworth. But it is true, for it is conceived by the mind and sanctioned by reason. And because it is true, it is upheld not merely by inspired teachers. As a devoted disciple Sister Nivedita relates her experiences in their relation to the "Master" whose "portrait" she thus draws in an eloquent, convincing manner. The book covers the period of the closing years of the Swami’s life, and is a labour of love. To judge by the numerous errors in the text, the proof-reader took it otherwise.

Charles Philip Yorke, Fourth Earl of Hardwicke. A Memoir. By the Lady Biddulph of Ledbury. (Smith, Elder and Co. 1910. 7s. 6d. net.)

This work may be described as a family memoir. It opens with a summary of the history of the Yorke family. The Yorkes of Hannington produced their first great man in Lord Chancellor Hardwicke. From the time that Lord Hardwicke reached the highest legal office in the United Kingdom the Hannington Yorkes were the legitimate successors of the Yorke family were made. Charles Philip Yorke, the immediate subject of this memoir, was born in 1799. He was put by his family to the navy, as his father got something for nothing, he will not rest content till he gets more. We can imagine him taking Mr. Reith aside and saying, "You have done an admirable service in making this research in your ten years’ explorations and excursions among the Pentlands accessible to visitors, and there is ample material for making them into an, to cultivate the wayward and curious way of looking at things, and some joyful appreciation besides. But this is not enough. Though you have brought to view a very striking geographical situation, you have neglected to point out the interesting history and the natural surroundings of the Pentlands, which will be helpful to me. But to be complete your book requires a map. You should not compel me to consult Bartholomew each time I desire to make a reference."
Memories of a Labour Leader. The Autobiography of John Wilson, J.P. (Unwin, 5s.)

When we first crawled through miles of four-foot workings in a Durham pit pit it was possible to find the word "to express our feelings. At last someone said: "How awful!" "Awful?" said our guide. "Some of us never do anything else." Then he added, "Some get to the top and stay there." The author of the volume before us is one of the fortunate few who have got to the top and stayed there, and not only that, but has risen to Parliamentary heights undreamt of in the philosophy of the majority of pitmen. In his honest book of memories he tells us all about it. He was born at the moment of the coronation of Queen Victoria, and came into the world at a period marked by some of the worst labour conditions in our history. Evidence of this is contained in a chapter of extracts from the report of a subsequent Royal Commission. His early career enabled him to taste the experiences of these workers, whose interests he was, later, to represent and legislate for. In relating these experiences—which occupy the first part of the book—of a miner's and a seafaring life, of a visit to America and to the City of Valencia, of disasters, and the pulpits, Mr. Wilson lifts the veil slightly, and we see the strange economic conditions of mid-Victorian times, and the improvements that set in, owing chiefly to the workers becoming aware of their real condition and taking proper steps to alter it. Possibly the latter part of the book will appear the most interesting. It is less taken up with domestic details and presents a survey of those political reform movements in which Mr. Wilson has taken part. The book is valuable for the light it throws on the character of Mr. Wilson, his industry and efficient mind, and the interest it must engender in the life of the labour movement.

The Ramparts of Empire. By Frank Fox. (A. and C. Black.)

We have seen many pageants, naval and military, and could never learn anything from them except that immoral means are always an obstacle to good ends. The volume before us is a pageant of wars, from the war-cano to the latest Dreadnought. The lesson it teaches us is that our primitive instincts have neither habit of wandering round the old walls accompanied by a sense of the hostility to Lord Hardwicke. Disgusted with what he rightly regarded as "official ingratitude," he returned to private life, only emerging into public life for a short period during which he was Postmaster-General in Lord Derby's short lived Ministry. He died in September, 1873. One is much impressed after reading this simply written record of a well-spent life, with sympathy for his former associates. Sympathetic introductions are added by the Bishop and Dean of Durham.

A Royal Cavalier. The Romance of Rupert, Prince Palatine. By Mrs. Stewart Erskine. (Nash, 15s. net.)

On several occasions we have stayed in the fascinating city of York. During our visits we were in the habit of wandering round the old walls accompanied by an ancient inhabitant who never wearyed of pointing out the precise spot where Charles II. was out of his forces routed at Marston Moor. The old fellow was well up in his subject, and, moreover, being gifted with an unusual descriptive ability, he was able to recall fairly vividly the main facts connected with the struggle between the Roundheads and Cavaliers. One thing that always stood out in his memory was the return of Prince Rupert, who commanded Charles's forces, late at night to York. This was all we ever desired to hear. "A Royal Cavalier" recalls the circumstance in the passage, "Quite late at night Rupert rode into York, having taken refuge in a bean field and made his way there unattended. According to this volume our lack of interest in the career of Rupert seems to be fairly justified. Apart from the romance with which time usually invests a character of this sort, there is very little to arrest attention. Rupert was merely a soldier of fortune in the usual sense of the word. His career is noteworthy for establishing a record of the battles fought in that monarch's cause. When he was not fighting on land he was fighting on sea. As a privateer he came into collision once or twice with the Dutch. He was a turbulent young man, and kept his morals fairly above suspicion. Towards the end of his career he became involved in mercantile transactions, and finished up as a dealer in sugar and furs. In short he appears to have had every reason to expect the right one. He had no political value, and principally for this reason has no serious historical interest. His military doings make very agreeable reading. The volume is embellished with many interesting portraits.

American station, where he was soon placed in command of a sloop. He was not twenty at this time. In 1822 he attained the rank of commander and served in the naval operations against the Greek pirates. One curious passage in a letter, written in 1828, shows how the sea simply bore from the sea into the 'thirties, becoming Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire. The troubles in Europe in the stirring times of 'forty-eight gave Lord Hardwicke an opportunity to return to the sea. He joined the Mediterranean Fleet, which, in the Genoa, Lord Hardwicke. Letters upon the conflicting interests working in Genoa are most interesting. Lord Hardwicke, commanding the vessel of a neutral power, had to hold the balance between the insurgents and the Sardinian forces. All his efforts were directed towards the preservation of the city of Genoa from those who desired to destroy it. Lord Palmerston paid this tribute to Lord Hardwicke: " Lord Palmerston is of opinion that the Earl of Hardwicke, by his promptitude, energy, and decision, saved the city of Genoa from the calamities of further bombardment, and prevented a great effusion of blood and much destruction of property and life." Unhappily political and professional jealousy prevented him at work to prevent Lord Hardwicke receiving the further promotion which his merit deserved. Lady Biddulph has not published many documents which throw much light on the nature of the hostility to Lord Hardwicke. Disgusted with what he rightly regarded as "official ingratitude," he returned to private life, only emerging into public life for a short period during which he was Postmaster-General in Lord Derby's short lived Ministry. He died in September, 1873. One is much impressed after reading this simply written record of a well-spent life, with sympathy for his former associates. Sympathetic introductions are added by the Bishop and Dean of Durham.

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