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August 15, 1896]
The National Observer

THE NATIONAL OBSERVER

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may be allowed to grumble at the peculiar dislocations pro-
duced by an 'eek's,' but there is no compulsion to print his
discoveries, and no inconvenience in making the
impositions of the native dealers pall a tripe upon readers who
have never to have seen a book of Indian travels. The harm-
less little joke about the 'truth of the proverb which associates
speech with a silver currency' may be detected by all we know,
and mildly relieves the generally unappreciative and ineffective
account of that most interesting and beautiful place, Srinagar.
Mr. Eckenstein has evidently no talent for description, and no
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and treatment to which Mrs. Alexander was once a stranger.

In the Savoy, Joseph Pennell has a very clever pen-and-ink drawing of 'a fair at Chartres.' The title is negatively reassuring. The illustrations have not actually set the whole town afire, but one started at first. Aubrey Beardsley has confounded himself to the cover and title-page. The woman on the outside is a little more than usually out of drawing. W. B. Yeats's 'William Blake and his Illustrations to the Divine Comedy,' and Havelock Ellis's 'Friedrich Nietzsche' continue to be the literary pieces of resistance. Both are solidly meritorious and would adorn any other philosophical magazine. Of the lighter literature of this number not much can be said kindly. We have a first taste of O. Shakespeare's 'Beauty's Hour,' which may be going to be very good. 'Doctor and Patient,' by Rudolph Dricks, is rather negligibly feeble, but nothing worse; the dull purposelessness of George Morley's 'The Woman of the Dower' is a story of the rustic dialect order—is believed by a style which it is only just to illustrate by an extract. Luce, it should be explained, is the 'red-haired flame' of one Clem; otherwise her 'Rubens-like beauty had blushed unseen.' She is going down a lane. It was a January—

a leafy lover's lane. To night it wore an intensely delightful aspect. It was moonlight. Few trees grew at the west end, and when the moon reached a certain altitude it shot a ray of effulgence down that avenue-like Warwickshire lane like a light in a railway tunnel. Luce looked like an animated poppy walking through the light into darkness.' The editor, Arthur Symons, that intrepid traveller who discovered Dipepe for the first number of the Savoy, has now penetrated to Viewet, and tells us all its 'Gingerbread Fair!' His article is called 'A Winning Hazard.' It is actually a Study of Thights. From this lofty and alluring theme he can never stay long away, unless it is perhaps to notice that when the ladies of the ballet turn their backs unconcernedly to the crowd... one distin- guishes the higher vertebral of the spine.' Mr. Symons has the true artist's eye for beautiful essentials. 'The Dying of Francis Dome,' told by W. C. Motson, with great and particular deliberation, shows us a success with such as are not too Hellenic in taste. Of his life, which should have been interesting, we learn little; but then an inadvertent curiosity should always be discouraged. Lionel Johnson experiments in twelve-syllable sonnets. One may safely question the success of this variation of the accepted length of the sonnet-line; the rhymes are too intricate to admit of any extension of the intervals between them; but there can be no question about the dignity of Mr. Johnson's manner and the high nobility of his feeling. The sestet of the sonnet on 'Hawk of Morwenstoun' is hurt by a jarring assonance between the separate rhymes; but it is a fault to pardon where conception and execution are alluringly distinguished. T. F. Hoefer's 'Song of the Women' is an excellent autody'namic carol, and should suit Mr. Dan Leno down to the pit as soon as the music-halls are opened on a Sunday. The editor must have discerned a latent poetical merit in Arthur Symons's verses, 'Stella Maligna,' to condone what nothing could ever rightly condone—her gratuitous Lesbianism. But we must not forget that the Savoy was originally supposed to represent a catholic reaction against the intolerant morality of the reformed Yellow Book.

FLOTSAM


There are a great many things that one hardly needs to say of Mr. Henry Seton Merriman's work in fiction. Those who have read him, for example, know, if they can be capable of knowing that he writes excellent English, terse, forcible—a little too forcible at time, it may be—and that he is capable of knowing or sort of bliss that seems to explain the popularity of his books which invariably go on into several editions before even the review copies have gone out. It is hardly necessary to say, therefore, that his latest volume is finely written, and therefore, a delight to the critic. The question is rather one of the actual story, and the manner of its development.

The heroine, Harry Wylam, is three years old in the opening chapter. The book contains his history from that age until the day of his death, and he is the 'flotsam' referred to in the title. He was once a rich man, and made a young man of whom she would love extravagantly if Mr. Merriman let you see more of him than is here disclosed. A soldier who must have ranked among the bravest of the many brave men who saved the Empire of India. He fell into all sorts of scrapes in the days when he was at school in England, and they gave him guardian of the city, and they were only scrapes: the boy did nothing mean. Yet he did not get the University education which it had intended to give him, and he was in some way under a cloud. Then he entered the army. There he was absolutely forced to fight a duel, and came near to killing a man who insulted the man he loved. For this he was once more under a cloud, and was advised to exchange into an Indian regiment. Thus be missed the Crimea. In it he was pitched straight into the arms of the villain of the story, who helped him, for reasons of his own, to go to the devil at a rapid rate. Because of this man's machinations, his very bravery brought it to pass that he was virtually cashiered after the Mutiny. He had already been jockeyed into marrying the man's daughter, and forgetting the woman who was waiting for him at home. Then he discovered why this had been worked for by his destroyer. He left his wife, sacrificing all he was worth in exchange for complete control over a little daughter who had come to the world. He took her home to England and gave her into the keeping of the girl who had loved him so long. Then he went out to Africa and died in misery a few years later. Even there he had done no more. Now, you will err if you imagine that the whole of the story has been told above. Only that part has been narrated which seems calculated to show the reason why the publishers were so eager to print the story. But Harry Wylam would seem to have had some excuse for complaining that the luck was against him. He was a weak sort of person, of course; but he had fine qualities and magnificent friends. These helped him not at all: they have managed to steer through life so well as they do. And Mr. Merriman has made us so strongly the friends of the novel. There have been cases where men greatly have come near to killing a man who had insulted the woman he loved. For this he was once more under a cloud, and was advised to exchange into an Indian regiment. Thus be missed the Crimea. In it he was pitched straight into the arms of the villain of the story, who helped him, for reasons of his own, to go to the devil at a rapid rate. Because of this man's machinations, his very bravery brought it to pass that he was virtually cashiered after the Mutiny. He had already been jockeyed into marrying the man's daughter, and forgetting the woman who was waiting for him at home. Then he discovered why this had been worked for by his destroyer. He left his wife, sacrificing all he was worth in exchange for complete control over a little daughter who had come to the world. He took her home to England and gave her into the keeping of the girl who had loved him so long. Then he went out to Africa and died in misery a few years later. Even there he had done no more.

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Fiction

8. The Underside of Things. By Lillian Bell. Low.

1. Mrs. Alexander's work does not improve. Indeed it deteriorates. It is now marked by a commonplace of idea and treatment to which Mrs. Alexander was once a stranger.