THE LITERARY WORLD

BOSTON 2 JUNE 1894

POETRY.

The Breath of Avon.

TO THE FELICITIS OF GREATER BERTAIN.

I.

Whate'er of the Dark may hide in words
For England, mother of kings of song and song —
He is ensnaring, racial hate's mysterious wrong.
II.

Lizard of Chance, or fret to drain of Doom
At breath of Avon, rich of meadow-bloom,
Inland to her to great daughter severed long.

III.

To near and far-off children young and strong —
With letters woven of Avon's dower-diamonds.
Welcome, ye English-speaking pilgrims,
Whose hands around the world are joined by him,
Who makes his speech the language of the sea,
To all winds of Ocean wait from the air.

IV.

The breath of Avon: let this great day be
A Feast of Race so power shall ever dim.

—T. S.

LONDON LETTER.

The literary excitement of the moment ranges around the question of the boycotting, by Messrs. W. H. Smith & Son and Mr. George Moore's Esther Waters. A great many literary men and women have thrown themselves into the discussion now going on in the Daily Chronicle, and it is notable that so far all the letters have been on Mr. Moore's side. Among those who are taking an active part are Mr. William Archer, Dr. Conan Doyle, Madame Sarah Grand, and Mr. L. F. Austin. I notice that this morning one of the letters defending the book is from the Rev. W. J. Dawson, the distinguished nonconformist clergyman who, in conjunction with Mr. Frederick Atkinson, edited the extraordinarily successful publications, The Young Man and the Young Woman. Mr. Dawson is the author of a notably refined and musical volume of poems which Messrs. Macmillan published some little time ago. Mr. Faux is Messrs. Smith's manager, who is acknowledged to be the responsible cause in the case, has had so far the charge of his own defense. According to Mr. Faux he is Mr. Moore's friend, and excludes his books most unwillingly because of incidental libel. According to Mr. Faux, Mr. Moore has excluded all his books save one, A Midnight Letter. The exclusions included Vain Fortune, which ran in the Lady's Pictorial, and which, according to my memory of it, was absolutely innocent. So far as I can see there is something to be said for both sides of the quarrel. Mr. Moore has got a bad name for himself, and it is not surprising that some of the nudes of his former novels stick to a serious and vital book, such as Esther Waters undoubtedly is. Then he has the compensation of knowing that his book is receiving the most magnificently gratuitous advertisement. Meanwhile the English new Philistine, who bears most amiably the burden of his Philistine fellow countryman, is up arms against him with true British hysteria. As it stands, it is rather a pretty quarrel.

As to the works of Esther Waters itself, there is no doubt that Mr. Moore has succeeded in producing in his servant-girl heroine a study of extraordinary patience, gravity, and sweetness. So far as the home goes Esther had better join the far less convincing Tiss in the locked cup-board; but for the grown man or woman the book is of the greatest interest and value. A masterpiece of its kind, it hews a good path of much of it an atmosphere dourly and sedately, but that comes from its extraordinary fidelity in painting a life deeply rooted and entirely starting shewing in the mind is Esther's maternal passion and the strenuous honesty, even purity, which is the most convincing thing in this unmarred mother. In a way I wish Esther Waters had been written by a man with a cleaner literary record than Mr. George Moore. If that were so, one would as soon expect what Mr. Faux calls the blunders as more surely inevitable in an inevitable tragedy. One thing that strikes me as curious is that Mr. Moore has made Queen Charlotte's Hospital, the famous London maternity hospital, the scene of our powerful and somewhat brutal chapter. Yet so far so good it seems to have been. Perhaps novels take a long time to reach the authorities of Queen Charlotte's; but I should say, judging from the point of view of a mere layman, that there is ground for even a prettier quarrel over Esther Waters than that at present in the public eye.

It is a long cry from these things to South Teresa, Mrs. Canningham's great life, in two handsome volumes, of the great woman--saint of Spain. Mrs. Graham, wife of the chivalrous and erratic member of Parliament, is herself a Spaniard. A thousand pities for the book's sake that going a step further, she was not a Catholic as well! She has followed South Teresa's footsteps in South America as an ardent lover. Every spot hallowed by the saint's presence or her foundations Mrs. Graham has learned by heart and prints in her book with a singularly fine and picturesque pen. She seems to have gathered in the compass of her work everything that is to be known about Santa Teresa and Monte Carmel. She brought to her task a passionate sympathy, anewsembling industry, and an excellent literary faculty. This ought to have been the life of Santa Teresa for all time, yet Mrs. Graham spoils her work by not giving it well enough alone. Every miracle, every vision of the saint, she explains away after a mundane fashion, intolerably exasperating. She explains away her ecstasies and apologizes for her fervor. It is the last position one would expect Gabriela Gamin's Hame Graham to take. It is Santa Teresa viewed from the standpoint of Little Bethuel-Bramhall, if one could imagine that conjoined with a rare enthusiasm and fervor. I fear Santa Teresa will not please either of the classes to whom it should appeal most strongly — the Catholics or the High Church people. One is very sorry for it, because one cannot help feeling admiration for the love and labor expended on it. I wish Mrs. Canningham's Graham would revise it for me, leaving out all those objectionable comments. Even as it is, apart from the vitriol caused by her entirely false and sentimentalized history of much historical value. It is most handsomely produced by Messrs. A. & C. Black, and it ought to be the standard work which a little revision on the lines I have indicated would make it. No one will wish Mrs. Graham's pictures of Spanish scenery and the old life of monasteries absent.

Mr. Van Der Pooten Schwartz, better known under his pen-name of Maarten Maarten's, is again among us. He is the guest of his publisher, Mr. Bentley, at Slough, where fortunate enough to meet him last year will be anxious to repeat the experience. It would not be easy to do justice to the charm of his personality; it is one in which good looks, genial nature, a beautiful voice and accent, and a really refined and poetic and somewhat scholastic wit play their part. Maarten Maarten is a fascinating person. Another distinguished visitor is the great Rudyard, who has not been seen, however, at any of the literary gatherings. Perhaps he will come into the open when leafy June brings the season into full swing. At present the weather might exercise a positive blight on all manner of movements. After a delusive early spring, which forced flowers and greenery alike, we are swept by this May by a biting northeaster, which pinches Floria and her train Sadly sets the birds to wondering whether they had not better be migrating this building. I dare say Rudyard has his quiet smile over the Esther Waters controversy, inasmuch as a couple of years ago Mr. Faux introduced the Christmas Detroit Free Press from the bookstalls, because of Mr. Kipling's free-spoken heroine, "Isabella Herodseford." I fear Mr. Faux's standard of morality must be one of outward decorum merely, seeing the stuff the lady novelists are at present stockin the libraries with. Mr. Kipling's Jungle Book, many of the stories of which have appeared in St. Nicholas and in To-Day on this side of the water, will be published this month. Mr. Fisher Unwin has just issued, at a shilling, Mr. W. B. Yeats's Lament of Heart's Desire, which, having acted during a short calamitous run as leon de rideau to Dr. Todhunter's unlucky play at the Avenue, is now performing the same office for Mr. Bernard Shaw's amusing and inconsequent "Aams and the Man." Mr. Yeats's little fantasy shared to some extent the damnation of Dr. Todhunter's play, though by it it holds the bill as the subordinate item. One wonders, indeed, how such a little poem could be supposed for a moment to attract the London audience. It is all millions of worlds away from modern Jotham, which appreciated little the fairy child, the mortal bride swept away to fairyland, Father Hart, and the pleasant cottage, with its cradle above the fireplace. Painful enough it must have seemed to see these things exposed to the stupid wit of 'Arry in Easter week. Mr. Yeats gets farther and farther away from a true dramatic ideal. "The Counterfeit Kathleen" would have been a far better acting play than "The Land of Heart's Desire," but "Mussal" of his, an early dramatic fragment of his, would have been incomparably better than either. That was a dramatic conception in

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
which were strong human motives. Mr. Yeats is injuring his work by his devotion to fairyland and the unseen. One grows tired of it, and to my ear, in his later fairy work, sounds insincere or at least half-heartedly sincere. It would be good for him to leave it out in the mist and get back to the strong Elizabethan drama, which is old times delighted him. He wants the flesh-and-blood qualities.

An indisputably fine book is The Invisible Playmate, by Mr. William Canton, hitherto best known as the author of a distinctly strong book of poems, A Lost Epic. The Invisible Playmate is the poetry of fatherhood. The tendereness and simplicity in which it will touch the hearts of all mothers and all men who love children, and I am sure the love of children is a far commoner thing with men than with women before marriage.

Miss Beatrice Harraden's In Varying Moods in is the book of short stories of the month. Miss Harraden is at present in California, whence she hopes to return greatly better in health some time in autumn.

The Yellow Book of Modern Literature. Matthews & Lane seems to have disappeared of late, to the great regret of those who valued it as a monthly magazine, not differing greatly from other magazines except by displaying the eccentric influence of Mr. Aubrey Beardsley, which gives it its individuality. Mr. Henry James' Death of the Lion, with its close portraiture of George Mereith, is the principal literary contribution. Miss Ella D'Arcy, a new writer, contributes a grim little story of an unequal match, which has the distinct note of inevitable tragedy. Mr. Crackanorhip is strong and ugly in "A Modern Maecenas," and Mr. George Moore and John Oliver Hobbes contribute a cynical little drama, which seems to be all Hobbes and no Moore. These are the most notable items.

Mr. Swinhoe's new volume of poems is making us all once more in rapturous music and diction. Mr. Andrew Lang's Ban and Arrive Ban has scored at last a success of an extent; and poor Mr. Lewis Morris is being torn to pieces by the excruciating critics of a younger day after a fashion and with a speed which make one sorry for the amiable English gentleman whom the indiscriminating seventies took for a poet.

KATHERINE (TYNA) HINSON.

NEW YORK LETTER.

M. WILLIAM GEORGE JORDAN, editor of Current Literature, is at work on a book interpreting in detail his system of "mental training," which he has been elaborating for many years. In it Mr. Jordan will point out the defects in our present educational methods and suggest others designed to give the student not merely a collection of facts, more or less valuable in themselves, but a knowledge of how to command these and an alertness in all of the mental processes. Though Mr. Jordan has won a fine reputation as an editor, he is one of the youngest of the magazine editors in this city. He has delivered many lectures on mental training in New York, Chicago, Minneapolis, and other cities, and his system has been received with great favor in all of these. During the last year he has brought Current Literature to a place of really notable excellence by

the keen watchfulness which he keeps over the literary work that is being done both in this country and in England, by his catholic taste, and by his industry. He is a first-rate editor and lecturer and he is a capable writer, as his vigorous editorial proves. Thus far nearly all of his contributions to the magazine have been unassigned, and his forthcoming book, it is thought, will establish his reputation as an author with a distinct and forcible style as well as of strong and original thought.

Mr. Hamilton W. Mahie, editor of the Outlook, is to bring out in the fall a new collection of essays. They will be a continuation of those which he published several years ago under the title My Study Fire, and will deal chiefly with literary topics. Mr. Mahie's work has won very wide reading, and he is one of the most popular of the present day writers in this country. As a lecturer, too, on subjects connected with literature, I doubt if there is an American who is more sought after. He tries, however, to confine his lecturing to talks before colleges and literary societies. The other day I asked him how he managed to do so many things and to do them so well, and he replied with a smile, "is peculiarly fortunate. I am obliged to be at my office only three days in the week. The rest of the time I can do my work at home in Summit, New Jersey. My purely journalistic work is done in the midst of the woods; all of my literary work is in my study, where I can look out on the Orange Mountains. I never write more than three or four hours a day. My afternoons, at home I spend in walking through the country and my evenings in reading. It is a great deal of reading out of my outdoor life; it gives me a change from my work and keeps me in good health. Then, too, I enjoy the study of nature. No, I'm not a botanist or a scientist of any sort. I merely try to observe the world around me. At my lectures, they take me out of my routine work and put me in touch with different kinds of people all over the country, which is altogether very interesting and stimulating."

During my talk with Mr. Mahie he spoke of the large number of people who are going in for literature and literature at the present time. "Only this morning," he said, "I received a letter from a perfect stranger asking me how she could begin a literary career. She looked over her desk and passed me the letter. It was written in an unskilled hand, evidently by one who seldom used a pen, and wrote in the rustiest fashion. I looked at the person who had sent it possessed not the slightest capacity for literary work. Yet that letter is simply a sample of a large number of letters that are sent to certain editors of this city. "What do you say to the people who ask your advice about making literature their profession, Mr. Mahie?" I asked. "Tell them to do anything else in the world if they possibly can," he replied promptly. "But if they have pronounced talent and if they can't do anything else I advise them to go in and do their best. They will probably have great obstacles to overcome, but if they have the right stuff in them they are sure to succeed."

Mr. Henry James is soon to have a new novel published in this country through a newspaper syndicate. He is one of the last authors in the world one would expect to find in newspapers, for his work appeals chiefly to a comparatively small class of readers, and these do not look for their literature in the daily press. However, George Mershell's Our first appeared here through syndicate publication, and if the public could stand that they will probably revel in James. It would be instructive to know, by the way, just what the devotees of the Sunday journals thought of Mr. Meredith's work.

Mr. James is also to bring out very shortly two comedies, "Tenants" and "Disengaged," in one volume, under the title Theatricals. Later he will publish a second book with two other dramas, "The AlMan" and "The Repro- dite." Most of these were designed for stage production, but as yet they have not been seen in public, and now that they are to be published it is doubtful if they ever will be played under professional auspices. Mr. James has already had two plays produced, the second of which, a dramatization of The American, had about three years ago, in London, a succès féminin.

The man on the top wave in literature at the present time is Mr. Stanley J. Weyman. During the past year his work, which has been extensively advertised in the American public through syndicate publication, has attained great popularity, and Longmans, Green & Co. are bringing out his novels in most attractive form. I heard a critic of this class speak of him the other day as a kind of present day Scott. Now that he has attracted attention he will possibly soon be the head of this country during the next few months.

"The popularity of a writer of such pronounced old-fashioned stories of adventure as Mr. Weyman writes may be thought to indicate a change in the popular taste from realism," said the critic I have already referred to, "but it does not; for every generation produces its writers of adventure, no matter what the prevailing literary taste may be. Ours, however, have one notable quality—that is, the best of them—they write with the skill and finish of first-class artists. Mr. Stevenson is now regarded as a master of style, and Mr. Weyman soon will be. However this may be, there is no doubt that Mr. Weyman's hold on the men of this country is sure to be strong. The women readers are hardly likely to 'enthusiase' over him, for the typical end-of-the-century American woman objects to Mr. Stevenson and the blood-and-thunder school in general.