THE YELLOW BOOK ON MODERN LITERATURE.

THE most advanced writers of England established a few months ago a periodical of their own, The Yellow Book, an illustrated quarterly, which was to be the mouthpiece of modern literature. The sensation created by the first number was enormous. The second, just issued, bids fair to create no less stir by its radicalism and its outspoken defiance of the old novelists.

To this number, Robert Crankanthorp contributes an article entitled "Reticence in Literature." There is no apparent relationship between the title and the subject of the essay, which consists of rambling, but very interesting, notes on modern progressive literature. We quote the author as follows:

"During the past fifty years, as every one knows, the art of fiction has been expanding in a manner exceedingly remarkable, till it has grown to be the predominant branch of imaginative literature. But the other day we were assured that poetry only thrives in limited and exquisite editions; that the drama, in England at least, has practically ceased to be literature at all. Each epoch instinctively chooses that literary vehicle which is best adapted for the expression of its particular temper: just as the drama flourished in the robust age of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson; just as that outburst of lyrical poetry, at the beginning of the century in France, coincided with a period of extreme emotional exaltation; so the novel, facile and flexible in its conventions, with its endless opportunities for accurate delineation of reality, becomes supreme in a time of democracy and of science,—to note but these two salient characteristics. And, if we pursue this line of thought, we find that, on all sides, the novel is being approached in one special spirit, that it would seem to be striving, for the moment at any rate, to perfect itself within certain definite limitations. To employ a hackneyed, and often quite unintelligent, catchword—the novel is becoming realistic."

The author defines realism and realism, and goes on to say:

"Completely idealistic—art that has no point of contact with the facts of the universe, as we know them—is, of course, an impossible absurdity; similarly, a complete reproduction of Nature by means of words is an absurd impossibility. . . . Art is not invested with the futile function of perpetually striving after imitation or reproduction of Nature; she endeavors to produce, through the adaptation of a restricted number of natural facts, an harmonious and satisfactory whole. Indeed, in this very process of adaptation and blending together, lies the main and greatest task of the artist. And the novel, the short story, even the impression of a mere incident, convey each of them the imprint of the temper in which their creator has achieved this process of adaptation and blending together of his material. They are inevitably stamped with the hallmark of his personality. A work of art can never be more than a creation of Nature, seen through the temperament of a single man. Thus, all literature is, must be, essentially subjective: for style is but the power of individual expression. . . . So, then, the disparity between the so-called idealist and the so-called realist is a matter, not of esthetic philosophy, but of individual temperament."

The author rightly prefaces his article: "Some Roundabout Remarks." He does not treat any of his subjects exhaustively, but skips lightly from one to another. He next comes to talk about the moral effect of modern literature, and says:

"Now, it would have been exceedingly curious if this recent specialization of the art of fiction, this passion for drawing from the life, as it were, born, in due season, of the general spirit of the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, has not provoked a considerable amount of opposition—opposition of just that kind which every new evolution in art inevitably encounters."

After hinting at the arrest of Vizzitini for "issuing English translations of celebrated specimens of French realism," and the reception given Zola, he goes on to say:

"During the past year, things have been moving very rapidly. The position of the literary artist toward Nature, his great inspirer, has become more definite, more secure. A sound, organized opinion of men of letters is being acquired; and in the little boats with the harpoons if I may be permitted the use of that wearisome word—no one has to fight single-handed. Novelism is at a discount; Mrs. Grundy is becoming mythological; a crowd of unsuspecting supporters collect from all sides, and the deadly conflict of which we had been warned becomes but an interesting skirmish. Books are published, stories are printed, in old-established reviews, which would never have tolerated a few years ago. On all sides, a tendency to the tendency of the time is spreading. The truth must be admitted: the case of unthinking prejudice is dying away."

The writer does not think this success is "a matter for absolute congratulation." He fears indifference and would like opposition: "directly or indirectly, they will knock a lot of nonsense out of us, will these opponents": "take, for instance, the gentleman who objects to realistic fiction on moral grounds:"

"He is the backbone of our nation; the guardian of our mediocrity; the very soul of our intelligence. . . . To him, morality is concerned only with the established relations between the sexes and with fair dealings between man and man: to him the subtle, indirect morality of Art is incomprehensible.

"Theoretically, Art is non-moral. She is not interested in any ethical code of any age or any nation, except in so far as the breach or observance of that code may furnish her with material on which to work."

Mr. Crankanthorp continues to expose "this moral man's" notions: how he "patters glibly of the 'gospel of ugliness,' how he talks about 'the cheerlessness of modern literature' and how he condemns "the whole business as decadence," but all the while he laughs at "this moral gentleman." He finishes by quoting Gasse:

"A new public has been created—appreciative, eager, and determined; a public, which has eaten of the apple of knowledge, and will not be satisfied with mere marmalades. Whatever comes next, we cannot return, in serious novels, to the intimacies and impossibilities of the old well-made plot, to the children changed at nurse, to the madonna-heroine and the godlike hero, to the impossible virtues and melodramatic vices."

THE CZAR AS AN AUTHOR.

OLLENDORFF, the Parisian publisher, will soon issue: "Souvenirs de Sébastopol, recueillis et redigés par S. M. T. Alexandre III., Empereur de Russie." The Parisian journal, Retour Hélas, has had access to the advance sheets and publishes two stories from the forthcoming book, entitled "Reçu d'un Officier" and "Reçu d'une Sœur de Charité," the first of which we translate and condense as follows:

"Among the defenders of Sébastopol must be counted the deservants, or officers' servants. To be sure, they were not counted among combatants, yet these latter depended upon them to carry so . . .

Who soldier (soldat) of the 1st district, h es forked that even in war, since his way was not easy. After he quieted down and served with great fidelity, and treated me as his fa...

"Once, hastion, side the of the way upon Ko with a lit . . ."

"What is this? I asked.

"With tears in his eyes he answered: See, Your Highness,

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