POETRY.

The Two Christmastides.

On Winter's wool, which scarcely seems of snow,
But hangs translucent, like a virgin's veil,
O'er her headstone, mournful and guardian still,
The New Year's sun shines golden—seems to throw
Upon her coffin-flowers a greeting glow.

From lands she loved to think on—seems to trail
'Love's holy radiance from the very Grail
O'er those white flowers before she sink below.

Is that a spirit or bird whose sudden song
From yonder sunlit tree beside the grave
Recalls a robin's warble, sweet yet strong,
Upon a lawn beloved of wind and wave—
Recalls her "Christmas Robin," ruddy, brave,
Winning the crumbs she throws where blackbirds throng?

In Christmastide of heave do she recall
Those happy days with Gabriel by the sea,
Who gathered round him those he loved, when she
"Must conk the birds to join the festival!
And said, "The sea-sweet winds are musical
With carols from the billows singing free
Around the groans, and every shrub and tree
Seems conscious of the Channel's rise and fall!"

The coffin lowers, and I see her now—
See that dear sister standing by her side,
As once I saw them 'neath our Christmas bough—
And her, that dearer one, who sanctified
With bal of mother's love our Christmastide—
And Gabriel too, with peace upon his brow.

—Theodore Watts, in the Athenaeum.

LONDON LETTER.

THE books are beginning to come out thinly,
and are, so far, rather remarkable for their accidental prominence than for any merit of their own. Messrs. Ward, Lock & Bowden have published those Lost Tales of George Meredith of which you Americans have long enjoyed a cheap edition; but the book has not yet reached me. I read the tales years ago in the Providence Sunday Journal, which, under Mr. Alfred Williams, used to be a storehouse of literature. In fact, one usually heard of the new literary reputations through that wonderful paper, now, alas! fallen from its high estate to a cheaper way of earning popularity.

A London publisher has turned playwright since I last wrote to you. This is Mr. William Heinemann, whose First Step has just been published by Mr. John Lane. For some reason or other the lord chamberlain forbade the performance of the play, and so gave Mr. Heinemann a large gratuitous advertisement. The lord chamberlain or his readers must have looked at the play through very different glasses from mine. To me it seems an arraignment of vice, making the thing as ugly and sordid as Hogarth might have done it. I have always considered the seducer in Tess of the D'Urbervilles a miracle of creative power. He is exactly that thing of creeping horror which impurity seems to the innocent, seen dimly in dreams. I am not sure that Mr. Heinemann's Jack, though far skilletter, is not the more revolting of the two. The gayety with which he sets out to ruin a girl, her ripeness for fall, the fatuity of the man who ought to protect her—or is it corruption—and the tragedy of the miserable elder sister, who sees her own weakness repeated with more fatal effect—all these seem to me masterly in their way. The play is grimy, sordid, horrid; but then so it ought to be, according to the dramatic verities. But if Mr. Heinemann can succeed so well in this genre, why not give us something of joy of life, and pitch Ibsen and his dreary school into the grave where he likes it?

It is always pleasant to upon a new writer of promise or performance, for O, the ghostly books that, for some reason or other, make a circulating library success, are praised to the skies by the Daily Telegraph, and disappear year after year! I have just read a novel which is amazingly strong, well considered, well constructed, and of high aims, and it is a first book. This is Into the Highways and Hedges, by F. F. Montrésor, which the Messrs. Hutchinson have just published. The two central figures, the preacher and his wife, are fascinating. George Eliot might have made them, and the story leaves one the better for reading it. It is full of exciting events through all its great length, and never a page flags nor is there weakness in delineating a single trait of character. The spirit of the book, too, is a lovely and humane one, and there is not a crease in it without the same softening touch. F. F. Montrésor ought to go far.

A very precious relic of R. L. Stevenson has come to me from Samoa. It is a little pamphlet, compiled by Mr. Lloyd Osborne and some others, describing for "Mr. Stevenson's friends"—O, most honorable title!—the last months of that beautiful life and the moments after death, which were necessarily "a lying in state!" The pamphlet has the most homemade appearance; it looks as if it were printed on a Volinima printing press, and the words are just the poignantly simple words which might be spoken to absent friends, telling how he died. It would be hard to overestimate the preciousness of this relic.

A valuable book that came to me recently from Dublin is Essays, by Sarah Atkinson, published by Gill & Son. The title gives no index to the value of the contents. Mrs. Atkinson was as she was a philanthropist, but her work for God and the poor was the successful rival of her literary work. Despite that, she found time during her life to write one masterly biography, the Life of Mary Aikenhead, the foundress of the Irish Sisters of Charity, and many magazine articles, into which she put knowledge, research, and sympathy out of all proportion to what is generally esteemed a light and evanescent medium. A number of these magazine articles are contained in this book of Essays, which should make part of the library of any one interested in Irish history, archeology, art, and that obscure subject, Irish hagiology.

Mr. Elkington Mathews will publish about the end of the month an Irish anthology, which will appeal to a large class of readers. This is Dublin Verses, by members of Trinity College. The editor has selected from living men only, and his authors include Aubrey de Vere, W. E. H. Lecky, Oscar Wilde, Standish O'Grady, Dr. Douglas Hyde, Professors Ingram, Dowden, and Tyrrell, A. P. Graves, and many other well-known names. Trinity College has been so little associated with nationality that a good many people will be amazed at the Celtic spirit of this volume. About the editing, for reasons which may be obvious to some people, I am not at liberty to free my soul. The book will be produced with the utmost daintiness, and will be a post quarto, bound in Irish linen, and printed on specially made paper.

In the latest issue of the Yellow Book Mr. John Lang has given a portrait of the young genius, Mr. Patten Wilson. This is the first of his work to see the light. It is a battle piece of great nobleness and stateliness, showing exquisite line drawing as well as great decorative beauty and wealth of detail. There is a poetic fitness in the work of this young maker of knights and heroes appearing side by side with the clever devilries of Mr. Aubrey Beardsley. They are the antithesis of each other, and it is easy to prophesy whose work will go farthest and longest. Mr. Patten Wilson's work has the seed of greatness in it.

I am glad to see that Mr. Lane has reprinted Mr. Le Gallienne's early prose volume, The Book-Bills of Narcissus. It has the dew of the morning upon it, and is airy, gay, delicate, and pathetic all at once.

—KATHARINE TYNAN HINKSON.

GERMAN LITERARY NOTES.

The originally and power of the new writers in Germany have won recognition everywhere among professional men of letters, but the general public probably will become aware of the triumphal entry of German productions upon the French stage for the first time through the acting of Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt of the magnificent rôle of Magda—a rôle that is the conception and work of a German author, Herrmann Sudermann. Two years ago a French critic in the Nouvelle Revue declared angrily that Paris was going to Berlin for its music and drama. Will the Parisian chauvinists cry aloud again with the same jealous wrath? or will the play so win upon the Bohemianism of spectators and critics as to make them forget their patriotism? The cable will have answered the question before this letter can be put in type. I sit, at this writing, in suspense and expectancy, awaiting news of the first dispatches of the author, who is on the scene, to his wife and friends, who are here in Dresden. Magda is played tonight, the 9th of February, for the first time on the French stage.

The drama in German goes by the title Heimat, or "Home." A narrow-minded, severe officer, retired from the army and living with his family on the small pension granted him by the government in consideration of his services, fossillizes with all his intimates in the uncompromising attempt to keep up appearances socially. The type is as frequent in Prussia as parsnips. The mother of such a home uses her brains only for concocting cheap dishes and reducing the number of farthings spent for kerosene; the daughters use theirs for contriving new dresses out of old material and..."