In Books

We are not measured by that one chance date
When we were born. In other times we live.
The friendships of to-day are fugitive
To the long kingly line that keep their state
In books—the good and beautiful and great.
More wisely well we love them, for we know
The hidden life that moves when the past vireness flows.
Some accident of time hath brought us late
To these fair shores—and who would change the hour?
It is a glorious and immortal power
Which makes our years coeval with all time.
We sit with Israel's shepherd kings of old,
To Ida mount, when Greece was in her prime,
Or walk with Eve in Eden's twilight gold.

JAMES HERBERT MORSE.

Current Comment

Mr. HOWELLS'S "GOOD SOCIETY."—Money is treated by Mr.
Howells as an insignificant factor, and rank is not mentioned at
all. The Vanderbilt motto, "A duke's a duke for that," has
not struck him as one of those social phenomena which are essen-
tial to a philosophical inquiry. Though a novelist with a realistic
turn, and a proper contempt for the "Puss-in-boots" style of
fiction, he has constructed a wholly romantic system of "good
society," in which people behave with as much disregard for the
facts of life as we find in fairy tales. Men by becoming equal are
to become sinless. Inequality, according to Mr. Howells, is the
mother of iniquity. Murder, theft, illicit passion, are all traced
to this one source. In a world of superiors and inferiors we have
plentiful crops of wickedness; but when there are no inferiors,
the social harvest will be of quite another sort.—The Speaker.

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PLOTLESS FICTION.—The decadence of "plot" in modern fic-
tion is very remarkable. There are many novelists, but very few
story-tellers. It is rather a rare experience to be led on from
chapter to chapter by a sustained interest. We have strings of
adventures; tales with a moral and (much oftener) tales without
one; snippets which have really no space for the author to "spread
himself" in any direction, published in washing-book covers, rivu-
lets of text in meadows of margin; but with the three-volume
plot has almost disappeared.—James Payn, in The Illus-
trated London News.

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"GEMS FROM THE OPERAS."—Every box was filled, and there
was a lavish display of jewels and handsome gowns, it being the
first general gathering of people in society in full evening attire
since last spring. Mrs. Astor was quite regal in black velvet and
silver, with a stomacher of diamonds, and some handsome jewels
in her coiffure. While her beautiful daughter-in-law, Mrs. John
Jacob Astor, was fair to gaze upon in a gown of white satin, made
with large puffed sleeves of turquoise blue velvet, the corsage being
ornamented with some superb jewels. Mrs. Lloyd Brick's blond
beauty was shown off to excellent advantage in a gown of pale
lemon-colored satin and lace. Her jewels were diamonds, emer-
alds and pearls. Beside her in the box sat Mrs. Henry Sloane,
lemon-colored satin and lace. Her jewels were diamonds, emer-
dals and pearls. Beside her in the box sat Mrs. Henry Sloane,
who seemed ablaze with diamonds. Her necklace of solitaires
claimed of Boston and New York in the East in that behalf, Chi-
west. I did speak of Miss Jewett (and Miss Wilkins) in terms of
high, and of Mr. Stedman of highest, praise; but I spoke also of
others whom the interviewer omitted to mention. What I said
about contemporary men-of-letters was that in my judg-
manship was so fully) was that whatever might be the resultant of the
social harvest will be of quite another sort.—The Speaker.

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A LITERARY PEEPING TOM.—He [E. S. Martin] is the mor-
alist and mentor of mundane foibles, a kindly hearted eaves-
dropper, a smiling Asmodeus, against whose penetrating gaze
the tin roofs of conventionality avail nothing. He has invariably the
air of reading a lecture in a well-bred parlor voice to some culprit
arraigned before the bar of etiquette, and the curious thing about
him is that he never lets his reader suppose that the culprit is
himself. One feels that the judge is an uncommonly "know-
ing" man, and while one secretly "chortles" over the fact that he
knows so many innocently degradable things about one's neighbors,
one always flatters one's self he knows nothing about him.—The New York Tribune.

The Lounger

The Yellow Book is shorn of its yellowness: it is nothing
now but book. Some of the old writers are to be found in its
seventh number, but they are not their old selves, except Miss
Ella D'Arcy, but then, she never was yellow. She depends for
her effects upon legitimate work, and has won an audience that
will stand by her when The Yellow Book is forgotten. There
is a little effort made to revive the color of this quarterly by one
who signs herself "The Yellow Dwarf." I say "herself," be-
cause the "poor dears" and "my dears" that scintillate through its
pages are distinctly feminine exclamation. Not only that, but
the whole tone of the paper is that of pose. It is the most
labored attempt at smartness that I have read in many a long
day. Really, the sophomoric naughtiness of the earlier volumes
of The Yellow Book were brilliant compared with this. The Sat-
urday Review attributes the article to the editor, Mr. Harry Har-
land. (See London Letter.)

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"YELLOWNESS in literature," writes E. C. from New
Albany, Indiana, "is not so recent a quality as might be sup-
posed. The term, in regard to objectionable characteristics,
must have had significance when Thoreau wrote 'A Week on
the Concord and Merrimac Rivers,' as the following excerpt
shows:—'The New Testament is an invaluable book, though I
confess to having been slightly prejudiced against it in my very
early days by the church and the Sabbath-school, so that it
seemed, before I read it, to be the yellowest book in the cata-
logue.'"

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THE CASE of Miss Lancaster, a young woman "who did," is
exciting the London public. It is a miserable story, and the
worst of it is that it is probably only one of many instances where
eccentric, visionary women have been influenced to wrongdoing
by such theories as Mr. Grant Allen and other vicious
writers advance. Miss Lancaster declares that she had not read
Mr. Grant Allen's book, and that she worked out her theories by
herself. Perhaps so, Mr. Allen unfortunately is not the only
person in England who is trying to pervert the young. He has
disciples, and his doctrines are aired from one end of the country
to the other: Miss Lancaster has imbibed them without know-
ing it. I think that Mr. Allen would be much less of a leader if
his followers appreciated what he does not hesitate to confess—
that he finds that such stories as his "Woman Who Did" and
the Hill-Top series pay him a hard coin better than anything he
has ever written, and for that reason he writes them. Now that
he has found the vein to work, he is working it to the bitter end.
I have sufficient confidence in the British matron to believe that
Mr. Allen will soon run his little day and be snuffed out.

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COL. R. M. JOHNSTON of Baltimore, referring to my quota-
tions from, and comment upon, a reported interview with him,
published in a Chicago paper, writes to me as follows:—"What
I said about contemporary men-of-letters was that in my judg-
ment, the average among them was not quite equal to that in the
generation last past. What I said about Chicago (and I believe
so fully) was that whatever might be the resultant of the
claims of Boston and New York in the East in that behalf, Chi-
ago, I believed, was destined to become the literary centre in the
West. I did speak of Miss Jewett (and Miss Wilkins) in terms of
high, and of Mr. Stedman of highest, praise; but I spoke also of
others whom the interviewer omitted to mention. What I said
regarding contemporary British poets was to a question of my
opinion regarding the probable bestowal of the Laureate: my
answer was that, if only excellence in poetic talent were required,
it must devolve upon either Mr. Swinburne or Mr. Morris. The
paragraph's opening words that I had gone to Chicago to 'lecture,
and have ever been 'interviewed.' I am more than being insulting.
Now that you, as other gentlemen are wont to do in like circumstances,
might feel it both a duty and a pleasure to retract them."

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I HASTEN TO ASSURE Col. Johnston that the words to which
he refers were written in no unfriendly spirit, and that I am
surprised that he should have taken them so seriously. Nothing
that I know of him as an author, or as a man, would warrant anyone
in writing of him in a way calculated to hurt his feelings in the
slightest degree. Not the slightest thing going in the interview, even
as misreported, that should cause anyone a moment's annoyance,
or provoke him to attack the author.