

JUST OVER THE BAY.

Just over the bay, just over the bay,
As twilight winks darkness into the day,
The star-beaded heavens with beauty inlaid
Drop pearls of dew where the dreams of day fade,
Just over the bay.

Just over the bay, just over the bay,
The mantle of night wraps the shoulders of day;
A censor of faith breathes the sweetness of prayer,
While tapers of hope light each altar of care,
Just over the bay.

Just over the bay, just over the bay,
Night weeps by the coffin of breathless day;
My heart weeps in sorrow for joys that are fled,
While Memory as mourner sits by the cold dead,
Just over the bay.

Belleville, Ont.

T. O'HAGAN.

"OUIDA."

THE NOTED ENGLISH NOVELIST AND HER CRITICS.—HOW THEY ABUSE HER, AND HOW SHE FIGHTS BACK.—HER TILT WITH THE LONDON "TIMES."—A SAVAGE ASSAULT BY THE "STANDARD."

LONDON, April 19.—The lady who writes lustful novels and calls herself "Ouida" is kicking against the critics most prodigiously. Her last reply to the reviewers eclipsed everything of the kind I ever came across. It is "Ouida" because it is clever, insinuating and naughty. I say he "last reply" so as not to be misunderstood, for lately the lady has spent a good part of her time in waging war against the critics. Before speaking of "Ouida's" present grievance I may be suffered to refer to the one which immediately preceded it.

Not many weeks ago the author of "Chandos," "Folle Farine" and "Moths" wept great, bitter tears of regret that anonymity had become so general in writers for the press—though as far as I know there never was a time when British journalists signed their work. She said it was one of the vices of an epoch that had created the Jersey boddice and the professional beauty, and added that no brave man surely would ever criticise anything without putting his name to his opinions. Then, with true feminine consistency, she rashly signed her phrases with a nom-de-plume. This, however, is a minor matter. Scarcely was the ink dry on her folio when there appeared in one of the London weeklies a scathing reply called "Unsigned Criticisms." Ridicule kills, says the French proverb; and probably "Ouida" never had it brought home to her more unpleasantly than at the moment of reading this article. "Yes," said the critic, meekly, "the epoch is wicked, and the world is full of sin. 'Ouida' herself has done her best to stay its progress. She has shown the profligacy of our time in a very picturesque way. Her maidens are patterns of dangerous wickedness; her kitchen-maids blossom with ease into gorgeous and repellent courtesans; her profligate young men are led to consume fleas from the bodies of their mistresses with a passion and daring unparalleled in history. But all these presentments of the loathliness of vice are of no avail, and the Jersey boddice and the anonymous journalist continue to desolate the community." Speaking with her usual fine freedom from vulgarity, she observed in her attack that the public "would not be impressed were the article signed by an obscure A B writing in a paragonage to eke out his slender income, or needy X Y Z writing in his chambers to gain the guineas that no briefs bring to him." This statement, of course, involves a vast and vulgar error, and the censor tore it pitilessly to pieces. How a gentleman writing in a paragonage can affect the quality of his literary judgment is something that most of my readers will fail to see. Sydney Smith wrote in a paragonage. A young anonym named Macaulay made his name before he ever had a brief. Fonblanque revolutionized English journalism, though he was but a briefless wight. Emanuel Deutsch was only an ill-paid superintendent when he gained a European reputation by one criticism. Dickens was a reporter when he stepped to the head of English letters. One Thomas Carlyle was a poor mathematical tutor when he ventured to begin reviewing. Young Mr. Disraeli made very acute criticisms on very great personages before he was 21. And "Ouida" was—I will not say what.

It has often been our gifted novelist's fate "to see articles (always anonymous) on herself which more than one English queen's counsel had advised her to pursue as sheer and unmitigated libels." I will quote the reply: "It is strange that so many reviewers should be taken with libellous inclinations when they read 'Ouida.' The coincidence offers food for sustained reflection. As to the 'always anonymous,' we can only say flatly that it is not true. The most fierce and able reviews of 'Ouida's' books have been signed by the writers. In 1873 a long article appeared in the *Contemporary Review*. This article went so far as to call 'Ouida' an ignorant and vulgar woman. And the writer said other pretty things which we do not care to repeat. We never read a bit of criticism so pertinaciously bitter, and, we may add, so little humorous. Wit there was in plenty, savage phrases in plenty, but of good-humoured banter not a line. The article was signed. So it appears the most virulent attack which the author of 'Chandos' ever provoked was boldly avowed by the man who made it. The fact is, that critics with any sense of honour can do nothing but be amused over 'Ouida's' works. They recognize a certain trance-like intensity which is not ineffective;

they see that in some undiscovered country the Creator may have framed beings like to those who appear in 'Folle Farine' and 'Strathmore'; and that, granting such a lapse of judgment on the part of the Author of the universe, 'Ouida's' scheme of life and emotion is tolerably well worked out. But the sense of the ludicrous is constantly being poignantly touched, and the stern reviewer is ever and anon shocked into laughter. He hears of university oarsmen who fleet along the course lifting their oars in perpendicular fashion; he learns that university 'quads' are overgrown by waving elms; he reads proud references to Petronious Arbiter, and he is moved to smile. Then, again, he finds that impassioned Menads sometimes dip roses in Burgundy, and crown exalted heroes with wreaths of the dripping vegetables; and he thinks how much better and cleaner it would have been to have used Brussels sprouts and water. Once more the enduring man has to scrutinize the most wonderful Spanish and classical quotations that ever occurred to the human mind. His task grows upon him, and he brings relief through laughter. But, if to laugh be libellous, who, then, shall escape the Guildhall? As to 'Ouida's' moral or immoral influence, we do not think any adult ever had any serious misgivings. The marionettes of her novels are utterly sexless. The stuffing is jerked out of them with every movement, and the idea of sexuality in their connection would never occur save to a revolted and excitable school-girl. We do not think that 'Moths' would be an improving book for a young lady's reading, but we are equally certain that no grown person need fear to look through it. It is blatantly, absurdly pretentious. It puts on the most comic airs of acquaintance with dark and unnamed vice, and these airs might impress young men and maidens, but people who have lived long can see that 'Ouida' knows as little of vice as she does of, say, Petronious Arbiter. In short, she is like the gentleman who was said to be 'le fanfaron des vices qu'il n'avait pas'; or, to quote a brilliant essayist, she is bent on dancing the can-can for a livelihood, and has quite forgotten that she has two wooden legs. This forgetfulness results in evolutions which are less unvirtuous than ungainly. But, despite all these considerations, 'Ouida' is implacable, and feels herself to be a wronged child of genius with a mission of vengeance. 'The English press, with a few estimable exceptions, loves platitudes and sophisms. I loathe them. So the English press and myself are eternally opposed, and shall so remain to the end of time.' Thus does she challenge the Fates, and launch the gage of battle towards the Infinite. It is a moving spectacle, and we confess to a momentary feeling of insignificance. 'Ouida' till the end of time! It is a dread prospect."

I come now to 'Ouida's' present grievance. She is cut up because the London *Times* reviewer courteously suggested that, piquant as "Moths" was, it could scarcely be accepted as a true picture of life as it passes before us, whether in Paris or in London, in Norman watering-places or on the shores of the Riviera. The novelist could endure any comment but this. To tell her that she does not see the things and people as they are, is to put the most terrible affront upon her literary genius. I will be fair to the lady, and give the important part of her remonstrance, in her own words.

After the usual compliment to the critic, she writes:—"No one who knows the 'great world' at all will, on serious reflection, fail to acknowledge that the charges brought against modern society in 'Moths' are substantially just and justified by actual truth. Your reviewer thinks that hundreds of houses in London would have shut their doors to Lady Dolly; he forgets that, though the reader sees Lady Dolly in all her nakedness and naughtiness, society only sees her in her pretty disguises. I describe her essentially as a woman who had the wit never to be publicly compromised. She was always careful of appearances and she lived under the same roof with her husband at least three months in every year. Now, unless there is a public scandal about a woman who is highly born and has great connections to sustain her, her relatives will always 'keep her up.' Both Belgravia and the Faubourg will always uphold their own women, unless compelled by some notorious publicity to drive out the sinners who have been so foolish as to become town-talk. It is certain that a woman meeting relatives all round her as strong and as highly placed as Lady Dolly is described to possess, will always be received, unless she pass that boundary line which the great world sets—the line which separates the sins that can be ignored and glossed over from the sins that have been published and pilloried. They change the famous line of Corneille, and it is the scaffold, not the crime, that makes the crime in their eyes. It is not only in Paris, or at Trouville, or at Nice, but in London as well, that the woman who plays and never pays; whose expenditure is certain to exceed her income, however large that may be, whose amourettes are well known to all her set, though she continues never to be dangerously compromised; who, in a word, is a *cocotte à seize quartiers*, is to be seen by the *cocotte* in the very best of London worlds, and (though some may think it impossible) deceives her husband, and yet goes to court. I say distinctly that Lady Dolly was never among the *peches à quinze sous*; she was always 'in the swim,' to use the cant phrase of the hour; and her living prototypes are to be numbered by the hundred. They are not Bohemian; if they were so, their influence would be imperceptible, and their follies of no importance.

"As regards the prodigality of the modes of living that I have described, I cannot admit that there is the slightest exaggeration of my own there. I have, indeed, described nothing I have not seen, and it would be impossible for any one to exaggerate the caprices and the splendour of a great Russian. Who could have exaggerated the magnificence and the expenditure of Paul Narischkine or of Paul Demidoff, under the second empire? Society nowadays is in itself madly extravagant and very strangely composed; any truthful picture of it looks of necessity overdrawn. Its passion for display, for excitement, for notoriety, is one of the saddest maladies of our times. English novelists do, it is true, still continue to depict mankind as always seated at an Aunt Tabitha's tea-table, the current of small talk only being allowed variety from the visit of an occasional murderer or detective; but English novelists are not conspicuous for their knowledge of the world, and their ignorance does not change the fact that no generation was ever more sadly burdened than our own with license, with satiety, and with a passionless immorality which has not even the excuse of ardour. A *luxe effréné* is the note of the time; and it is a contagious disease, which spreads downwards from the palace to the cottage. This I have reflected and portrayed in 'Moths'; the exaggeration is not mine, but the epoch's."

There! there she is in all her purple magnificence. That "Ouida" is a woman, nobody need be told who reads the letter. Logic was never woman's strong point; and what little "Ouida" ever possessed was exhausted before she wrote to the editor of the *Times*. I do not wish to misjudge the lady, or to prejudice my reader; but I must say that this reply strikes me as being about the most brazen contribution even she has yet favoured us with. As I said at the beginning of my letter, it fairly eclipses all previous efforts in the same line. "Nakedness and naughtiness"—this is her own measure of the qualities of one of her characters, and there are some who will be unkind enough to say that the words are a truthful epitome of all she writes. English novelists are ignorant, are they? And the exaggeration is the epoch's, not hers, is it? Oh, the modest woman! Oh, the naughty world! Marry come up, why were we ever born? I don't know—do you? There is enough sin in the world, we all know, but the hypercritical are likely to question how much the cause of transgression is advanced by a writer who cloaks transgression in purple and fine linen.

In answer to the letter the *Times* published a column leader, decidedly racy in tone for the editorial page of the leading journal, poking fun at the author in amusing fashion—crediting her with some gifts, but telling her in a grandmotherly sort of way, that her novels are intrinsically wrong in conception, and that it is not by such as she that the world is kept sweet and habitable. The satire of the whole was admirable and did credit to the waning art of Printing House square.

But the *Times* review and editorial sink into utter nothingness compared with the cruel attack on novel and author which has just appeared in the *Standard*. Since the old days when the savage *Edinburgh* critics autocritically said what should and what should not be—happily now no more—I question if equally severe strictures have been passed on any work—excepting, perhaps, the notorious *Quarterly* censure of Macaulay's "History." *Blackwood* once commenced a criticism on a volume of poems with this apostrophe to the author: "Come along, donkey, and be cudgelled." Now, the *Standard* is more polite, but not less mordacious. It says that "Moths," with its false sentiment and cheap display of sham learning, is ridiculous and contemptible; a libel upon contemporary society, and the work of a morbid and mischievous imagination. The novel is one, it writes, which it is little credit to any respectable publisher to have produced. Its sentiment is false and corrupt. Whatever is unhealthy and effeminate in passion, whatever is sickly in sensuality, whatever is misleading in sentiment, is depicted or suggested in this book. Its atmosphere nauseates and depresses, and the reader lays down the volumes with the feeling that might be experienced on escaping from an air laden with polluted odours. If its author had deliberately set to work to compress into three volumes as much of mischief as a meretricious imagination suggested, she could not have succeeded better. It is not agreeable to read these things of a lady, but the writer of "Moths" would probably be the last person to wish that her critics would be troubled with any compunctions on the score of her sex. She has, in fact, in her later novels, unsexed herself. She has thrown away all scruple of reserve, and it is only by a masculine standard that her novels can be measured. "In 'Moths' 'Ouida' seems to have touched the lowest point which any English novelist has yet reached. Wherever she looks she can see nothing but debauchery and sin. Whatever she touches, she degrades." But it is monstrous—a sin against decency as well as against art—for a writer to present us with an exaggerated sketch of her own associations and experiences, and then tell us that they are representative of modern life." Let those of us who are without the pale thank our stars we are not writers of fiction.

It is so easy not to write three-volume novels.

T.

IRISH crochet in revived Venetian design and Carrick macross point coupes are reasonable priced lace novelties, suitable for trimming either velvet robes or children's soft all-wool wraps, particularly white and pale blue wraps for children.

AGNOSTICISM AND WOMEN.

It is acknowledged on all sides that Agnosticism is gaining ground among men. It is not so thoroughly realized that in this case it must in the long run equally gain ground among women. This side of the question is not one that is often raised. Men do not see willingly that which they dislike to see; and there can be little doubt that the spread of Agnosticism among women would tend to make them discontented with the quiet home life which is often their only lot. It would, moreover, increase tenfold the cry of women for the right of employment in the more active lines of life at present denied to them. Men prefer to hope that women will be slow to drive logic to its ultimate end; that they will still cling with womanly inconsistency to all that is refining and soothing in the old creeds; and that the newer and colder lights of their husbands and brothers will only serve to eliminate from those creeds the elements of superstition and fear which are now considered so debasing. But in a day when intellect in woman is valued more highly than it has ever been, they will not long be willing to hold a belief that is not shared by men. The strength of women lies in their heart. It shows itself in their strong love and instinctive perception of right and wrong. Intellectual courage is rarely one of their virtues. As a rule they are inclined to be restless and excitable, allowing their judgments and actions to be swayed by quick emotions of all kinds, but, above all, it is in their hopefulness and their endurance that they find their chief power. Who is the last person to give up hope in the case of a member of a family who has apparently gone altogether to the bad? What mother or sister, with deep and ardent love for such will ever cease to cherish hope or to endure suffering on their account? The patience of women is proverbial, and their whole lives are bound up in their affections. Few people will deny that love in one form or another makes up the beauty of life to woman. It enters into all she does. Any work outside her immediate circle is undertaken most often from pure desire to help some one else to know something of the mysterious happiness of love. Unlike men, women chiefly look for personal intercourse with those for whom they are working. If their interest lies among the poor, they are desirous of sympathetic personal acquaintance with them; and very little good work of a lasting kind has been done by women without their own influence of love being brought to bear on the individual case. Without dwelling on the greater physical weakness of women in general, it is a fact that their brains are more easily deranged, and unless they change greatly they are apt to deteriorate in essential womanly qualities if thrown much or prominently before the world. They are seldom fitted to rule; emulation and jealousy being generally strong in their character, while their feelings and judgments are often rapid in the extreme. It is in the heart, therefore, that a woman will more especially feel the effects of Agnosticism, whether those effects be for good or for evil. Her head may gain in grasp of logic and in clearness of view; but if her heart, with all its powers for good, is weakened and discouraged, she will gain little ultimately by the spread of the new views. When the heart is dispirited, or thrown back upon itself, the action that springs from it tends inevitably to fall lifeless to the ground.

FASHION NOTES.

GOLD lace and coloured lace is used for millinery purposes, for trimming parasols, fans, and rich brocade and velvet dresses.

SOME very handsome Surah silk and satin petticoats have two puffs stuffed with hair placed at the top of the skirt in the back.

COUNTRY dresses for summer wear are made of light flannel of various colours—navy and peacock blue-gray, olive, maroon and cardinal red.

FRENCH costumes of Turkey red calico are given a softening effect with embroideries of creamy white muslin and pleatings of Languedoc lace.

YACHTING costumes of wool bunting are made effective by combinations of handkerchief pattern bunting, with dark blue bunting, polka dotted with red.

NEW silk and lisle thread gloves have the wrists much longer this season, and finished in lace clockings to imitate the lace-trimmed kid and kid lace topped gloves of last winter.

INDIAN broches have been so much improved that they resemble Turkish embroidery, the stiff palm leaf patterns being lost in the variety and harmonious intricacy of the designs.

SEVENTY-TWO different shades of colour have been counted in the new cashmeres, toiles religieuses, muslin de laines, and batiste de laines, seen on the counters of A. T. Stewart & Co., this spring.

POINT Colbert is one of the lace novelties found in A. T. Stewart's lace department. It is a revival of early Venetian rose point, and admirably adapted for trimming velvet and rich satin robes.

WORTH's London house, in Hanover Square, has brought out a Jersey bodice corset, invented for wearing under the Jerseys, and so arranged that the silk under body now necessary is done away with.

NEW black silk and black lisle thread gloves for summer wear have lace-clocked tops in bands around the arm alternating with solid spaces in the style of the black kid lace-trimmed gloves of the past season.

THE improved English Jerseys for children are lined with blue and gold facings in the back, and have lacings on the front, the hips, and the wrists, the tags being left like Henry V.'s needles hanging from the lacing.

THE Englishwoman's "costume of the future," embroidered with coloured crevells in bouquets and set flowers, roses, carnations, blue bells and dandelions of life size, is growing in favour on this side of the water.