

'Puck' was mentioned before a gathering, the offender was made miserable for the rest of the day by the coldness with which his observation was received. And in his heart he knew that his quotation was understood, and that his hearers were only trying to keep up appearances. It was fashionable to read Ouida, but it was very unfashionable to let your neighbours know it. But the hypocritical mask fell at length, and now people read Ouida and talk about her, not always without a shudder, but still they talk about her. A change has come over the novel reader; but no change has come over Ouida. She is the same rollicking, hoydenish, semi-learned and semi-superficial story-teller she was from the first. She has neither improved her style nor her morals. She talks as plainly as ever. She slips scraps of French and Italian into her stories with the same old prodigality. Her men are as profligate, her women are as immoral and the incidents she describes are as loose, and her dramatic effects are as ambitious as they were fifteen years ago. Her last story is a finished satire on the morals which exist in a certain class of society. She paints all of her pictures boldly and with a bold and masculine hand. She is prodigal with delicate tints, but the reds and greens and blues, particularly the flaunting blues, she squanders on her canvas with great liberality. 'Friendship' is not a satisfactory story. There is nothing cheering about it, and its tone is morbid. It has passion, but the passion is affectation, and its sentimentality is mawkish. Some of the descriptive parts are extremely good, while much of the incident is meaningless, and the conversations are not always bright and interesting. The story will be read, however, for Ouida has a hold on the multitude. She is best among writers of her own class and people will have the best when they can get it. She furnishes a diet which is stronger than milk and water.

There are bits in Mr. J. Sheridan Le Fanu's romance of *The Bird of Passage*\* which are worthy of the best days of William Black. He possesses fine descriptive power, clever analysis of character, and a chivalrous fancy. His story is full of action, eminent in dramatic force, and original in conception and tone. From the first page, which rather whets the appetite of the reader, to the last one in the book, there is not a dull chapter, or a single passage we would willingly part with. The glimpse which Mr. Le Fanu gives of old country life, the Manor house and its cheery inmates, the wild and romantic scenery roundabout Haworth Hall, the camps of the wandering gipsy bands, and the fresh breezy sketch of the bold young squire of Hazelden, and the exquisite portraiture of Euphan Curraple, are as enchanting as they are artistic. Not the least interesting portion of the book is the minor character sketch of the old housekeeper, Mrs. Gillyflower, whose frequent appearance on the scene is hailed with satisfaction. Her portrait is apparently painted from life. But she does not always exist in the village, nor does she live at all times in the old country houses. She can often be seen in the cities, and her type is the ruling spirit in many homes to-day. Mrs. Gillyflower is a true woman, faithful and kindly, and her 'management' of her young master—in her eyes yet a child—is described very pleasantly. The incident which brings about the meeting between William Haworth and the beautiful gipsy girl, is related with consummate skill. The lonely young squire is striding homeward. A wintry wind is sweeping the moor. A sound falls upon his ears, and he stops and listens. The notes of a sweet song fill the weird forest of trees with melody, and the sighing wind carries the strain over the distant hills.

\* *The Bird of Passage*, by J. SHERIDAN LE FANU, New York, D. Appleton & Company; Toronto, Hart & Rawlinson.