

POETRY AND PROSE.

A THEORY of interest to singers—whether they have or have not, any doubts as to the continuance of literary song—is to be found in the "Science et Poesie" of M. Paul Bourget, a writer who is fast coming into recognition as one of the newly-risen stars of French realism. That M. Bourget is a fixed star of realism could not be inferred from the book of essays of which the above-named "study" forms a part; for the interests of poetry, if not of romanticism, are as ably defended as are those of the dominant school. M. Bourget seems to have that catholicity of sentiment and broadness of perception which enables one to adopt the most opposite standpoints and to see as with the progress of those who are thus variously stationed. The theory to which I have referred is sketched from one of these standpoints, and M. Bourget does not allow himself to dogmatize upon it; one cannot even be sure that he entertains it seriously. It is merely a hint, a side glance, a suggestion by the way, on which it may not be quite unprofitable to waste a moment's thought—and it is to the effect that the line of division, whatever it may be, between poetry and prose is about to disappear. Is not this a suggestion to make one pause and ponder, especially if he have any yearnings after poetic immortality? Democracy and science, says M. Bourget, are creating a new world, a new society, and of this society prose, not verse, will be the proper and peculiar form of literary expression. Forms of literary expression, he argues, like everything else that is human and mundane, come and go, are born and die. Verse has fulfilled its mission; has had its reign. It was the fitting expression of the aristocratic and monarchic ages; and as, in the political sphere, the aristocratic and monarchic idea is being swept before the tide of democracy, so, in the literary sphere, the old order shall give place to a new. Those who go with the tide may be borne onward to success; those who resist it will waste them in futile effort.

Can this theory be anything more than a fantasy, or is it the glimmering of a truth. Surely the instinct of song is not destined to perish; though I am here reminded that by many is considered great, has said almost the same thing as M. Bourget. He finds something even ridiculous in rhyme, and speaks of the "diviner heaven of prose." Now, is it possible to sing in prose? or are rhythm, melody, rhyme, of the essence of poetry? Can a poem be contained in a paragraph? We already know that prose can be poetical, and have heard of prose poems. It is possible to be wise, to be witty, to be passionate or pathetic in prose—but is it possible to be lyrical? And if we cannot be lyrical, if we cannot be rhythmic and melodious in prose, can we be poetical?

Our time is remarkable for specialization of functions; subdivision of labour, to borrow an illustration from the sphere of economics, appears to be the law. Are the æsthetic arts subject to this law? Has the necessity for specialization invaded them also? Could it be possible, for example, that the function of harmonious expression, which has heretofore been shared by the poet and the musician, may, in future, be performed by the musician alone? Shall songs without words and odes become the rule of lyrical and melodious expression, and will poetry be something less or more than it is now, having a sort of prose ether for its all-sufficient medium? Where the drama covered the whole ground, we find the novel successfully disputing possession; and metrical language, even on the stage, is fast giving place to the longer or shorter sentences of prose. And now comes Mr. Oscar Wilde, with an engaging essay, exquisitely demonstrating that criticism, which is scarcely poetry, is the heaven just beyond creative art. It was only the other day, too, that Mr. Howells described the prose of Mr. Henry James as "a sweetness on the tongue, a music in the ear." Can Mr. Henry James be a poet in disguise? The reader smiles—and I smile also. But there are similes as subtly charming and bits of description as delicious in Mr. James as can be found—I had almost said in Shelley or in Keats. Ah, but the dear verse! the music, the charm, the fascination. With what enchantment it possesses us. Prose will have to be divine indeed to make us willing to abandon, to break, this spell. Let us go read "St. Agnes Eve" or the "Ode to a Nightingale!"

J. H. BROWN.

THE RAMBLER.

THE doings of the celebrated Fudge Family in Paris, which belong, I humbly submit, to a dead and gone generation, are nothing to those of the American colony in London, as supplied by the New York Herald Bureau and other polite and well-informed organizations. But there are seasons when the fittings and the masquerades, the banjo playing and the four-in-hand "meet" pall somewhat upon our satiated appetite. We yawn and put the paper down and like to think what there is across the water of interest and value outside these ephemeral records of doubtful social successes. For there is a great deal, be assured, of both. No one nowadays crosses to England and back again without remarking that in most things, they are fully as "smart" over there as we are here. Personally, I can only recollect two drawbacks in English life which struck me forcibly, and as requiring amelioration; these were—first, the absence of ice; second, the presence of candles. I dislike so much going to bed by a candle.

I also dislike ringing nine times for what, when it comes, takes the shape of an oblong morsel about the length of your middle finger melting away in single blessedness in the middle of an ocean of tepid water. However, these things may be all different now. The world moves quickly and the very existence of this exacting luxurious American colony has probably helped the advance of matters, sumptuary and otherwise. London, it appears, will receive anything and anybody from the "other side," even to a dramatization of Henry James' "American." Or it intends to; at present Mr. Compton's Company is performing it in the provinces.

Henry James as dramatist is soon to be followed by Du Maurier as novelist. He will succeed better than Oscar Wilde, because he is a man of more ability, and because he has in plenty the heaven-saving gift of humour. But it is distressing to see that no one escapes the contagion. If the artists are going to furnish all the artistic novels, and the novelists all the plays, it will soon be in order for the clergymen to supply the religious novels, the lawyers the legal ones, and, of course, ladies and persons of fashion to write the society tales, as indeed many of them are doing. In some lights, this would seem to work very well. Archdeacon Farrar will doubtless give us a three volume novel dealing with the condition of the London poor, or with refutations, gentlemanly and eloquent, if not convincing and Titanic, of modern agnosticism. This book will be "Yeast," "Robert Elsmere," and the "Silence of Dean Maitland," rolled into one. Then Mr. Henry Irving will modestly announce "his first novel"; a *pot-pourri* of stage-life, courtiers and rustics, in the time of Shakespeare. Mr. Gladstone will create a new two-sided kind of story in which the hero crosses to California in a fit of despondency (caused by the refusal of the critics to accept his latest views about Homer) in order to amuse himself with felling the biggest trees on earth. But in the meantime what is to become of the scribes by profession—our old friends, Mr. Besant, Mr. Payn, Mr. Meredith, Mrs. Oliphant? I rather think that some of the best sketching in stage-life has been done by Mr. William Black. We all know what a statesman did in fiction from the Disraeli novels—are they better, truer, than Grenville Murray's "Boudoir Cabal," or Anthony Trollope's full-length but distinct portraiture in the "American Senator"?

It is a very interesting question, this contest between Specialism and Generalism, or between the all-round culture and many-sided education of the day and the sharply-defined, sometimes bigoted, attitude of the past. Whatever may be in store for the new complex type, journalist, actor, war correspondent, we are assured that the greatest work in the past has been done by specialists all along the line. I imagine all natural, enthusiastic, indomitable and patient scientists to have been specialists—all explorers, all translators, commentators, great historians, true poets. But now the greatest work of the earth has been done, and so the once invaluable type merges into another, and we have now the twentieth century man and woman, equipped at many points, facile, versatile, reliant. This great globe which we inhabit loses, month by month, much of its mystery. We fly around it in not so much more than forty days. The towers, once cloud-capped, the palaces, gorgeous in the days of our nation's youth, are seen to be only temporal structures, faulty because human. We have lost the sense of wonder, and sometimes we do not even get in return the eye of faith.

This would seem but a miserable outlook if it did not turn upon the actual improved mental status of the race. There may be a level of dull mediocrity before us; there will also be a level of cheerful, brilliant attainment. The dark places of the earth—authors' attics, editors' dissecting rooms—will soon be, with their occupants, curious relics of the past.

As I seem to have drifted into a melancholy strain, not inappropriate to this sodden, depressing, colourless day, I will finish with an anecdote which, to lovers of the Anglican liturgy, may not prove unamusing. A good canon reads evening prayers to his household every night, as every good man should (*Vanity Fair* says). One morning his new housemaid—she was a country girl, and had only begun service in the house the day before—gave notice, tearfully. No reason was assigned; but nothing could persuade her to stay in the canon's house, where, she said, she had been so grossly insulted. No one could understand the girl; but after much persuasion she explained: "I was at prayers last night. I heard master say . . . 'O God, who 'atest nothing but th' 'ousemaid.'"

From early years I was fond of poetry, and I owe an immense debt to the poets, not only because I have found in them the greatest and best of moral teachers, who revealed to me, or confirmed in me, the purest truths on which it is possible to live, but also because they have illuminated many a dark hour, and added fresh sunlight to many a bright one, by noble lessons set to natural music in noble words. They have helped me to hang the picture gallery of imagination with lovely and delightful scenes, and to take refuge from any storm which might beat upon me from without in that flood of unquenchable sunshine which they had kindled for me within.—Canon F. W. Farrar, in *The Forum*.

ART NOTES.

SIR JOHN MILLAIS' eyesight, which gave him a good deal of trouble, and threatened to interfere with his painting, has improved. He has given himself the advantage of a very long rest, and his general health is excellent.

GAINSBOROUGH'S portrait of the beautiful Eliza Ann Linley (the wife of Richard Brinsley Sheridan) with her brother has been sold to Alfred Rothschild for 12,000 guineas, or about \$63,000—a monstrous price even for so fine a work.

L'Art dans les Deux Mondes, launched at Paris on November 22, under the editorship of MM. Yveling Rambaud and Camille de Roddaz, has among its contributors Alphonse Daudet, Emile Zola, Edmond de Goncourt and Paul Mantz. In the first number of the new weekly L. de Fourcaud defends Americans against the charge of barbarism and ignorance of the fine arts; and the first sketch is a dry point by Miss Mary Cassatt, a native of Pittsburg, and graduate of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.

BEFORE his return to the palace, Michael Angelo had begun a series of careful studies in anatomy, to familiarize himself with every line and dimension of the figure. He toiled at this study for years, until his mastery of the human form was complete. He never painted or chiselled a figure without working out in a drawing the most delicate details of the anatomy, so that no turn of vein or muscle might be false to the absolute truth. It is by such means that any mastery is secured. Behind every work of genius, whether book, picture, or engine, is an amount of labour and pains—yes, and of pain—that would have frightened off a weak spirit.—*St. Nicholas*.

MUSIC AND THE DRAMA.

THE favourite baritone, Del Puente, has written a very pleasing song entitled "Mesto Ricordo."

MME. MODJESKA is publishing a narrative of her tour in England and America in a Cracow newspaper.

CHARLES SANTLEY, the famous baritone, has returned to England from Australia. He will come to the United States in March next.

AN early and long forgotten work of Donizetti, the "Regina di Golconda," originally brought out at Genoa in 1828, has been revived at Rome, and received with great favour.

A SWEDISH singer and pupil of the celebrated Jennie Lind, Miss Omalia Riego, sang with great success Haydn's "With Verdure Clad," and an air from "Barber of Seville" at the Holy Trinity Church recently.

A NEW operetta, with the long title "A Roman Carnival in the times of Marquis del Grillo," has made a hit at the Rossini Theatre, in Rome. The music is by Zucani, and the libretto by M. Berardi.

THAT indefatigable pianist, composer and teacher, Mr. Bernardus Boekelman, out-Bülows Bülow with a new edition of eight fugues of Bach which for novelty of treatment are simply unique.

AT the Royal Opera House, Berlin, a grand opera by Mme. de Broussart, of Weimar, is in rehearsal. It is entitled "Hiarne." The composer is well known in Germany, her first opera having been written in 1867.

ROSINA VOKES' new comedy, "The Silver Shield," has met with such enthusiastic endorsement at the Madison Square Theatre that it will be continued during the engagement of this merry comedienne, which lasts two weeks longer.

IN "L'Obstacle," a new play by Daudet, there is a musical role, which is to be undertaken at the Paris production by M. Reynaldo Hahn, a pupil of Massenet. He is a youth but sixteen years of age, but has already attracted attention as a composer of piquant melodies.

AT the Leipzig opera this season will be revived "Hans Sachs" by Lortzing, "La Chasse" by Hiller, "Serva Padrona" by Pergolesi, "Star of the North," by Meyerbeer, "The Vampire" by Marschner, and "The Rat Catcher" by Nessler. At Vienna, "La Manon" by Massenet, is to be the leading novelty.

BALTIMORE possesses in the person of Mr. I. A. Oppenheim an ambitious and popular young composer. One of his latest productions for voice—he writes equally well for piano—is a song for soprano or tenor, published by Otto Sutro, called "Thy Love," which is simple, melodious and well within the compass of the average voice (it goes to G) and which also merits a word for its simplicity of feeling.

IN this age of centenary celebrations it is hardly to be expected that "La Marseillaise" will escape observance. A dispute has arisen in Paris in regard to the date of the famous revolutionary song. It has, however, now pretty conclusively been settled, on the authority of no less eminent a musical historian than Mr. Arthur Pougin, that Rouget de Lisle wrote the hymn during the night of April 23-24, 1792.

SARASATE, the great violin virtuoso, is coining money in Europe, and more especially in England, where he is drawing immense houses. He will not only give a series of orchestral concerts in London in May and June next, but will also return there in June and give concerts and recitals in London and the provinces until the end of December, 1891.