

critics to attribute to these supernatural creations a deeper meaning than their creator ever intended. In the present instance, we can conceive the slow processes of ordinary events working out, in the course of years, much such a game of cross-purposes as is played by the two couples in the moonlit forest within the narrow space of a few hours ; but the circumstance does not justify us in supposing that Shakespeare had such a co-responsibility in his mind, far less that he intended to shadow it forth. The very fact that the allegory, if such it is, would be a lame one, should make us ponder before accepting this theory. As already mentioned, the wood is to be the world, and our lovers 'all fled into the world, and they suffered.' If this be so, in what forgotten limbo is Athens, where the first two scenes and the last Act (besides the last scene of Act IV.) take place ? We cannot but think that it is like chaining a moon-beam to lade this delicate play with the weight of an allegorical meaning.

A not much less important fault is to be found in the analysis of Puck, for we make bold to say that Mr. Moyses 'mistakes his shape and making quite.' How much over-attention to derivation may deceive a scholar is evident when we find the following sentence gravely enunciated : 'He is called the *lob* of spirits, *lob* denoting heaviness, either mental or physical, probably the latter.' This is positively misleading. Let us throw philology to the winds if it is to blind our eyes to the fact that this 'physically heavy' Puck is described as, not untruthfully, boasting

'I'll put a girdle round about the earth
In forty minutes.'

And, again, in answer to Oberon's injunction,

'About the wood go swifter than the wind.'
is represented as replying

'I go, I go, look how I go ;
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow.'

—not a very heavy comparison ! We need not vindicate the merry, knavish 'wanderer of the night' from mental heaviness ; the 'will-o'-the-wisp,' 'misleading night wanderers,' is the personification of lightness.

Neither is Puck identical with Milton's 'lubbar fiend,' despite the analogy of 'lob' and 'lubbar.' We can guess how

Mr. Moyses fell into this error, and he must excuse us if we add that it smacks of superficial reading. Milton's fiend is the huge, overgrown goblin of German extraction, hard-working, stupid and good-tempered, who regularly comes at night to the favoured farm-house or mill, churns the cream, thrashes the grain, and looks for the supper which is 'duly set' for him by his grateful host. This goblin played no pranks, but worked for a small reward, only showing his teeth if some stranger ate his supper and usurped his place by the chimney-corner. But Puck is not of this calibre. His 'labouring in the quern,' which must have misled Mr. Moyses, consists in preventing the butter from coming

'Bootless he makes the breathless house-wife churn.'

The work which he does for those who call him 'sweet Puck' is not the household drudgery which the 'lubbar fiend' performed. Had we space, it would cost but little labour to re-habilitate Puck's moral character also, and show that he is by no means 'the incarnation of the Manichæan Ahriman !'

One more remark. What authority is there for supposing the pansy to be the 'little western flower' ? Perhaps some botanical historian will enlighten us on the point whether the pansy was so cultivated in Shakespeare's time as to be properly called a purple flower. Certainly if Mr. Moyses is right in calling it an 'emblem of mischief and trouble,' its old English name of hearts-ease was most inappropriate.

Di. Cary, a novel. By M. JACQUELINE THORNTON ; New York : D. Appleton & Co. ; Toronto : Hart & Rawlinson.

It is an offence against good manners to thrust such a novel as this upon the public. One is perplexed, in reading it, to tell what aim the authoress had in her mind when she essayed to write it. The moral of the first part of the book seems to be, 'manure your worn-out land,' a purely agricultural maxim which has never yet found its inspired poet that we are aware of.

But before long the keynote is changed, and we hear the old familiar tune 'Beware of Widows,' performed by the full force