

Literature and Science.

WHAT THE SONNET NEEDS.

THE average writer of the modern sonnet seems to overlook one distinguishing feature of all the greatest products in this department of poetical expression. Thanks to the excellence of the best examples, and to the thorough criticism that has at length appeared on the subject, it is well-nigh impossible now to make a mistake as to what should be the form of a sonnet, or as to how its motive and its method should be adjusted and displayed. It is, no doubt, largely in consequence of the knowledge thus slowly acquired, and the artistic dexterity thence accruing, that any collection of modern sonnets presents a considerable quantity of work whose highest merit is the unquestionable one of the "golden mean." Sweet melodies and carefully balanced thought are good, but they are not everything. The epigrammatic line, the strenuous and boldly inserted maxim, the thrilling note of the wind instrument interrupting while supporting and enhancing the mellifluous movement of the strings—it is this feature that one misses in many of the hundreds of sonnets produced in recent years. It is the presence of this element that serves to differentiate the poet and to make his work memorable, as we see in the work of Wordsworth at his best, and notably in the sonnets of Dante Rossetti.—*The Athenæum.*

DISRAELI IN LITERATURE.

HE had little or no history out of politics and literature, and the first being here in a manner "taboo," and only to be dealt with indirectly and in the way of general remarks on his character, his literary work may justly receive some particular attention. It is unfortunate that while that work in fiction has been collected in an accessible and satisfactory manner, some of his political and miscellaneous writings have never been reprinted at all, while none are accessible except in fragmentary unco-ordinated form. The reproach ought to be removed, and the addition of some half-dozen volumes to the Hughenden edition would remove it. We should then have a uniform collection of literary work quite unique in character. It has been frequently objected to the authors of the present century that they are "not quotable"; that the jewels five words long, which they contain from the point of view of thought, as well as from that of style, are conspicuously few as compared with those of former ages, when the immense mass of the production, both of the whole period and of separate authors, is considered. This reproach may be true: there is, at any rate, some truth in it. But it is not true of Mr. Disraeli. The

excellence of his separate phrases, of his epigrams, of his maxims of life, perhaps contrasts, and certainly has for the most part been thought to contrast, with the inequality and disappointingness of his works as wholes. Again, there is some truth in this. Except "The Infernal Marriage" I do not know any work of Lord Beaconsfield's which is entirely *par sibi*. In that respect even "Ixion" is inferior; and if the author had done more work of this kind he would have equalled (as it is, he has very nearly equalled in "The Infernal Marriage") the author of the incomparable volume which begins with "Babouc" and ends with "Le Taureau Blanc." In a very different way, I think, "Henrietta Temple" may be called a masterpiece, though it is a masterpiece, of course, in a conventional style, and played upon few strings; in fact, upon only one. Of all the others, from "Vivian Grey" to "Endymion," a critic, that is to say a person who does not indulge in indiscriminate superlatives, must speak with certain allowances. "Vivian Grey" itself is a marvel of youthful brilliancy but the brilliancy is decidedly youthful. "The Young Duke" contains one scene, the gambling party, which is not inferior to anything of the kind in fiction; but the author's apology for it as "a picture rather of fleeting manners than of perennial character," is its best description as a whole. "Contarini Fleming" is, no doubt, a book of great power, and I know critics, whom I respect, who rank it first of all novels. But I suspect that, to rank thus, it ought to be read in youth; and by accident I happen never to have read it myself till middle age, though I had long known all the others. "Alroy," good of its kind, belongs to a kind which must be better than good to be first-rate. "Popanilla" is inferior to "The Infernal Marriage" and "Ixion." For "Venetia," I have myself a peculiar affection, and it seems to me (contrary, I believe, to the general opinion) a very happy instance of the peculiar faculty which Mr. Disraeli had in common with all the great writers who have woven real characters into the characters of novels—the faculty of giving a certain original twist to the borrowed personality. Of the trilogy, I prefer "Sybil" to "Coningsby" and "Tancred," despite the unmatched political portraits of the second and the picturesque imagination of the third, I should call "Sybil" Mr. Disraeli's best novel, a judgment which is not incompatible with the judgment above given, that "Henrietta Temple" is a masterpiece; and finally, running contrary to the general judgment once more, I should prefer "Endymion" to "Lothair." But in all these books (excepting "Henrietta Temple," and not excepting "Sybil") the parts surpass the whole, and even make the reader lose sight of the whole. The inimitable social and personal judgments, the admirable epigrams, the detached phrases and scenes that bring their individual sub-

jects before the eye as by a flash of lightning, dwarf or obscure the total impression. No doubt the author had definite purposes in writing all, or at least most of them, but the purpose is not the chief thing that impresses itself, nor the characters, still less the plot, or what does duty for a plot, which those characters combine (*tant bien que mal*, and it must be confessed quite as often *mal as bien*) to work out.—*Geo. Saintsbury, in Magazine of Art for May.*

Special Papers.

ARBOR DAY.

PROF. BROWN ON TREE-PLANTING.

THE following is a topical synopsis of the "Guide to Planting Trees and Shrubs on the School-grounds of Ontario," prepared for the special Arbor Day meeting of the East Middlesex Teachers' Association by Messrs. A. H. S. Broome, C. R. Brown and D. Calvert, a committee of the 2nd year students of the Ontario Agricultural College, under the direction of Professor Brown. We hope to give next week a report of the other addresses at the meeting.

GENERAL ADVICE.

1. Choose the best kinds of trees and shrubs for the special purposes—having regard to soils, districts and exposures.
2. Attend to every detail thoroughly, and adopt the most approved management.
3. The best ornament, shade and shelter are from properly developed trees and shrubs so disposed as not to unduly check side branches.
4. Never plant upon naturally poor nor wet ground, and remember that drought is more dangerous than frost.
5. Make no profuse congratulations when you have many leaves and some growth of wood the first and second years, nor rejoice unnecessarily if fruit is also abundant then, because neither are necessarily indications of well-doing.
6. Order your plants one month ahead of time, and place responsibility of delivery upon party supplying them. Instruct nurserymen to puddle the roots before shipping.
7. In case of extensive work it will pay to employ competent labour, but the education of others at same time should not be overlooked.

TREES FOR SHADE.

8. The best trees for shade are the sugar maple, soft maple, horse chestnut, Scotch elm, butternut, European linden, and fern leaved birch.

TREES FOR SCHOOL GROUND SHELTER.

9. A mixture of maple, elm, oak, ash, beech, birch, black walnut, with evergreens of Norway spruce, Austrian pine, common white cedar, and black American spruce.