

novels, doubtless because, with the exception of *Little Dorinn*, they are wholly ideal in conception and execution. The story of *Carmina* is almost a prose poem, and it is overrun with a tropical luxuriance of brilliant descriptive passages, by which the radiantly beautiful figure of Carmina is fitly framed. But Miss Murray's imagination responds no more perfectly to the stimulus of Italian skies than it does to the homely charm of life in an Irish farmyard. What could be better in its way than this bit from *Little Dorinn*?

"Close by ran a clear, sparkling stream, which never became dry in the hottest summer, and there every morning and evening, a bare-headed, bare-footed maiden scoured her wooden 'milk-vessels'—churns, cools, piggins and noggins—with bright sand from the stream's pebbly bed, till the wood was white as snow, and the iron hoops shone like silver, piling them on the bank as they were finished, to sweeten in the pure air among the buttercups and daisies."

Good as this is, it is no better than its context, from which I have torn it with a pang. The whole chapter is pervaded by the same idyllic sweetness and charm.

Perhaps the most finished of all Miss Murray's novels is *The Cited Curate*, the scene of which is laid in the County of Wicklow, Ireland, where the author's childhood and youth were passed. The current of the story, clear and sparkling in the opening chapters, deep-toned and dark towards the tragic close, winds through a series of natural scenes, most lovingly painted from life. I would be the last to inflict upon Miss Murray's art the cruelty of over-praise, but I have no hesitation in envying her the fascination which her pages exert. It is the fascination of her personality, of her style, of her unerring instinct for the effective, of her unwearying pleasure, which she compels the reader to share with her, in "nature's wildest and softest phases." But with scarcely a glance at the crags and glens, leaping streams and ivy-muffled bridges, "lonely moorlands, where the golden furze and purple heath make gorgeous the summer day," and where "the swollen river mingles its murmurs with the reverie of any lonely loiterer on the moor," let us consider the deep feeling shown in this passage concerning "the highly Calvinistic prayer" of the gifted, ambitious, but weak-hearted hero, who delivers himself of it at the devotions of his household:—

"Could I have heard him pour out his heart to that God in whose presence and power the voice within the breast attests its involuntary, indestructible belief whenever the soul's depths are stirred, to whom, in the hour of anguish, when the floods overwhelm us, and the waters cover our heads, we blindly cry for a help and a pity, nowhere else to be found,—that God above us, beyond us, yet forever near—whom many, alas! regard with a sad, superstitious fear, where no fear is,—it would have been an inexpressible relief; but to listen to him uttering formal words, for which he had neither faith nor reverence, words involving so many harsh and cold-hearted dogmas, which I knew he utterly condemned and disbelieved, and invoking Him who reads all hearts to hear them, while all the time he neither felt nor knew any thing except that the barbed arrows, which had that day entered his soul, were fastening their fangs in it deeper and deeper—was a mockery I could hardly bear. Yet, what know I? It is not the spoken words, but the silent voice within that God marks, and even then, under all this weight of dead words, Eardley's tortured heart may have sent up a living cry for pardon and peace, that was heard and answered, though in a way dark and inscrutable to mortal eyes."

Not much poetry has flowed from Louisa Murray's pen, but the little she has given us is of no ordinary quality. Some idea of the limpid purity of her thoughts and utterances may be found in her description of the heroine of *Merlin's Cave*.

All things that crossed her joyous way
A gleam of gladness caught,
Her presence, like a sunny ray,
A flash of brightness brought.

And in her soul there burned a light
That cheered her on her way,
Made luminous the starless night,
And cleared the cloudy day.

Imagination's wondrous power
Had taught this cottage girl,
In every field to find a flower,
In every shell a pearl.

Bright fancies dwelt in her untold,
And flashed through her clear eyes,
As gleams of light betray the gold
That in some river lies.

And so she lived in sweet content,
And smiled when first appeared
The sunlit cloud that o'er her bent,
And darkened as it neared.

It has been said that there is a shade of sadness discernible in Miss Murray's work, due to the untoward circumstances of her denied life, which must have seemed perpetually to thwart her natural preferences and aspirations. This shadow I have not been able to discover, but one cannot be blind to the sunny gleams of humour, that flicker among her pages, and through her letters, which abound in shrewd and piquant comments upon the literary topics of the day. A life-long companion of nature and of books, the productions of her virile and loving imagination have not been dependent upon fame nor even recognition. Genius, like virtue, is its own exceeding great reward, and this rarely gifted personality, while it may be pitied for its Canadian environment, is to be envied as a native of that ideal world, which takes no account of outward conditions, because so immeasurably superior to them.

A. ETHELWYN WETHERALD.

LITERARY GOSSIP.

CANON VENABLES has written a life of John Bunyan for the Great Writers Series.

MACMILLAN AND COMPANY announce a volume of poems by the Rev. Stopford A. Brooke.

HERBERT SPENCER has placed materials for his biography in the hands of Miss Beatrice Potter.

MISS ALCOTT directed by her will that all her letters, documents, and manuscripts be burned.

A Castle in the Air, by Gen. Hugh Ewing, is one of Henry Holt and Company's forthcoming novels.

WALTER BESANT will contribute the second of his two articles on *The Writing of Novels* to the April *Atalanta*.

A PAPER ON *The Laws of Property*, by Chief Justice Lord Coleridge, is the opening article in *Macmillan's* for April.

M. JULES SIMON has promised to preside over the next literary congress, organized by the Société des Gens de Lettres.

EDWARD EGGLESTON is engaged upon a history of America for children, which D. Appleton and Company will publish.

A Glimpse of North Africa is the title of an interesting paper by Mr. Grant Allen, in the April number of the *Contemporary Review*.

L. KREICHAUF, Elmira, N.Y., will issue this month the first number of the *Quarterly Bibliography of American and English Literature*.

Shakespeariana for April contains articles of importance on *The Bxton Shakespeare Library* by Arthur Mason Knapp; *The Fool in Lear*, by E. A. Kalkins; and *Views of an Unbeliever*, by Baruk Siddon.

The Spell of Ashtaroth is the title of a novel which the Scribners have in hand, the scene of which is Biblical, with Joshua as one of the principal characters. The example of *Ben Hur* appears to have been heeded.

THE new edition of the *English Reference Catalogue of Current Literature*, which work has for years been one of the thickest of thick volumes, will comprise upward of 4,000 pages. In weight it will exceed nine pounds.

M. HENRY HARRISSE proposes to celebrate the coming 400th anniversary of the discovery of America by the publication of an *édition de luxe* of all the original letters and other writings of Columbus now in existence relating to his great discovery.

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN, AND COMPANY publish this week a beautiful little volume entitled *Before the Curfew, and Other Poems, Chiefly Occasional*, by Dr. Holmes, containing the poems he has written during the last eight years since the publication of the *Iron Gate*.

THE April number of *Temple Bar* contains some interesting reminiscences of Charles Dickens by a lady who knew him before he was famous as well as when he came suddenly into notice with *Pickwick*. It is a phase of Dickens which probably Forster never saw.

GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP fully describes in *The Critic* of April 14 the personal appearance and manner of living and working of Philadelphia's most prominent author, the Hon. George Henry Boker, ex-Minister to Turkey and Russia, and founder of the first Union League Club in America.

THE peculiar marriage ceremonies of the Zulus of Southern Africa are described for the first time in a graphic sketch entitled *A Zulu Wedding*, contributed by W. P. Pond to the April number of *Woman*. Mr. Pond lived in South Africa for several years, and his paper is a record of personal observations.

HARPER AND BROTHERS have just issued the third and concluding volume of Lea's *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*; a collection of stories by Amélie Rives, taking its title from her strong story, *A Brother to Dragons*; and *Joyce*, by Mrs. Oliphant, which appears in the *Franklin Square Library*.

THE *Henry Irving Shakespeare* is now being published by Messrs. H. Bryant and Company of this city, simultaneously with Messrs Blackie and Son, of London and Glasgow. It is edited by Shakespeare's interpreter, Henry Irving, and by the eminent Shakespearian scholar, Mr. Frank A. Marshall and illustrated profusely by the popular artist, Gordon Browne.

ONE of the oldest of the French Academicians died recently,—J. M. N. D. Nisard, a distinguished journalist. He was a contributor to the leading reviews, for ten years Director of the Higher Normal Schools, and a Commander of the Legion of Honour. He was eighty-two years old, and had been in the Academy since 1850. He had written novels and translated Shakespeare. His works include *The Latin Poets of the Decadence* and *A History of French Literature*.

WE have received from the publishers of *The North American Review* a neatly printed paper-covered edition of *The Field-Ingersoll Discussion*. It is a series of controversial articles, originally published in the *Review*, on Faith and Agnosticism, by Rev. Henry M. Field, D.D., and Colonel Robert Ingersoll. The articles are able, often eloquent, and entirely free from controversial acerbity; but it does not appear that either of the contestants has converted the other. The faith of the learned Doctor is still unshaken, and the silver-tongued preacher of Agnosticism is still firm in his unbelief.