



AN IMPRESSIVE EPISODE IN THE LIFE OF A POET.—Mr. Alvern de Songue entrusts the MS. of his last volume of poems to a publisher. He visits that estimable gentleman some time afterwards, and learns that the verses have been sent in to the publishing committee of the firm to be read prior to publication, and at the time of his visit the committee were engaged in reading them over. The genial head of the firm suggests a visit to the committee room to ascertain their ecstasies at the charms of his lines.

On entering the effect is strikingly apparent.

Leaves from my Japanese Note Book.

By DOUGLAS SLADEN.

To the Editor of THE DOMINION ILLUSTRATED:

SIR.—As the pictures for the first of my articles on the Canadian route to the East have been unavoidably delayed I send you some leaves from my Japanese note book to take its place in this week's number.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD'S POEM.—Sir Edwin Arnold, with his usual generosity, came forward and offered to give a reading from his great unpublished poem, "The Light of the World," if people cared to hear it. If! When it was an event of first class importance in the poetical world, to parallel which one has to go back to the days of bards and rhapsodists, before this utilitarian age of reporters and syndicates began.

The recitation was given in the fine hall of the Rokumeikan, the historical and handsome building, some of which is leased by the Government to the Tokio Club. This hall is rather an imposing chamber, with its three carved fireplaces and parqueted ceiling. There was an assemblage of some hundreds, embracing most of the representative people of Tokio and Yokohama, headed by the English Minister, Hugh Fraser, the American, John Swift, the Austrian, Baron von Biegeleben, the Bishop, the Right Rev. E. Bickersteth, Captain Brinkley, R. A., and General Palmer, R. E., whose names are beginning to be known to Englishmen as writers to whom everything Japanese is precious and beautiful, from their morality, commercial and otherwise, to the perfume of their fertilizing methods, a number of officers from the British fleet and a fair sprinkling of Japanese, who went there probably as they adopt Christianity or European boots—as an evidence of their equality with the Western nations.

Sir Edwin came forward—the orthodox afternoon reciter as unexceptionable as that lion among ladies, the composer, Isidor de Lard—in a faultless frock coat, white waistcoat, lavender tie in "sweet disorder, light gloves and carnationed buttonhole, with his strong face wearing its accustomed serenity of perfect physical health. He is a good reciter, because he is most earnest and impressive, without a tinsel of rant or posing. The name of his new poem, as probably all the world knows by this time, is "The Light of the World," a companion to his epochal poem "The Light of Asia." As "The Light of Asia" puts before Christian audiences Buddhism transmuted with alchemical art into a poem, harmonious, unified, exquisite, so "The Light of the World" puts Christianity before Christians in a new light—the light of the accumulated wisdom of the East. "The Light of the World" expresses the Buddhist's homage to Christianity, a task for which no man living is so competent as Sir Edwin, bred a Christian and saturated with Buddhist love and ideas.

Whether Sir Edwin is or is not a Buddhist need not be discussed here. That he has sucked the best out of Buddhism is undisputable. If "The Light of Asia" is Buddhism by the light of Christianity, "The Light of the World" is Christianity by the light of Buddhism.

Sir Edwin read with much feeling, and it is needless to say was received with the highest interest. To sketch the plot of the poem would not be fair to him, but one must pay homage to his characterization of Pontius Pilate, his rehabilitation of the stern Roman soldier and stoic who made the one "faux pas" of currying the favour of the unruly Jewish populace, who were Caesar's most unamenable subjects. As to the romance in which he has invested

Mary Magdalen I must be silent, and also as to the sublime figure he makes of Christ. Pilate's wife, Procula, who belonged to the great Claudian gens, was an ambitious subject to approach after the magnificent idealization of Dore with its haunting beauty and majestic presence. But Sir Edwin has added the breath of life to this exquisite idealization by the noble character he has created in his poem.

For twelve long years Sir Edwin carried the scheme of his poem in his mind, as Ulysses cherished the image of Penelope on his ten years' wanderings after Troy, and when at last he was able to lay down his editorial harness for a while, the seeds sprang, burgeoned and burst into blossom with extraordinary rapidity—until they stand before us the perfect whole of a great poem.

It is the outcome of his wanderings in Palestine many years ago as the pre-Raphaelite accuracy of the local colouring shows Sir Edwin, like the great poet that he is, loves to study the beast of the field, the bird of the air and the flowers of the earth. The Titan wall that no convulsion of nature or warfare could overthrow, the fallen acanthus frieze and masonry crumbling into picturesque decay, enthral his eye. The solemn Eastern night, purple and diamonded with stars, the fierce Eastern noon, the mellowness of the delicious sunsets are unconsciously reflected, and here and there hovers across the horizon the Bedouin of the desert with Arab steed and matchlock and fluttering burn-orse.

Sir Edwin has absorbed the whole atmosphere of Palestine, and his poem breathes it. To his aid comes a profound antiquarian knowledge and the familiarity that comes from long residence in the East. The poem is as much a piece of Palestine as Wallace's now classical "Ben Hur." As might have been expected in a poem born in Japan "Fujiyama" inspires one noble passage, in which the sacred mountain so gloriously beautiful with its perished or hidden fires and its spotless crown of snow shadows forth the life of Mary Magdalen. Another noble poem is inspired by one of the most famous incidents in Greek literature, Socrates condemning the Athenian Judges to live, and taking the hemlock as a gift, and a third, full of Sophoclean irony, pointing out that Christ's blessed feet overthrew Jerusalem more utterly than the armies of Titus, and a fourth with Pilate flying from the presence of Mary Magdalen at midnight on his swiftest horse, because "one other watch would make me Nazarene!"

The poem is full of these dramatic situations and interspersed with lyrics of the beauty of Swinburne's earlier method as he sang in "Songs Before Sunrise." The poem is also full of striking lines such as these:

Write me a song unstained by any tear.

In the mor'ning watch,
When dreams come truer through the fate of morn,
Deep hollows where the winter hides away
Snows through the summer.

He himself passed
Mild and majestic through death's black gate
If hades be a black tribunal,
Her that loved much and had her love with thee.

Jordan ere he hastens on to die,
As rivers die and men die, helplessly,
To rest as the wild waters rest.

Must I find at Rome
The face that fills my nightly dreams with fear
Watching with those great eyes.

It toucheth Athens and hath crept to Rome.

To this end was I born and became
King of all kings to witness to the truth.

Those old fires now under snow.

Here are some of the lines which delineate in masterly points Sir Edwin's conceptions of Christ and Pilate and Christ's view of Pilate:

With such a mien as one should have
Wearing the purple.

Her eyes
Burned themselves on my heart.

The fire of those mild eyes,
That had no fear or bitterness.

Claudia sighed,
There was no fault

Oh! the light
That beamed from those mild eyes.

The speech of him fair music and his feet
A benediction.

Authority yet sits upon my lip.

I played worse traitor to my stoic soul.
I might have saved, I would have saved.
That which is writ is writ.

I did not dare

And that which hindered was thy lust to win
Favour of men instead of praise from heaven.

The horde of circumcised
Baying about my palace.

That they might drink clean in swill.

I took water and washed hands
Before the herd.

These lines caught by an accident of slower delivery in places, must serve as a sample. There were finer than any here quoted, but they were usually in passages poured forth with the rapidity of excitement.

No one who heard the poem had any doubt of its quality or its success. One of the audience, Harry Deakin, the famous curio dealer of Yokohama, was so enthusiastic that he bought the American rights of the poem, it is said, for the large sum of \$25,000.

One of the two greatest living American poets is going to write in lines here and there, so as to secure the copyright, which will appear in his name and Sir Edwin's conjointly. This will be the first instance of an English poet of the first rank publishing a magnum opus in America before England—a well-deserved homage to the wider diffusion of culture in America, as evidenced by the vastly larger body of readers.

The reading was one of the events of the season in Tokio and every one went to it dressed for a legation garden party.

Count Marshal Von Moltke.

Helmuth Carl Bernhard Von Moltke was born on the 26th of October, in the year 1800. His father was also an officer in the army. The family, originally of Mecklenburg, where it was held in esteem, moved to Holstein while the future general was still a child. At an early age he was sent to the military academy at Copenhagen. In 1822 he entered the Prussian service as lieutenant, and ten years later was admitted to the staff. In 1835 he made his *début* as a writer on strategics, his essay being an account of the Russo-Turkish war of 1828. Soon after the Sultan Mahmoud sought his counsel for the reorganization of his army and the construction of frontier defences. Von Moltke took part in the campaigns against Mehemed Ali. On his return to Prussia he wrote his "Letters on Condition and History of Turkey in the years 1835-39," which appeared in 1841. In 1845 he was aide-de-camp to Prince Henry of Prussia, with whom he resided in Rome for some time. He wrote some letters on the States of the Church, which were subsequently published. In 1849 he was made Chief of Staff of the 4th Army Corps, and in 1858 became Chief of Staff to the entire army. Under his supervision the staff was rendered the most effective means of concentrating and directing the force of the army. In 1864 (being then a lieutenant-general) he drew up the plan of the campaign in Denmark for Prince Frederick Charles. In the Austrian war his services were still more brilliant, as it was mainly through him that the victory of Sadowa was won. On that occasion he led the main army and followed up the success by a bold advance on Olmutz and Vienna, thus bringing the seven week's war to an end. The Prussian Parliament voted him a grant of money and the King honoured him with the Order of the Black Eagle. It was he who prepared the plan of the Franco-German war, and the rapidity and accuracy with which the army was moved on the predetermined line of attack showed how thoroughly he had mastered the problem. In recognition of his services, which were the admiration of Europe, he was made a Count and Chief Marshal of the Empire. Count Marshal Von Moltke has published a number of technical historical works besides those already mentioned, including an account of the Italian campaign of 1859. In character he is a man of known integrity and honour, is simple in habits and unassuming in manner. The esteem in which he is held in the Empire which he has done so much to create was exemplified last week, when all classes of citizens united in doing him honour. Among the substantial tokens of respect of which he was the object was a gift of 50,000 marks, presented in his name by the Burgomaster of Berlin to the late Emperor William's almshouses. To a private soldier who wrote some verses for the occasion, the Count wrote a letter of thanks, in which he said that the army which produced poet soldiers must be above the average of armies. The great powers were represented at the anniversary celebration, and Queen Victoria, the Prince of Wales, the Czar, the Sultan, and other sovereigns, telegraphed their congratulations.