

smother the voice of true womanliness which speaks in every page of the writings of George Eliot and Christian Reid.

The latter has been a favourite with the novel-reading public for over a dozen years, and yet it is safe to say that no reader with any pretensions to discernment has ever supposed Christian Reid to be other than the pen-name of a refined and pure-minded woman.

Not that the writings of Frances Fisher, or Mrs. James N. Tiernan, to be more correct, do not evidence a strength of character and an abundant seriousness which would do credit to any man, but, as in those rooms which know a woman's presence, a thousand and one objects attest that such is the case, so in the works of Christian Reid we constantly find touches which could have been given only by a feminine hand.

In order to make this point clearer, let us consider in a general way her women and her men. The former, types of whom are found in Sybil Bertram, Laura Dorrance, Helen Morley, Marion Lynde and Renée Leigh, are drawn from life. They are genuine women, having all the best characteristics of the sex as well as its weaknesses. But Alan Egerton, Adrian Stanmore, Gaston de Marigny, even Duchesne, are ideal men. They are realities only in the minds of good women, and let us pray that they may continue to have an existence there. For if women could see men as they really are, would it be possible for them to respect, not to say love them?

But we must descend from generalities to particulars, for the object of this article, as of some former ones, is to tell Catholics of what too many of them know little or nothing—of some delightful novels written by a Catholic.

Christian Reid has written a great deal. The orphan daughter of an officer in the service of the Confederate States, she was early obliged to lean on her pen for support. The necessity of being her own breadwinner led her to bring the products of her brain to the best market, and so it happens that the most of her novels, "Valerie Aylmer," "Morton House," and a dozen others, are not distinctively Catholic in tone. But they are all safe and excellent reading, and the above mentioned rank emphatically among the popular novels. The committees of parish or society libraries could not do better than purchase the complete set, whose acquisition would assuredly tend to increase the membership of ladies at least.

But it is of three distinctly Catholic novels that we propose to speak. For the first of these, "Armine," we are indebted to the *Catholic World*, that storehouse of what is best in American Catholic literature. The novel has, moreover, been issued in book form by the Catholic Publication Society Co. of New York. Did it bear the impress of a non-Catholic publisher and a sensational title, such as "The Socialist's Daughter," its success would have doubtless been much greater. And to this title "Armine" would have a better right than Miss O'Meara's "Narka" to that of "The Nihilist" which we dare believe has increased the sale of the novel by one half. For Armine Duchesne is really the daughter of a Socialist, a man of wondrous eloquence and lofty single-mindedness. Infidelity, however, has not broadened his views sufficiently to make him tolerate that his daughter should have different opinions. With him freedom of thought should not be extended to those who do not know how to use it, that is, to those who do not by its means arrive at Socialistic conclusions. So poor Armine, with her slight graceful figure and high-bred face, has to pass through severe trials, in which her chief if not only support is derived from Raoul d'Antignac, a helpless cripple, who while lying on his bed of pain, is able to do stronger battle for the truth than he had done on the field of Mentana. They are not common-place persons, Armine and Raoul; more like angels than man and woman, they seem to be of the few whose presence in this world serves to give us a glimpse of another.

Around these two superior planets circle a number of satellites whose movements will perhaps be more interesting to the average reader. There is the haughtily beautiful Sibyl Bertram and her excellent mother who despairs of comprehending her, handsome, good-humoured Alan Egerton, a wealthy young fellow who studies alternately Socialism and Sibyl Bertram, and is despised by the latter for his want of purpose, and Laura Dorrance, a harmless, gossipy young lady of the period, whose highest pleasures are driving in the Bois or shopping in the Magasin du Louvre. All these and many others less worthy of special mention does the writer place in the kaleidoscope, and the result is a series of charming pictures. Marmaduke Talford,

an Epicurean of the most modern type, whose philosophy of life has condensed all his vague ideas into a corrosive sublimate of selfishness, is well set off against the Vicomte de Marigny, in whose bosom there burns "the heart of a Crusader," but whose well disciplined brain can grapple with all the social and religious problems of this modern age. He is, moreover, the ideal of a Breton noble, the personification of a true gentleman.

And it must not be imagined that this story is without an interesting plot. Although there is much serious talk concerning important questions of society and religion, yet the charm of the novel is constantly felt. The beauty of such a character as Armine Duchesne cannot be contemplated but with pleasure. In fact, it exerts a fascination on the reader which holds him bound as with a spell, even after he has finished the last page.

We cannot refrain from laying before the readers of the REVIEW one of the many noble passages in this beautiful book. Christian Reid shows herself a satirist of much power when she speaks of "Society which keeps up a bowing acquaintance with God, and which goes to church (in a new toilette) on Sunday with a comfortable sense of performing a vague duty, and at the same time passing an hour so in an agreeable manner, hearing some good music and probably some novel doctrine, which can afterwards be discussed with much individual freedom of opinion."

"A Child of Mary" was first given to the public in the pages of the *Avs Maria*. It is the most popular of Christian Reid's later books, though inferior in merit to "Armine." Popularity is not the best criterion of merit, but surely the more popular story is the better, in a relative sense at least. That is, it is better for the appetite which craves food of this kind and will have it whether it be poisonous or wholesome. The "Child of Mary" is Renée Leigh, half French, half American and Catholic, whom fate brings to a thoroughly Protestant village of the Southern States to live with her Protestant cousins, Helen, Herbert and Margaret. The first likes Renée till the defection of her lover causes jealousy; the second loves her; and the third hates her, in a mild fashion, because of her religion. Simple materials and simple plot! But that which is simple most often pleases, and, as a proof, all are pleased who read "A Child of Mary."

The *Avs Maria* had also the honour of introducing to the world "Fairy Gold," which has not yet, so far as we are aware, appeared in book form. The first scene is a convent school, the time, the last day of the school term. Three girls, Marion Lynde, Helen Morley and Claire Alford, who are to leave forever the walls which are so dear to them, are endeavouring to forecast their future. Claire desires only to succeed in her art, painting; Helen is satisfied with the prospect of a smooth and happy home life; but Marion is ambitious, and desirous of making a great and wealthy marriage.

The scene changes to Helen Morley's home, whither Marion Lynde has accompanied her on a visit. Without thought of anything but the gratification of her own vanity, the latter draws Paul Rathborne, Helen's lover, away from his allegiance, only to reject with scorn his offer of marriage. His anger, his failure again to win Helen's love, and his successful revenge on Marion—successful only for a time—give the novel strong dramatic interest. Marion's rejection of the man she loves because he will not stoop to obtain wealth, and her subsequent misery, are drawn with vivid distinctness. She is at length led to see that wealth and position are not the highest goods, and her ultimate abandonment of her former selfish principles is rewarded with what the reader will probably regard as too great a share of worldly happiness.

It is to be hoped that Mrs. Tiernan will continue to favour those Catholic readers who are now beginning to appreciate her with many more such stories from her facile pen.

DAVID RONAYNE.

Hon. Mr. Sullivan, Premier and Attorney General of Prince Edward Island, and Mrs. Sullivan, who returned to the Island on Saturday evening last after a visit to Great Britain and the Continent, had the honour of a presentation to the Pope on the 7th July. His Holiness received them most kindly, and held a long conversation with Mrs. Sullivan, whose mother he remembered during his ministrations as a priest. The family of Pecci, of which His Holiness is a member, belonged to Sienna, the birth-place of Mrs. Sullivan's mother.