

evidently longed for a transformation scene as in a Christmas pantomime. He was a fair specimen of myriads who, by their votes displaced the free-trade party. In rural France such people are the support of the ultra-protectionists who have reversed the state of things of 50 years ago. Then almost all articles of food were cheaper in France than in England; now, owing to British free trade, it is exactly the reverse.

What Sir John said to the British Commissioners anent the danger of annexation, if what he advised was negated, is a capital instance of his fitness for the position of an old-time ambassador as then currently defined. It was pure buncombe. During 23 years in Quebec and Ontario I have not met with six native Canadians who desire annexation. We all know that we are far better governed than the States, and that annexation would mean that the careers of our statesmen of both sides would be blighted, and that, like the Americans, we should be ruled and victimized by the Washington rings.

Although not a Conservative, I agree with Dr. Grant that the work gives a better opinion of Sir John than we had before.

In conclusion I would respectfully suggest—as Dr. Grant excels in seizing the leading points of history—that he would be a very fit person to write a history of Canada for popular use. Great historians are as rare as great generals. In each case it is necessary—among other qualifications—to combine large views with thorough insight.

FAIRPLAY RADICAL.

Toronto, Dec. 31, 1894.

SCOTT AND STEVENSON.

To the Editor of The Week :

SIR,—Mr. Neilson, in his notice of Robert Louis Stevenson, in *THE WEEK* of December 21, makes the following remark :—“ ‘Kidnapped’ is not a mere return to Marryat and Cooper, not even to Scott ; it is a return to the picturesque and dramatic action of these earlier romance writers, with the addition of a subtle power of characterization of which they knew little or nothing.” After quoting Scott’s own admission that “the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment” was denied him, he makes the assertion that “with the commonplace he notoriously failed,” and cites “Edward Waverly” as an example.

I write not for the purpose of controverting this opinion, but for the purpose of getting a little more light on a difficult branch of criticism from one who writes with the airy confidence of an expert. It seems to me that Scott has succeeded with a good many of his characters quite as well as Stevenson has with “David Balfour,” and I would like to know whether those named below are, in Mr. Neilson’s opinion, included in his idea of the “commonplace”: “Caleb Balderson,” “Edie Ochiltree,” “Dominic Sampson,” “Dandie Dinmont,” “Andrew Fairservice,” “Gurth,” “Friar Tuck,” “Rebecca,” “Jeanie Deans.”

I may add that little importance should be attached to Scott’s comparison of himself with Jane Austin. He was not the best judge of his own artistic powers, any more than Shakespeare or any other truly great artist. If Mr. Neilson can clear up my difficulty he will earn the gratitude of an

ONLOOKER.

SOCIETY AND MANNERS.

To the Editor of The Week :

SIR,—We are often told that the world is improving, and I am inclined to hope and believe that this may be the case. But I am troubled about one thing—the manners of people—of women, and of well-dressed women in society. “Manners make the man,” we are told ; but surely they much more make the woman ; and, if that is so, according to my observation, the woman must be very badly made. It is not merely that a great many of these ladies—women, very well dressed women, too—are destitute of ordinary courtesy. They hardly ever say, “If you please,” or “Thank you,” when you show them an attention ; but they are loud and noisy in their conversation, offhand in their remarks—speaking, for example, in a crowded room, almost at the top of their voices, and making personal references to persons in the room and almost within earshot. Now, sir, I want your

opinion on this subject. Is this the blossom of modern civilization ? Is this the outcome of our improved education and the like ? We read of the ancient Salon where ladies and gentlemen were courteous and even ceremonious, and we smile at the old-world politeness—the bows, the gestures, the smiles. I dare say, it would be easy to ridicule the practices of older times. But oh, the misery, the agony of mingling with crowds whose rudeness and brutality make one’s skin creep and one’s hair stand on end ! What is the reason of it ? How do you account for it ? What is to be done about it ?

OLDSTYLE.

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Library Table.

Odes and Other Poems. By William Watson. (New York : Macmillan & Co. Toronto : The Copp, Clark Co., Ltd.)—This new volume of verses by William Watson contains work which shows that this gifted writer has completely recovered health and strength. Some of his admirers will feel that these new contributions are rather slight, but, no doubt, the strain of composing a long poem would have overtasked the author’s newly recovered energies. This disappointment is amply atoned for by the rich promise of the poem entitled “Vita Nuova.” It is a hymn of thanksgiving poured fourth in gratitude and joy for recovered life. Its grandeur—we can use no less a word—proclaims a nature of great power and capacity. We make no apology for quoting it entire :

Long hath she slept, forgetful of delight :
At last, at last, the enchanted princess, Earth,
Claimed with a kiss by Spring the adventurer,
In slumber knows the destined lips, and thrilled
Through all the deeps of her unageing heart
With passionate necessity of joy,
Wakens, and yields her loveliness to love.

O ancient streams, O far-descended woods
Full of the fluttering of melodious souls ;
O hills and valleys that adorn yourselves
In solemn jubilation : winds and clouds,
Ocean and land in stormy nuptials clasped,
And all exuberant creatures that acclaim
The Earth’s divine renewal : lo, I too
With yours would mingle somewhat of glad song.
I too have come through wintry terrors,—yea,
Through tempest and through cataclysm of soul
Have come, and am delivered.

Me the spring,
Me also, dimly with new life hath touched,
And with regenerate hope, the salt of life ;
And I would dedicate these thankful tears
To whatsoever Power beneficent,
Veiled though his countenance, undivulged his thought,
Hath led me from the haunted darkness forth
Into the gracious air and vernal morn,
And suffers me to know my spirit a note
Of this great chorus, one with bird and stream
And voiceful mountain,—nay, a string, how jarred
And all but broken ! of that lyre of life,
Whereon himself, the master harp-player,
Resolving all its mortal dissonance
To one immortal and most perfect strain,
Harps without pause, building with song the world.

These lines have been said—whether worthily or not, let the reader judge—to have something of the majesty of Milton’s verse.

Among many beautiful pieces we would single out the beautiful lyric which begins : Bid me no more, etc., and the Ode to the first skylark in spring. “A Study in Contrasts” compares the restless spirit of a Collie to the genius of the West and the monumental calm of a great Angora to the genius of the East. It is more humorous and altogether in lighter vein than Matthew Arnold’s well known lines : “In Memory of Obermann,” but it is quite worthy to be compared with them.

We are inclined to think that the *Spectator*, in placing Watson first among living poets, is overstepping the mark, but if Watson fulfils the promise of some of his work, it may be that this disciple of Tennyson is destined to win the withheld crown. All his work is musical, some of it is in the grand style. But as yet it is rather slight and the poet is inclined to be too self-conscious, too anxious, too eagerly desirous of fame. His admirers will watch anxiously for his next volume. In the meantime *Odes and Other Poems* is full of promise, and will add to an already widespread popularity.