

LITERARY NOTES

MUCH regret is being expressed in England because of the announced retirement of Miss Helen Mathers, who in private life is known as Mrs. Henry Reeves. Miss Mathers has been writing for thirty-four years and twenty novels stand to her credit. Her best known work of course is "Comin' Thro' the Rye," a book to whose phenomenal popularity no less a person than Mr. James Hardy paid the compliment that wherever he went he was sure of finding it and the Bible. "Comin' Thro' the Rye" was composed when Miss Mathers was barely out of her teens. The young author, in her modesty, planned and executed her work without the knowledge of her family. She gained confidence as the construction of the story progressed. When it was about half completed she braved a publisher with the manuscript. There was no rebuff. This publisher was a very shrewd gentleman. He at once arranged that Miss Mathers should finish the book. She wrote at top speed and "Comin' Thro' the Rye" was soon upon the book counters. A very tired young lady awoke to find herself famous.

The withdrawal of Miss Mathers now from the literary world is in itself significant. Her chief reason which has inspired this action, according to herself, is "the terribly unsatisfactory condition of the book market—at any rate so far as the author is concerned." Miss Mathers claims that under prevalent conditions no novelist can continue in the profession and keep self-respect. In a published interview the other day she stated:

"I think there are several causes for this state of things and chief among them is the natural popularity of the 14c. edition. The public are reaping a fine harvest of cheap editions at the expense of the author; no one is going to pay \$1.12 or \$1.50 for a novel when it can be bought after the lapse of a few weeks or months for 14c. Unlike the paper-covered 12c. editions, the 14c. books can be kept and given a place on the bookshelves.

Of course, booksellers are not going to stock \$1.12 novels which remain unasked for in the shop while the public wait patiently for the cheap edition.

"The motor car is another factor in the decline of the novel; people have no time to read while they are travelling about the country. What the ultimate result of the cheapening of novels will be I do not know; I can only think that in time the best authors will cease to write and will turn their brains and energies to some other way of making a living."

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MR. JOHN W. DAFOE, a delegate from Winnipeg to the Imperial Press Conference, has just issued a small pamphlet containing impressions of the visit of the overseas journalists to the heart of the Empire. The other day Mr. J. A. Macdonald, another Canadian delegate, told what impressed him most. Mr. Macdonald's views were pessimistic. He saw the flotsam and jetsam of civilization in England. Mr. Macdonald sounded a warning. The presence of this decadent social condition appealed to him as a terrible menace. Mr. Dafoe, on the other hand, perceives no signs of rottenness in the nation. His is a healthy, rosy picture of English society. To quote a few words:

"Of all the impressions which remain after the visit to England, with its unexampled opportunities for seeing things on the inside, the one

which is strongest is that the home-keeping race is young, progressive and virile, not stale and decrepit as it is often represented as being. Great Britain in conjunction with her overseas children is entering upon a new career, but for her it is no last adventure of Ulysses. It is not a case of:

"Death closes all; but something, ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods!"

The English race, not only in the wider horizons of the new lands, but in the old home, is not old, but younger; it is vigorous, prolific, stout-hearted, keen brained. Consider how the handful of Britons who occupied the "little isle set in the silver seas" less than three hundred years ago, have peopled and taken possession of great areas in every continent. When England and Scotland became one country by the accession to the English throne of James of Scotland the island held only some five million souls. To-day the descendants of that sparse population number more than 100,000,000 and they hold in addition to the home land the fairest stretches of the younger world—United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand—while their language is conquering the whole world. In trade and commerce the development has been equally marvellous. These are not signs of racial decrepitudes."

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"THE WHITE PLAGUE AND OTHER POEMS."

By Thadeus A. Browne—Briggs.

THIS is about the time of year when the annual deluge of pretty Canadian poetry books is due to choke the bargain counters of the land. Among the early arrivals is a volume by young Mr. Thadeus A. Browne, of Ottawa. This gentleman and his publishers claim to have struck "a new note in literature." It is to be hoped that few will desire to pay the piper or dance to his tune. Mr. Browne's book contains as its leading feature "The White Plague," a sixteen page treatise upon the horrors of consumption with crude fanciful pictorial conceptions of the disease which among artistic monstrosities, as a critic remarked the other day, "Have the 'Martyrs' beaten a mile." This long painful dissertation is supplemented by a number of the usual insipid Canadian type of effusions about love, and April, and in this case, as a climax, some verse of which Mr. Tom Longboat is the theme. Mr. Browne's book is the silliest lot of morbid drivel which has appeared in this country since Dr. Fisher's, "The Child of Destiny."

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THERE is but one thing in this world that Mr. A. T. Quiller-Couch loves better than writing and that is yachting. Like many famous Englishmen, Mr. Quiller-Couch dates his fondness for aquatic sports from his Oxford days. At college, he stroked the Varsity crew and was a prominent figure in the rowing world. When Mr. Quiller-Couch is not on the water he gives up most of his energies to literature. He is an exceedingly careful worker. His plots are usually developed during long tramps into the country, the form in which he takes his exercise when a landlubber. Mr. Mark Twain considers himself slow and he turns out 2,000 words a day, but Mr. Quiller-Couch's limit of daily output is 1,000 and often but 150 words.

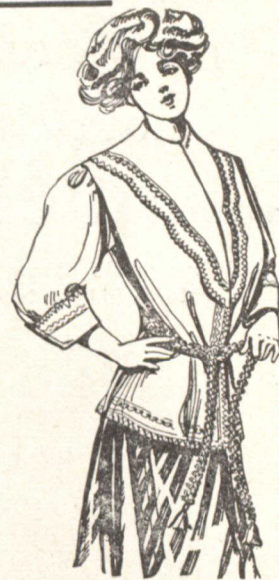
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