

THE DOLL'S HOUSE.

IN borrowing the title of Ibsen's play, there is no intention of in any way discussing his book, but the singular appropriateness of the title to one phase of the subject in hand is the best excuse. "Woman's Rights," "The Enfranchisement of Woman," "The Progress of Woman" and other titles have come to be rather mal-odorous, Shakespeare to the contrary.

Ever since the time of the "spouse adored," whom her consort in the "Creation" addresses so tenderly, man has had decidedly the best of life. Eve and her daughters have had to work out a problem during thousands of years; it has been in a blind, groping way, stumbling upon parts of the solution here and there. In fact, until very recently, that they have been doing this does not seem to have been plain to themselves. That problem is woman's exact place in the universe. Man has been so busy with his own destiny, thinking the whole world during all time depended upon that, that he is not at all prepared for the "vagaries" of woman in this nineteenth century. Woman was handicapped in the beginning by a curse which could only be removed by thousands of years of suffering. The curses of the decalogue are only to the third and fourth generations, but on and on during hundreds of generations, toiling, enduring woman existed until the star in the East became to her the star of hope. That Christ was born of the Virgin Mary was the visible sign that at last the heavy weight of that disobedience in Paradise was removed.

During the pre-Christian centuries the "Oriental view" of woman was the only view. A creature given to man to help to populate the earth, but to have thoughts, feelings, an existence apart from man was not for her, nature and the Creator had not meant that she should have. This of course sanctioned polygamy, even to the thousand wives of the wise king. Though of later years, the Mohammedans hold it and deny her a soul. The dwellers in India allow her enough spiritual nature to give her a part of a seat in the abode of the blessed, near her beloved husband, if on earth she never contradicted him, never objected to his beating her, never in any way resisted the worst indignity put upon her. The Jews permitted her a soul-germ, enough to admit her into the outer court of the temple. In attempting a classification hard and fast lines can never be drawn, we cannot say so-and-so begins here and stops there, but we find in Christian lands and in modern times that the man who holds the oriental view is not a *rara avis*.

With the Christian religion another feeling began to prevail. Now follows the time when man is to be the husband of one woman; that woman rapidly becomes a creature "too bright and good for human nature's daily food," an angel, a seraph—in short we enter the "Doll's House Era." The danger of over-population, and not that the waste places shall become desolate is the fear. But there is another fear in the minds of anxious parents—probably the fear was necessary for the correct solution—that is, lest the daughters of the house shall not find husbands. So woman's duty in life is to be good and beautiful that men may have good and beautiful wives. Woman is petted and caressed, given pretty clothes and furniture. How much of her life is her own? How many opinions and wishes has she which are not her husband's? Of course the funny man makes jokes about this—the woman rules, the husband is a cowering wretch—but the attitude of the joker only puts the general case in a clearer light. In this era the whole education of woman is for the one end, her pretty accomplishments, her ways of thinking, or rather not thinking. She must not have positive opinions, men do not like positive women; she must not be learned, men do not like "blue stockings"; she must accomplish her destiny when young; men do not like old maids. Volumes are devoted to "How to become good wives." According to the theory of this period, to be a reflector—not too brilliant—of man is the sole duty of woman. She became vain, frivolous, deceitful; not because it is woman-nature to be so, but because education and custom combined to make her so.

Some years ago there were those who were rabid over woman's equality to man; she must do as he does, dress as he does, be as he is. There must always be some fanatics. We live in a transition epoch—transition epochs are times of great upheavals. Tolstoi in Russia declares all marriage un-Christian. Statisticians prove that there are far more women in the world than men. Others are agitated over the fact that there is an evident reluctance in the minds of many to quit the celibate state. These things must needs be. Meanwhile woman is gaining the solution to the problem, not how to become man, but herself; how to be equal, but different; capable of taking care of herself or working shoulder to shoulder—so much of the petty sentiment about clinging and trusting is sheer selfishness on both sides—still capable of being taken care of when necessary; capable of living in harmony with man, though often differing widely in opinion; in short is learning how to develop herself physically, mentally and morally.

L. O'LOANE.

WE women want sometimes to hear what we know we die unless we hear what we doubt.—*Landor*.

EXACT justice is commonly more merciful in the long run than pity, for it tends to foster in men those stronger qualities which make them good citizens.—*Lowell*.

THE RAMBLER.

A WELL-KNOWN contributor has lately assured us that much of the verve, the charm, the qualities of force and distinction that have raised men like Stevenson, Lang and Meredith to pre-eminence has been the result of French influences.

The statement is not without certain side issues of truth, yet the honest student of the literature of Elizabethan England, of the Addisonian school of essayists, and of the great Victorian book-making epoch, receives the statement—it must be confessed—with very great caution. Lang and Dobson, Henley and Gosse, Brander Mathews and Clinton Scollard have, it is true, revived the old "Gallic bonds" of Villon and Voltaire with brilliant success. These *papillon* forms of verse seem to have sprung anew from minds so much more intelligently and broadly cultured, from temperaments so infinitely chaster, purer, yet no less keen and alive to outward impressions, that our pleasure in perusing them, either in dainty books, willow-patterned down the margin and bearing rough mediaeval edges, or, as they occur, ephemerally but ever gracefully, in periodical literature, scarcely suits with some notions of French delights. Yet Dobson and Lang, for all their adoption of Gallic forms and certain glittering graces of technical adornment, remain English writers and writers of English—not always one and the same thing. The germ of Dobson was in *Praed*. With an added culture, a far wider and loftier range of thought, and an altogether higher and more compelling conception of his work, Dobson is *Praed* removed to a different sphere.

Andrew Lang is still further from the original *Praed*, and suspiciously like his friend Dobson. Yet his subject-matter is, if anything, still more removed from the common stock-in-trade of French poets, for he revels in the classical allusions and personages dear to the true student.

With regard to Robert Louis Stevenson, I am still less inclined to accept the statement that much of his power and finish is derived from study of French masters of style. It appears to me that Stevenson is one of the most typical and original English writers we have, holding his gift in a straight line from such authors and giants in their own lines as Kingsley, Leigh Hunt, De Quincey and Scott. His story of "The Black Arrow" is almost equal to the best of the Kingsley romances. His short stories may perhaps have borrowed in peculiar terseness from the French, but there have always been writers of short stories in England capable of great things in this not so very remarkable line, *vide* "Tales from Blackwood," the Christmas tales in annuals and elsewhere, the minor pieces of Charles Dickens, and many others. I am, by-the-way, either ignorant enough, or old-fashioned enough, to still consider Dickens the master of the short story. His essays and travel pieces, his short stories and sketches, alone would have sufficed to make a name—unique and a great deal more than respectable. I think the most powerful short story, dealing with murder and revealing the mind of a natural and hardened criminal, I ever read, is one by Dickens, describing a terrible occurrence at an English country-house, by which bloodhounds track the murderer to his doom. I have at this moment forgotten its name, and perhaps it has no name, purporting to be a confession written by the man in his cell, but it is to be found in one of the volumes of current editions along with "Tom Tiddler" and a couple of striking sea-stories quite as good as Clark Russell.

I imagine Stevenson, in particular, to be a great student of the old English essayists. That half-archaic turn of his, both in style and in train of thought, does occasionally recall the Thomas Browne (not *Tom Brown*, dear reader) and the Burton and the Cowley of our school-days. And, indeed, it is a gigantic debt the modern English literary world owes to these half-forgotten writers. In choice of words, how apt! In dignity, how impregnable! In latent humour, how rich! Then, to come down to Charles Lamb, how delightfully refined his stray lapses into slang! Lamb, the forerunner of many a modern humorist, who fancies, forsooth! he is the only and original exponent of that rare gift, humour, the salt—as it were—of daily life! It was Lamb—do not forget—who, speaking of the lark's matutinal song, referred to it irritably as "that orchestra business," which few of us care to hearken to very early in the day. Asked at random, whose was the expression, I should have said, "Mark Twain's."

Speaking of humorists, I wish to state that I have read Jerome K. Jerome's "Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow." Mr. J. K. J. is the new humorist. But this book, at least, I do not like. It is a most exasperating production. It reminds me of some sermons, in which death-bed scenes are made to alternate with side-splitting jokes of antediluvian origin. The fun may be very decent fun. The pathos may be very respectable pathos. But the fun and the pathos together, following upon one another's heels without warning or interregnum, strike me as miserably weak. If I were to tell you that Max Adeler and the "Country Parson" (you know whom I mean by the latter, of course) had collaborated in a new work, each of them retaining his own style, you would grasp the situation. Altogether, the fun is better than the pathos, which is saying a great deal, for, as every true critic will tell you, it is far easier to be pathetic than funny, either upon the stage or between the covers of a book. Let somebody expunge Mr. Jerome K. Jerome's sentimentalism, and I

venture to say many readers of THE WEEK will buy the expurgated edition.

Do you know those facile, mobile, volatile, versatile, futile Irish faces, that widen into grins one moment while their owners spout prayers—and then fall away into masks of despair and suffering to the tune of blasphemy and rancour? Such contrasts, such violences like not we, either in humanity or in the record of it—literature.

If I refer for a moment to a little matter which occupied my attention some weeks ago, and which a poem in the last issue of THE WEEK again brings before me, it is partly for the pleasure of writing about it. So much about Mendelssohn is enveloped in the rosy mist of loving reminiscence, particularly among his loyal English admirers and friends, that many of the charming stories about him have different beginnings and different endings, and may be said to vary greatly in sense and truthfulness of application. The story in question, which "Walter Powell" mentions and which "Basil Tempest" takes as a keynote for a very charming poem, is told in another way. The well-known "Song without Words" in A, called in Germany *Frühlingslied*, but long known in England as "Camberwell Green" from the fact of its having been composed on Denmark Hill, is generally supposed to be the piece in the composing of which Mendelssohn was interrupted, thereby causing the *arpeggio* or broken chord which is so striking a feature of the song. But mythical perhaps as so pretty a tale is, it would do equally well for either musical extract.

DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY.*

MR. LESLIE STEPHEN has been almost the ideal Editor. Not only has he given us almost the best book of its kind ever published; he has also brought out its successive volumes with a marvellous regularity, a thing, we will not say unprecedented, but certainly very uncommon. And now, when he finds the work too heavy for his unaided strength, he has associated with himself Mr. Sidney Lee in the editorship, and under their collaboration the work goes on in the same admirable manner as before.

It is superfluous to remark that there are a great many names of eminence in this volume. Indeed there are many names which would deserve to be mentioned here, were it not that they are overshadowed by greater names, and that our space is limited. Thus there are Glovers and Glyns who should not be forgotten. There is the Lady Godiva (we beg Dr. Freeman's pardon, Godgifa, who is the canonized of Coventry). Then there is the great clan of Godolphin, with its members famous in Church and in State; with many others.

The memoir of Godwin, the father of Harold, by Mr. Hunt, is an excellent piece of work, which we commend to students of early English history. The period is one of great interest, and it is curious that Mr. Freeman's two disciples, Mr. Green and Mr. Hunt, should both have departed from their master's leading in this case. Mr. Freeman is undoubtedly too partial to Godwin, as he is also to Harold. On the other hand, Mr. Green seems over-severe in his judgment of the great Earl. Mr. Hunt holds a more even balance, and may be safely followed. We need hardly add that we are attributing no unfairness to Dr. Freeman, who always gives the facts with absolute fairness.

There is one name in this volume which would make it of interest to the lover of English literature, the name of Oliver Goldsmith. His memoir is from the pen of Mr. Leslie Stephen himself, and is, as a matter of course, written with point and force. We are bound to add, however, that it does not quite leave upon us the impression which was the effect of our previous knowledge of this charming writer. "He was," says Mr. Stephen, "clearly vain, acutely sensitive to neglect, and hostile to criticism; fond of splendid garments, as appears from the testimony of his tailors' bills, printed by Prior, and occasionally jealous, so far as jealousy can co-exist with absolute guilelessness and freedom from the slightest tinge of malice. His charity seems to have been pushed beyond the limits of prudence, and all who knew him testify to the singular kindness of his nature." This is all quite true; but it does not leave upon us quite the impression that we should desire.

We have passed over the Godwins and so we merely mention the names of Gooch and Good and Goodall and Goode and Goodman and Goodwin. But we pause when we come to the name of Gordon, which occupies no fewer than eighty pages of the volume. Here, amidst many not inconsiderable names, which cannot be mentioned, we have Earls of Aboyne, Marquises of Huntly, Dukes of Gordon, Earls of Aberdeen, and many untitled Gordons, as eminent as any of them. There is at least one name, that of Charles George Gordon, "Chinese Gordon," that must always be written high on the scroll of fame; and Colonel Veitch's description of him is so admirable that we reproduce it. "Gordon's character was unique. Simple-minded, modest, and almost morbidly retiring, he was fearless and outspoken when occasion required. Strong in will and prompt in action, with a naturally hot temper, he was yet forgiving to a fault. Somewhat brusque in man-

* "Dictionary of National Biography." Edited by Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee. Vol. xxii. Glover-Gravet. New York: Macmillans; London: Smith, Elder, and Company. 1890.