

CURRENT LITERATURE.

In "The Monks of Thelema"* the authors of the "Golden Butterfly" and "Ready Money Mortiboy" have produced as clever and entertaining a satire in the guise of a novel as one would wish for. The Utopian schemes of the Apostles of the Higher Culture are reduced to practice by a wealthy young landowner, a disciple of the modern Oxford School of Art and Criticism. After a journey round the world to study the habits and needs of the people, he settles down to live the life of his own farm hands, and to work out their artistic salvation according to Ruskin and Pater. At the same time he lends his house to the Order of Thelema, a society of merry-makers, whose only vows are to be pleasant company, and whose motto is summed up in the Rabelaisian apothegm, "*Fay ce que voudras*." Alan Dunlop's delusions lead him on to the point of marrying his bailiff's daughter to carry out his ideas to their full development, instead of gravitating to his born mate, Sister Miranda of the Abbey, Miss Dalmeny his neighbour, young, pretty, rich, and also infected with the contagion of the modern culture. The reception by the rustics of his projects, their stolid unreceptivity, and his blind perseverance, furnish Messrs. Besant and Rice with plenty of material for witty expression of keen criticism and accurate appreciation of social problems. The under-currents and incidental life at the Abbey, the eventual rescue of Dunlop from his self-imposed fate, the fortunes of one Tom Caledon, detrimental and lover of Nelly Despard, both of whom are in the Order, the love story of Alma Bostock, the bailiff's daughter, and her future husband, a manly young gamekeeper, make up the action of the story. Sister Desdemona, *née* Clairette Fanshawe, actress, and Lord Alwyne Fontaine, Alan's father, a genial and sensible man of the world, are two admirably drawn characters, and bring in the element of everyday life in amusing and well-defined contrast to Mr. Paul Rondelet, fellow of Lothian College, Oxford, Neo Pagan, and one of the most eminent possessors and exponents of the Higher Criticism. Mr. Rondelet has the Nemesis of taking orders or working for his bread and butter looming unpleasantly before him in the distance, and would fain marry Miranda, who, however, does not find the prospect of sharing his "divine discontent" sufficient attraction, even though "The world waits for Oxford to speak, Oxford waits for Lothian," and by implication Lothian waits for its cue from Rondelet. So all comes straight. Dunlop's eyes are opened at last, and after a runaway wedding, which settles at the same time Tom Caledon and Nelly Despard, Alma Bostock and the gamekeeper, the Order of Thelema fulfils the object of its foundation, and the scene closes with everybody else engaged to be married to the right person, save one recreant brother, who has a half-caste wife and five children in India, and Sister Desdemona, whose experience of wedlock has been still more unfortunate. We could quote with pleasure pages of this amusing and clever book, but must be content with giving a passage or two which have a special interest to Canadians, and which will show the accuracy of its criticism. Speaking of the French Canadians:—

Their contentment, he found, was due to profound ignorance, and their want of enterprise to their contentment. "You may lead the people," a priest told him, "with the greatest ease, so long as you do not ask them to receive a single new idea."

The following estimate of Montreal comes pretty close to the truth:—

At Montreal, which is the place where the English Cannuck, the French Canadian, the Yankee, the Englishman, the Scotchman, the Irishman, the German, and the Jew meet, and try their sharpness on each other. It is a very promising city and will some day become illustrious. But there was little reason for a social philosopher to stay there.

The authors seem to us to hit the mark also in this:—

None of the stalwart farmers (of Ontario) could give him any philosophical reasons for the advance of the colony.

"We send the little ones to school," one of them told him . . . "and we mean to push on somehow!"

That is the difference, Alan observed, between the common Englishman and the Canadian. The latter means to push on somehow. How to instil that idea into his own people. . . . And he thought all the time of his own rustics who came like sheep to his lectures, sat like sheep while he delivered them and went away understanding no more than sheep.

And in this again:—

In all his researches on the American continent, he was struck with the fact that the people had no leaders; they seemed to lead themselves. That unhappy country has no heaven-sent and hereditary officers. They have to live without those aids to civilization; and, it must be owned, they seem to get on very well by themselves. . . . "Send him over here, Sir. He can't sit down and be contented in this climate. Discontent is in the air; ambition is in the air; and there are no parish workhouses."

"Rare Pale Margaret"† and "Love's Crosses"‡ are two novels principally remarkable for the amount of reading given for the money; they appear in Harper's Franklin Square Library, and cost but ten cents each. The former is the usual love story, where two men and one woman get hopelessly entangled, and one has to be killed off before everybody's sense of honour can be satisfied. It is, however, written with some degree of taste in language, if not with skill or originality of design. The latter is a compilation of all the rubbish of a dozen young women's novels. Bodily charms and kissing, the delights of eating and drinking, distracting love and despair, slang and false sentiment, are all mixed up together, and everybody is "desperate spoons" on somebody. The heroine changes her mind and transfers possession of herself six times before the right man turns up at the church window, just in time to spoil the wedding by making her faint before the ring can be put on. Another young woman begins by being kissed by each of two men and resenting the comparison of herself to a flamingo, because that bird has thin legs and she has not, and ends by dying a penitent in an Anglican Sisterhood, after having shot one of the aforesaid kissers, who naturally enough compromised her seriously after better acquaintance. The other young man, a lieutenant in a Lancashire regiment, turns Ritualist parson, consoles her last days, and keeps her grave green. We have forgotten to mention the *deus ex machina*, an old sailor who speaks of "tying up a sail as if it was a horse," and who saves a boat from capsizing in a squall by the remarkable nautical order to "take the rudder, and I'll hold the painter." It should also be added that the gentleman who made himself *de*

trop at the wedding had been supposed to have killed his sister's false lover, to have been drowned twice, and to have been shot twice, once in the Carlist war and once in a Spanish prison. With all these elements well mixed up, any amount of seasoning with man's talk—although, by the way, we do not remember to have ever heard one officer in Her Majesty's Service accuse another of telling "taradiddles"—lots of moonlight, bare arms, long hair, luncheon parties, bitter mockery of fate, strange loveliness and dust and ashes, "Love's Crosses" should be sure to find plenty of admiring readers.

"The Mistletoe Bough"§ is a collection of short stories of the kind presumed to be peculiarly appropriate to Christmas—on the ground of contrast, we suppose, for surely if anything could throw into relief the joviality and good spirits that by prescription and a well-meant fiction attach to the period of settlement of bills and the renewal of annual good resolves, it would be the ghost stories and murders that fill the Christmas numbers of the periodicals and disturb the rest of their readers. Miss Braddon's inventive talent has been quite equal to the occasion, and furnishes for those who like to sup on horrors an abundant feast. The inevitable love story, where the good-natured young man and the pretty girl are on the point of eternal separation and misery through a misunderstanding, want of money, or the presence of a better *parti*, is provided in several varieties. There are also the usual sporting tale, where the "pot of money is landed" just in the nick of time to save the hero from bankruptcy; the experiences of the man in a madhouse; and the fatal curse that kills a fresh victim on a given day every year till only the last of the original band of boon companions is left to tell the story half an hour before his time is also up. But, as Miss Braddon is sure to find plenty of readers of two sorts—those who read these stories because they like them, and those who would read anything—we shall leave them the full enjoyment that is to be got out of this, to us, extraordinarily dismal literature, although the qualification will, perhaps, after all be to its admirers the highest recommendation that could have been given.

THE PERIODICALS.

Rose-Belford's Canadian Monthly has a good illustrated paper on volcanoes and earthquakes. Mr. Townsend makes a fair and appreciative estimate of Shelley's poetry, while a more practical paper deals with the question of water for drinking, and gives a good many useful hints. Stewart's "Canada under Lord Dufferin" is dealt with tenderly by Mr. Rattray, which is more than can be said of Jingoism, as seen by Professor Goldwin Smith, and treated of in a forcible paper on "Berlin and Afghanistan." The story of an extraordinary life and of a genuine poet is well told in a short three pages on "Richard Realf," which include two specimens of his poetry, one of which we have thought too good to let pass, and shall publish. Wilkie Collin's "Haunted Hotel," closes the door on its horrors in this number, and James Payne commences a new story, "Under One Roof." The "Monks of Thelema" draws to a close, increasing in vivacity and shrewd satire, as the schemes of the Higher Intellect are pictured in their actual outcome. There is the usual admixture of verse, and the number ends with some good criticisms of current literature, following some very *apropos* remarks "Round the Table," as to the woeful deficiency of Canadian newspapers in this respect.

In *The Fortnightly Review* Mr. Matthew Arnold opens the number with an article on middle-class education, giving a great deal of information as to the excellent results of the French system, pointing out the consequent homogeneity, extent, and importance of the middle-class in France, and putting in a plea for something of the same sort in England. Professor Fawcett grapples with the development of Socialism in Germany and the United States in a very readable and useful paper. This is his summary of the ultimate programme of modern Socialism:—

"That there should be no private property, and that no one should be permitted to acquire property by inheritance. That all should be compelled to labour, no one having a right to live without labour." "The nationalization of the land and of the other instruments of production; or, in other words, the State should own all the land, capital, machinery—in fact everything which constitutes the industrial plant of a country, in order that every industry may be carried on by the State."

As there is no immediate prospect of attaining their objects in complete form, the Socialists aim for the present at securing cooperative associations under State support, universal compulsory education, the abolition of indirect taxation, State provision for the unemployed, limitation of the day's work, and sanitary inspection of mines, factories and workmen's dwellings. M. Emile de Laveleye runs a tilt with Senor Castelar on the subject of the Berlin Treaty, coming to the conclusion that as a matter of present fact opposition to Russia is unjustifiable. "Epping Forest" gives a sketch of this at present queerly named tract, and contains a plan for making it, by a great agricultural experiment, a forest indeed, in several distinct portions, each containing the trees and shrubs that grow in one of the great forest regions of the temperate zone. Whatever be the success of this project—and there seems nothing against it but the expense—Mr. Wallace's paper contains a great deal about trees and their distribution which is worth reading. "The Peasants of the Limagne" is a sketch of French country life in Auvergne, almost equal in the reading of it to the life there itself. Mr. Sidney Colvin has a paper on the Study of Classical Art, followed in sharp contrast by the continuation of Mr. Frederic Harrison's article on the "English School of Jurisprudence," in which he deals with Bentham's and Austin's Analysis of Law. Mr. Harrison thinks it seems hard to assume that there can be any single and universal scheme of classification, and that practical convenience makes it of immense importance to respect the practical methods of grouping the principles of the *corpus juris* of any system which are so familiar and so long sanctioned by usage. "Civilization and Noise" is a study of the sources and conditions of the afflictions of sensitive ears and busy brains, from which the only hope of escape, according to Mr. Sully, is a general growth of sensibility or the resources of science. Mr. Chamberlain devotes attention to "The Caucus," which he considers a ready and useful instrument for the political organization of the English Liberals; and the usual review of Home and Foreign affairs closes an unusually diversified and attractive number.

§ The Mistletoe Bough, by Miss M. E. Braddon. "Franklin Square Library." New York, Harper and Brothers. Montreal, Dawson Brothers.

* The Monks of Thelema, by Walter Besant and James Rice. Toronto, Rose-Belford Publishing Co., 1878. Montreal, Dawson Brothers.

† Rare Pale Margaret.]

‡ Lover Crosses, by H. N. Notley.