

MALLOCK'S "ROMANCE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY."

Perhaps the most remarkable work, both from a literary and artistic point of view, that has appeared during the current year, and the one, most assuredly, that has been subjected to the greatest amount of adverse and unjust criticism, is "A Romance of the Nineteenth Century," by Mr. W. H. MALLOCK, a gentleman who has already gained world-wide fame by his "New Republic," and "Is Life Worth Living?" Mr. MALLOCK is one who evidently has given much thought to the subjects of which he writes, and in addition to an extraordinary clearness of perception, he possesses an artistic manner of writing, a poetic imagination, and a remarkable aptitude for delineation of character. His descriptions of scenery, magnificent in their composition, fairly overflow with richness of poetic feeling; in fact, his whole book is poetry vainly veiled by a prosaic form.

And how gloriously and wonderfully are his characters depicted! Witness his heroine; so pure, and yet so degraded; so beautiful, and yet marred by contamination with the world; so cultured, and yet wanting that true culture—pure, unimpeachable, maidenly virtue. One is tempted to regard MALLOCK as an exemplification of his own epigrammatic dictum: "The imagination is for every man the co-creator of his universe, and those men are poets whose imaginations create most gloriously."

In his conception of the characters of his various *dramatis personæ*, he shows an insight into human nature, and, in a striking manner, a thorough appreciation of the character of this nineteenth century of ours, with all its frivolity, infidelity, sensuality and intensity. And yet, although so just in exposing the failings of our modern society, he does not forget to give expression to its higher feelings, its struggle after the truth, its culture, and its humanity.

The majority of the critics who have so aspersed this wonderful work in imputing to it an immoral character, have overlooked entirely the fact that it professes to be a Romance of the Nineteenth Century, and a true one. If the work is immoral, then, in one direction, it has attained its aim; if its principal characters show traces of infidelity and agnosticism in their thoughts and conversations, then they are typical examples of our times. Are these adverse critics afraid to acknowledge the failings of the age, and to look them in the face, that they so mercifully cry down their faithful exposition? Is it because they wish to deter the intellectual portion of the community from recognizing fully the baseness and lowness to which our society has sunk in these times of vaunted culture, that they have condemned Mr. MALLOCK'S work as "Ouidesque"? To careless, superficial readers, perhaps this imputation may seem just, but to those who read the book not merely for the sake of gratifying their curiosity, but regard it as a work of art, looking beneath the surface, its true nature becomes apparent. They will see at once the distinction between "A Romance of the Nineteenth Century" and "Puck." The latter may be truly said to be immoral, *i. e.*, wanting a moral, the former points to a moral of a most impressive nature; the one strives to excite our admiration for sensuous lovers and unprincipled women, the other makes one feel a profound contempt for the former, and a pity most deep and sincere for the victims of their unrestrained passions; one, in well-balanced minds, excites disgust at the author for having written, and at one's self for having stooped to read what has been written, the other, the most pure and holy feelings of which our fallen race is capable.

And, in addition to all these nobler passions inspired by this wonderful book, the beauty of its diction, and the sublimity of the thoughts expressed in the dialogues, render it truly a work of art. "Many poets perhaps might have drawn a Desdemona; only an artistic poet could have drawn an Iago also." So may we also say: many poets perhaps might have drawn a *Vernon*; only an artistic poet could have drawn a *Cynthia* also.

AUDAX.

LIVINGSTONE RIVER.

THE PRIZE POEM OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO FOR 1880.

Oh, dreamy, silent river, deep and strong!
 Oh, river rich in life, and gleaming light!
 Along thy sloping shores and watching hills,
 No legendary past, in glory rich,
 Has left its many-towered battlements
 To moulder, crumble, and too soon decay;
 To weave around each falling turret's base
 The thrilling tales of mythic warrior days.
 Thy richly rounded hills, in endless throng,
 Glance back no faint, far distant shock of arms,

That, sounding still, rolls on from year to year,
 No sabre stroke on heavy-plated mail
 The peaceful flow of thy dark flood disturbs.
 No thunder peal of war's artillery
 Along the winding passages of time
 Reverberating still, doth wildly start
 The wary fowl upon thy breast asleep.
 A mist impenetrable hides thy past,
 A brooding silence stills historic tones;
 We see no visions of the days gone by;
 To us no wrecks float down the stream of time;
 No weird and mellow tones float on the wind;
 And so we say thou hast no memories.
 Ah, well! we know not; it is dark to us,
 For we are but the children of to-day,
 Our knowledge reaches only back to morn.
 Perchance to thee are known the great events
 Of histories full of wondrous deeds. Perchance
 As much good blood hath mingled with thy stream
 As ever tinged the waves of fabled flood
 In mythic song. Perchance, could we but catch
 The rhythmic undertones of thy deep roll,
 We might then hear a fragmentary thrill
 Of songs, whose grandly swelling tones, whose sweet
 Wild music, grander, sweeter is than all
 The songs thy European fellows know.
 Perchance by thee have wandered, deep in thought,
 As mighty men, and minds as great, as e'er
 By Roman Tiber, German Rhine, or e'en
 By English Avon.

But now a tropic calm,
 A tropic haze, hangs over thee,
 Each trembling murmur into speedy rest.
 With fitful sob the sighing winds sink down
 To sleep, and twilight shade in softness falls,
 And weaves a subtle tint with filmy light
 That gleams like strained mist athwart the leaves.
 Along thy marge the tall and slender reeds
 In accents hushed, and nodding, half asleep,
 Their strange, weird tales upon thy waters pour.
 The lofty trees bend over thee, and droop
 Their pendant branches, swaying softly down
 To kiss thy smiling face, and trailing vines,
 In clusters rich, creep down to sip thy breath.
 Along thy reedy shores no sound of bells,
 No rich, full majesty of organ tones,
 No human voices, chanting praise divine
 On holy days, in dreamy accents float;
 But in the reeds thy rippling waters break,
 And through the trees the winds do softly sigh,
 And touch in every leaf a chord of song,
 And myriad hymns of praise, and wild delight,
 Through all the long bright tropic day,
 From feathered songsters rise to pierce the skies,
 And float through azure domes with star-dust strewn,
 Until they reach the very throne of God.
 Oh, silent river, lying still and lone,
 Thou hast unnumbered visions all day long,
 Of gleaming golden sun, and fleeting cloud,
 Of distant mountains—overhanging trees,
 Of birds, that sweeping down a moment, seek
 To peer within the hidden depths beneath,
 And then on fleet and flashing wing, are gone.
 At night thou art a richly jewelled sky,
 Where southern stars in trembling downward sink.
 And dost thou, silent river, nownere keep
 A record of the beauty thou hast seen?