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LITERARY NOTES

THE ROMANCE OF THE REAPER.

IT has been asserted many times that this is a commercial, not to say materialistic age. Doublets and court garb are no longer the fashion and the plain business suit is the only masculine wear. When pirates and other picturesque characters are in the great army of the Unemployed it is not surprising that the modern novelist or writer of essays should turn to the existing world of finance for material. Captains of industry may not be so striking as the gentlemen who sailed under the black flag but they may be made, under the manipulation of an imaginative biographer, fairly interesting figures to the Twentieth Century reader.

During the last ten years there has arisen a group of writers who devote themselves to commercial subjects or characters, seldom stopping short of huge trusts and impressive multi-millionaires. The modern magazine is sure to contain an article with reference to sugar, wheat, coffee, steel, copper or aluminum and the magnates who control the production and prices of such useful commodities.

Among new books dealing with such subjects, *The Romance of the Reaper* by Herbert N. Casson, author of *The Romance of Steel*, will probably be of unusual interest. Mr. Casson is a Canadian by birth, the son of a Methodist minister and he has already gained a reputation as a writer on industrial themes. His story about the steel manufacture and extension was told with remarkable vividness and was first published in *Munsey's Magazine*. A Canadian ought to know something of wheat and Mr. Casson will doubtless include his native country in this study of North American harvests. An advance notice says of the book: "It is a wonderful story of our most useful business—a medley of mechanics, millionaires, kings, inventors and farmers." (Doubleday, Page and Co., New York.)

* * *

MRS. WARD'S VISIT TO CANADA.

THERE are few living novelists who have won the place accorded to Mrs. Humphry Ward. (Most of the Toronto papers, by the way,

insist on spelling the word, *Humphrey*.) It is said that Miss Corelli's romances are the most widely-read works in modern fiction; but popularity and literary merit are not synonymous. Mrs. Ward seldom falls short as an artist and usually makes herself felt as a possessor of ideas. *Robert Elsmere* created a decided sensation in the later eighties and no one may declare how far it was advertised by Mr. Gladstone's review. The book was preached about until many church members bought it and were grievously disappointed at receiving no shock. *The History of David Grieve*, published about seventeen years ago, is the strongest book Mrs. Ward has written and will be remembered when *Marcella* and *Kitty Ashe* are not even ghostly memories.

It is to be debated whether the fact that Mrs. Ward is an Arnold was not an early handicap. It may have been depressing, at the outset of her literary career, to be reminded that the great Matthew Arnold was her uncle and that much was to be expected from the niece of a famous literary critic. Macaulay, in his essay on John Milton, appears to consider formal scholarly training a disadvantage to the imaginative writer. Milton, in his eyes, was a poet in spite of his academic studies. Hence, it may be that Mrs. Humphry Ward deserves great praise for rising superior to the constant admonition "to be an Arnold," and proving herself a novelist in spite of tradition.

Mrs. Ward has been visiting in Montreal for the last fortnight and will come to Toronto next week where she will lecture on May 18 in Association Hall on *The Peasant Element in Literature*. Mrs. Ward is deeply interested in providing playgrounds for the children in large cities and has accomplished a great deal towards that desirable end. However, her Toronto readers will probably be glad that her subject of address is to be literary rather than philanthropic. Canada is fairly supplied with women who can talk exhaustively about the poor whom we have so much with us. In fact, Toronto has been most thoroughly dosed with the poverty-stricken and their needs. Just by way of change, it will be pleasing to hear of the peasant in literature, instead of having the immediate distress of the man with the hoe pressed upon public attention.

POEMS OF OUTDOORS

AT THE FERRY.

E. PAULINE JOHNSON.

We are waiting in the nightfall by the river's placid rim,
Summer silence all about us, save where swallows' pinions skim
The still grey waters sharply, and the widening circles reach,
With faintest, stillest music, the white gravel on the beach.
The sun has set long, long ago against the pearly sky.
Elm branches lift their etching up in arches slight and high.
Behind us stands the forest, with its black and lonely pines;
Before us, like a silver thread, the old Grand River winds.
Far down its banks the village lights are creeping one by one;
Far up above, with holy torch, the evening stars look down.

Amid the listening stillness, you and I have silent grown,
Waiting for the river ferry,—waiting in the dusk alone.
At last we hear a velvet step, sweet silence reigns no more;

'Tis a barefoot, sunburnt little boy upon the other shore.
Far thro' the waning twilight we can see him quickly kneel
To lift the heavy chain, then turn the rusty old cog-wheel;
And the water-logged old ferry-boat moves slowly from the brink,
Breaking all the star's reflections with the waves that rise and sink;
While the water dripping gently from the rising, falling chains,
Is the only interruption to the quiet that remains
To lull us into golden dreams, to charm our cares away
With its Lethean waters flowing 'neath the bridge of yesterday.
Oh! the day was calm and tender, but the night is calmer still,
As we go aboard the ferry, where we stand and dream, until
We cross the sleeping river, with its restful whisperings,
And peace falls, like a feather from some passing angel's wings.

(Continued on page 26)

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