

A NEW HUMORIST.

this salvation code. It has been already dramatized as the scene where he detects his wife being kissed by a strange gentleman. The sinning lady in defence claims the right to commit a "first" fault. With this privilege and the Clitheroe-Jackson liberty of a wife to quit her husband when she pleases, even Mrs. Caird ought to be satisfied at the weaker becoming the stronger sex. Punch's advice about matrimony is sagacity itself—"Don't."

Since the Sofia assassination, opinion in Paris has taken fright that the Balkan blaze is at least going to burst out. Germans and Austrians see, in the attempt to "remove" Mr. Stambouloff, another Pan-Russo plot, of which the ultimate aim is to hang Prince Ferdinand as high as king Haman, on "a sour apple tree." Then early spring is the favourite period for opening a European campaign. With a dual, as well as a triple alliance, claiming to be the guardians of European peace, the continent ought to be tranquil. No sovereign has up to the present indulged in the annual prediction that there would be no war in 1891. What a pity the opposition alliances cannot be allied? It is rumoured that when Prince Ferdinand shall have been re-invested by the silent Turk, as Vice-Sultan of Roumelia, he will be betrothed to his cousin, the Princesse Henriette of Orléans, the jilted fiancée, by that other cousin familiarly called "Gamelle," Duc d'Orléans.

The Surgical International Congress has just opened, and the members will take stock of their "operations" during the last year. The assembled "Knights of the Bistoury" are all famous specialists. There is Dr. Labbé, who extracts forks and spoons from stomachs. Dr. Péan takes swords out of throats that have been swallowed the wrong way. There are others who will graft on new skin and replace an old splinter of bone by a fresh morsel. Surgeon Horseley trepans skulls, and, satisfying himself the patient has brains, puts them to rights. As for Surgeon Lawson Tait, he thinks no more of sectioning abdomens than opening his carriage door. What a pity French surgeons do not speak English, even if not as well as their English and American—especially the latter—confrères reel off a few *parlez-vous*.

An editor, M. Charles Margat, and his lady have just celebrated their silver wedding. That ceremony was followed by the marriage of their two daughters.

M. Bocher asserts that the French navy department is to-day administered on the lines laid down by Colbert, a seventeenth century statesman. M. Bocher's idea to leave it optional with parents to will their property as they please is largely connected with the future of France.

M. Flammarion believes, with the sincerity of an early Christian, that Mars is inhabited, and that the people are chiefly occupied in cutting Panama canals. With the new telescopes of the Paris observatory, the valleys and the mountains in the moon are very visible; there is no sunrise or sunset there.

HORACE: CARMEN VII., LIBER IV.

The snow-banks have vanished from earth, and the grass in the meadows is springing;

Burst are the buds on the trees;
The New is born from the Old, while the lessening torrents are bringing

Freshness that floats in the breeze.
Graces and Nymphs lithely dancing are tripping the round of the chorus

Zephyrus and free as the light,
While the hour-rapt day and the seasons show naught that's eternal before us:

Change is as certain as night.
Zephyrus is chasing the frosts; the spring slowly blooms into summer,

Fated to vanish away
When autumn, full-fruited, appears: soon winter, the laggard last comer,

Enters with sluggish delay.
Swift-winged moons in their heaven grow pale but to burst into beauty;

We, when we wither and fade—
Or wealth-gilded Tullus or Ancus; Æneas, though perfect in duty—

Only are dust and a shade.
Whether the high gods shall add the sum of to-day to the morrow,

Who in his wisdom can say?
Heirs from their covetous clutches begrudge thee with malice and sorrow

All that thou spendest to-day.
Once thou hast fallen, Torquatus, and Minos has weighed thy deserving—

Just are his judgments, and right,
Birth nor eloquent words, nor merit of goodness unswerving

Bringeth thee back to the light:
Shades wrap Hippolytus still—Diana in vain to deliver

Pleaded with Pluto beneath;
Nor Theseus could wrest off the bands from Pirithous, fast by the river

That laves the pale province of Death.
J. EDMUND BARSS.

To act with common sense according to the moment is the best wisdom I know; and the best philosophy is to do one's duties, take the world as it comes, submit respectfully to one's lot, bless the goodness that has given us so much happiness with it, whatever it is, and to despise affectation.—Walpole.

MANY persons, no doubt, will regard the assertion implied by the above heading with strong suspicion, if not with positive incredulity. That there should appear at this late day a really fresh member in that thinnest rank of authors, the humorists, cannot but seem highly improbable. Wit, or what passes for such, we still get enough of and to spare; but humour—true, real humour—surely there must be some mistake. No, I venture to say I can make good my implication; and what is more can disclose not only a new humorist, but a veritably new species of humour. It has nothing Aristophanic or Rabelaisian in it. It does not remind one at all of Sterne; scarcely at all of Mark Twain. It is altogether *sui generis*. Its most noteworthy feature is the supreme imperturbability with which it can give utterance to the thing that is not, or to the thing that to the veriest child obviously and palpably is and must necessarily be. All the arts of literary composition are utilized with the most consummate skill and ingenuity to give the appearance, and to intensify the effect of this pretended unconsciousness of the ludicrous. But it is a mistake to cloy the hungry edge of appetite by vainly endeavouring to characterize its peculiarities; let me proceed at once to give specimens from the book itself.

Its title is simply the single word "Gentlemen," and this is perhaps the most quintessentially humorous thing on or between its two handsome cream-coloured covers. There is not even a note of exclamation or an interrogation point after this title—by which already the writer gives evidence of his possession of that excellent quality of restraint nowadays almost everywhere in literature so sadly lacking. The work is printed anonymously at New York by the De Vinne Press, and is copyrighted by "the Simplex Munditiis Company," wherein perhaps lies concealed another point, too fine for us, until we know more of the author, to perceive. The book is dedicated "to all who admire perfect dress and correct social habits, in the hope that the principles it teaches may promote strict observance of the usages of society." The tables of contents are a little disappointing: one feels that the author might have chosen a higher theme for his intellectual powers. He has certain mannerisms also: a man is always a "gentleman," a woman a "lady," and he evinces a strange partiality for the word "attire," e.g., "sleeping attire," "English rain attire," "English hunt attire"—though possibly this is of a piece with his curious felicity in choice of words.

But to return to the contents. Part I. contains, amongst other topics, Underclothing—The art of Dressing the Collar—Walking-Stick and Umbrella—Suspenders—Uppers—Monocle—Dress Shields. Part II., which deals with "Essential Customs for Gentlemen," is divided into "Actions Indoors" and "Actions Outdoors," and amongst these are conversation, kissing, familiarity, proposing, etc. Let me now quote from the body of the work, leaving the reader for the most part to enjoy the humour undisturbed; only let me ask him to pay particular attention to the literary style.

"A gentleman should . . . never leave his room without complete attire, as it is essential that he present the same appearance before a servant as a lady. The same rule should apply when he risks encountering an unknown gentleman." Those four last words seem, I confess, to me delicious. The idea of "risking" an "encounter" with an "unknown gentleman" in one's shirtsleeves! And the demure disregard of all meaning and grammar in the first sentence, too! Never before, probably, was ungrammaticalness impressed so ingeniously into the service of humour. "The body-coat should never be removed in the presence of ladies, no matter how ready they may be to approve of the act." "The pockets of either coat, vest, or trousers should never be bulged out." When calling, "if the lady seats herself upon a sofa, do not place yourself beside her without first obtaining her consent. If you take the seat, be careful of your position, and do not appear too easy and at home, and, above all, do not cross the legs." (I give up all attempt to analyze the subtle power which these sentences possess of exciting the most inextinguishable laughter.) "Take care not to upset or run into ornaments, or stub the toe against them." (Note the happy use of the definite article—"the legs," "the toe.") "Do not attempt to speak when the mouth contains food. When spoken to, a motion of the head will be sufficient to convey the reply intended, and at the same time to acquaint your questioner with the fact that he has spoken inopportunistically." (How effective the change to a vocabulary in which polysyllabic romance words preponderate! How weak the old-fashioned "Don't talk with your mouth full" sounds beside it! A still better example is seen in the following sentence: "Never remain astir after the host or hostess, or both, have retired, but ascend to your own room coincidentally with them, and retire immediately." (On the other hand, his simple, direct monosyllabic style, with the deliberate lapses from grammar and sense, shine conspicuously in—) "Have the drawers fit tight or the trousers will set ill." (This is, perhaps, the gem of the book. I cull the following at random: the humour of each has its own peculiar flavour:—) "Evening dress—this is the culmination of grandeur in the dress of a gentleman." "Afternoon dress—here is the chance for the greatest amount of display." "Sticks are worn in summer and winter." "The umbrella—this worn only in doubtful or wet weather." "Do not . . . wear a scowl." "At a dance always take the inside arm

of a lady while promenading. Repeatedly ask after her thirst, and never allow her to approach the refreshment table, but bring the glass to her on your kerchief if there are no doilies." "The hair should be carefully brushed." "Never use the eyes in a flirtatious manner." "Do not . . . hum to yourself in company." "Yawning should be confined to your own presence strictly." (That is beautiful.) "Do not stretch in the presence of ladies." "Dress shields.—It is placed over the linen bosom while en route." (One can actually see the gentleman in the cab with the dress shield over the linen bosom while en route. O Herr Teufels-dröckh, would thou couldst have read that ere thou hadst penned thy clothes-philosophy!) "Kissing is a pleasure which is not to be indulged in except among dear relatives, the family, wife, or your fiancée. Never kiss or embrace a person outside of these exceptions, no matter how old friends they may be. No lady would allow such a privilege, and if she should so far forget her standing as to permit the act, you would be rude, exceedingly so, and no gentleman, to take advantage of her forgetfulness." (Ah, unknown author, be not too strict with us, draw not your lines of conduct too hard and fast; there are some of us who, if with a lady who would permit the act, would . . . would, I much fear, be rude, exceedingly so, and no gentlemen. But I forget; the intensity of his humour makes us forget it is humour, as excess of light proves darkness. Truly, this is most excellent fooling.) "How to propose—Remember that you are a gentleman, and success will be yours if the lady possesses any love or affection in her heart for you." "When you propose, never do so unless alone with the lady." "If she speaks favourably of any one of your fascinations [what are a gentleman's 'fascinations'?] then on that foundation you may attempt to build your future happiness." "Always stand when proposing." "When accepted it is left to the option of the suitor as to what mode of procedure will best express his delight and happiness. But perhaps for those of timid and bashful nature it is advisable to suggest a standard course of action, viz.: when the lady replies affirmatively, immediately clasp her in your arms; this is not, for true lovers, a very embarrassing position." (What consummately simulated naïveté, what exquisitely pretended ingenuousness! Taken all in all, I know of nothing in the whole history of English prose literature quite so funny in its own way as these suggested modes of procedure.)

I think, then, that I have made good my promise, and more than my promise, for few books will give their readers such unmixed mirth. Let us hope the author will continue to publish. Will he permit the suggestion that, since his "Gentlemen" can so intensely amuse us, his next subject should be "Ladies"? ARNOLD HAULTAIN.

A VISIT TO J. G. WHITTIER'S HOMES.

THE New Englanders are a people of oppressively early habits, and when we paid our congratulatory birthday visit to Mr. Whittier, we started before 9 a.m., in order however, I feel bound to say, to allow for a railway run to Amesbury, where my companion understood the poet would receive his visitors. This town is an annoying little place to get to from Boston, as the trip involves a change of trains and consequent delay at Newburyport; so in spite of our early breakfast it was midday before we heard the porter's welcome call "Amesbury!" A short drive from the station brought us to a very unpretending white frame house with green shutters, as like its neighbours on the outside as men of genius are like to more prosaic mortals. This is one of Mr. Whittier's residences, for he has another not far away in Danvers, and here we learned to our dismay that he had left the previous day for the latter place to spend the rest of the winter. My friend, who is very intimate with the family, showed me through the lower part of the house, however. Its simplicity is charmingly characteristic of the owner, its few decorations very suggestive. In the parlour hang two or three family portraits, all bearing that air of decorous gravity combined with gentle kindness which one imagines characteristic of the sober, peace-loving Quakers, to whose society the Whittiers belong. Passing through the dining-room, which is severely plain, we came to the poet's own study. Here in delightful contrast to the cold desertedness and formality of the other rooms reigned warmth and life. The well-filled bookcases, the picture hung walls, the writing chair drawn up to the desk, all seemed to breathe of busy mental activity, while a bright outlook over the garden afforded a pleasing change after the darkened rooms at the front of the house. The grass and flower-beds, if such there be, were hidden under snow at that time, for it was the 17th December, and the trees were bare; but in summer it must be a shady and refreshing spot to which to turn the eyes wearied with work at the writing table standing by the window. It was gratifying to observe among the pictures adorning this sanctum the portrait of a distinguished Englishman, General Gordon. I asked the housekeeper, who accompanied us, whether Mr. Whittier was a great admirer of the General, and was gravely answered: "Mr. Whittier admires all that is noble." Evidently his household all admire and love him.

A man's personality has a subtle power of impressing itself upon his inanimate surroundings, and by the time we left the house I was already conscious of a certain sense of familiarity with the mind and soul, which had found their partial expression there—a sense vague indeed, yet strong enough to have impelled me to an effort much