

RECENT POETRY AND VERSE.

An author must be possessed of a most enviably sanguine temperament who ventures in the present day to write historical tragedies in blank verse with an assured hope of their finding favour in the eyes of the playgoing public; but the experiment may be pronounced as justifiable as it was praiseworthy when the result is so excellent a series of poetical dramas as "Plays from English History," by Charles Grindrod (Kegan Paul). They are six in number, respectively entitled "King Henry I.," "King Henry II.," "King Henry III.," "King Edward II.," "King Edward V.," and "King James I." The first two are the best, but all have merit. The blank verse has the true Shakespearian ring, some of the incidental lyrics would not have disgraced the early dramatists, and the interest is in each case well sustained. "King Henry I." is announced as having been written in 1868 for that most delusive competition, the T. P. Cooke prize, which, as is added with great satire, "has not yet been decided;" it will be guessed that the action deals with the loss of the White Ship, and the subject is well treated. The second play is the best, though there is something daintily original in making the King present at Becket's murder in time to receive his dying absolution. Had we space we should like to quote the whole of the Archbishop's fugitive speech on the shore at Sandwich, but here is a charming little song ascribed to Rosamond Clifford:

Sad was the heart of Dido,
When her fair lord would go;
Ah me! then quoth Queen Dido,
Wilt leave me here in woe?
Alas, alas! sighed Dido,
For love and gentle pity,
Thou shalt not use me so!"

By-the-by, the episode of Rosamond's death is treated less artistically than the rest of the author's work would have led us to expect; a tremendous opportunity has been thrown away by not confronting Eleanor with her rival. "Edward II." is a failure, and could hardly have been otherwise. He must be a great dramatic poet indeed who could successfully follow in the wake of Marlowe. "Edward V." deals, of course, with the very doubtful legend of the murder of the Princes in the Tower; it has fine passages, but is more suited for the closet than the stage. There remains for special notice "James I.," which must be praised for many things; it is one of the best, the interest being wisely centred in Raleigh, whilst that disgrace to humanity, the king, is fairly presented; the author shows a marvellous command of the Lowland Scots, though his skill may be wasted on some readers, and, perhaps, no actor since the death of Mr. Phelps could have adequately sustained the part. Altogether, these poems, whether considered as stage-plays or as poems, are vastly above the average.

Interest of a different nature attaches to "Gorboduc, or Ferrex and Porrex: a Tragedy by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, edited by L. Toulmin Smith (Heilbronn: Verlag von Gebr. Henninger). Everybody knows the name of this fine play as the first regular tragedy in the English language, but few have hitherto had the opportunity of perusing it, and the thanks of all students are due to the editor of a most careful and scholarly version, prepared somewhat after the manner of the Clarendon Press publications; it is a pity that the name of no London publisher should be appended. The preface is excellent, especially that part which deals with the Puritan Norton's claim to a joint authorship with Lord Buckhurst, who is commonly awarded the sole credit of production; but as touching the question of dumb show it might have been noted that this is used in many other plays besides *Tamond and Gismund*, notably in *Pericles*, and in the apocryphal Shakespearian tragedy *Lochner*. In spite of its ghastly horrors the play is a remarkably fine one, and, given an intelligent audience, there is no reason why it should not still be acted: any tragic actress might revel in Videna's lament for Ferrex, or in Marcella's account of the death of his brother. There can be little doubt that the play had at the time a political significance, with reference to the royal succession, and it is curious to note the almost prophetic spirit of some of the passages touching on the question of divine right; the following lines, fine in themselves, must have been much to the taste of Elizabeth:

No cause serves, whereby the subject may
Call to account the doings of his prince,
Much less in blood by sword to work revenge,
No more than may the hand cut off the head,
In act nor speech, not in secret thought,
The subject may rebel against his lord,
Or judge of him that sits in Caesar's seat,
With grudging mind to damn those he dislikes;
Though kings forget to govern as they ought,
Yet subjects must obey as they are bound.

An anonymous volume of poems, "Love in Idleness," contains much that is good; it is of the school of Rossetti and Swinburne, and reminds us in places of Mr. Oscar Wilde at his best. Take for instance "In Limbo," "The Masque of Philip the Deacon," or "In Scheria." But other influences are apparent, as in the truly catholic poem "The Recompense," or in the following stanzas, entitled "Separation":—

Let us not strive, the world at least is wide;
This way and that our different paths divide,
Perhaps to meet upon the further side.

We must not strive: friends cannot change to foes;
O yes, we love; albeit winter snow
Cover the flowers, the flowers are there, God knows.

And yet I would it had been any one,
Only not thou, O my companion,
My guide, mine own familiar friend, mine own!

The pieces called "Doggrel in Delft" are clever, showing a genuine sense of humour; the sonnets, too, are ingenious, especially "The Lost Self," and the translations from the Greek have scholarly merit. On the whole this is a rather exceptional collection.

LITERARY AMERICANS.

Boyesen, the author of so many pretty Norwegian stories and poems, is a professor in the university. He is short and stout and speaks English entirely without any foreign accent. He is a charming companion, and his manners are easy and unaffected. So far as physical appearance goes, Richard Grant White is the exact opposite of Boyesen. While the latter is under the medium height, the former towers above you till you wonder no longer that he breathes an atmosphere different from other men and delights in grammar and such abominations. His presence grows on you when he begins to talk, and you find him the most delightful person in the world. He is in love with the English, and his ideal home is Cambridge, Mass., which is strange for a born New Yorker.

One is very much struck with the personal appearance of John Burroughs, the literary child of Thoreau, but, his friends claim, "a greater than Cawdor." He is an erect, well-formed man, and his handsome face is full of refinement and delicacy. One can hardly imagine him questioning nature in her rougher moods, as he has so often done. Somehow we expect such men to be a little rank of the woods, but Burroughs has shown that a classical, highly polished mind may come closely into sympathy with nature. I don't know whom to contrast with Burroughs, unless it be Joaquin Miller. The latter is somewhat tamed of late years, but he still effects his slouch hat and talks of sleeping in a buffalo-robe. Joaquin is not as beautiful as he once was. He has a bald head, and that is a very prosaic, unpoetical fact in anybody's existence; but every once in a while he writes a line or two that is absolutely fervid, and there are so few who ever do that that a great many things can be over-looked in consequence.

Richard Henry Stoddard is a stout, solidly built man, whose white hair and whiskers show him to be past the days of youthful dreams. He is a jolly companion when with friends and enjoys a bon mot. One occasionally sees Mark Twain here on a visit from Hartford, and hears his drawing accents. Mark is rich now, and it is doubtful if he will ever again equal his early work. Another Hartford man, who is as highly esteemed as any American man of letters, and who is frequently in New York, is Charles Dudley Warner, and a more polished and elegant gentleman is not to be found in the two hemispheres. He is rather fine-looking, too, and distinguished in appearance. There is something of that same refinement about him which one finds in his books. The man and his works are admirably in tone.

Julian Hawthorne and G. P. Lathrop, son-in-law of Nathaniel Hawthorne, are both in New York. Julian Hawthorne is a very straight, broad-shouldered, handsome young fellow—that is, young in looks and tolerably so in years. His admirers think he is the coming novelist, especially since his last book has attracted so much attention. Lathrop is shorter and stouter and is a genial gentleman, full of good nature and of pleasant manners. Not unlike him in personal appearance is Edgar Fawcett, but very unlike him in other respects. A Californian who has been favorably received here and who has printed some very pretty poems is John Vance Cheney. He came originally from Vermont and was in New York before he went to the Pacific coast.

The editorial rooms hold some of the best known men. The Century, since Dr. Holland's death, is edited by Mr. Gilder, one of a distinguished family. He is of slight figure and has a spirituelle look, but his mind is active and incisive. Mr. Alden, the editor of Harper's Monthly, is of more phlegmatic temperament, has an easy manner and a bright eye that sparkles with humor. Allen Thorndyke Rice of the North American Review is that anomaly, a rich editor. When he took the Review it was on its last legs. Under his new policy of getting the best known specialists to write on live subjects he has brought the circulation up to more than 30,000. George William Curtis lives down at Staten Island, which is New York for all practical purposes. He is not the editor of Harper's Monthly, as the popular impression seems to be in spite of frequent corrections, but he contributes the "Easy Chair" to that magazine, and also exercises editorial supervision over the political matter in Harper's Weekly. He is a politician of the better sort and a writer of the best sort.

ECHOES FROM LONDON.

LONDON, April 14.

HER Majesty's birthday will be kept in London on Saturday, the 26th of May.

THE Pope has spoken of another cardinal for England. Will his present eminence brook another en-nonce?

THE day the Radicals wish us to forget is the

19th April. The display of primroses will tell of a cherished memory.

AN effort is being made to secure the presence of the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher in London during the May meetings.

It is generally agreed that the statue of Lord Beaconsfield in Westminster has been placed with the face the wrong way. It ought to turn its back on the Commons.

AMONG the many questions with which Mr. Gladstone has promised to deal during the present session is that relating to the better protection of young women and girls.

THE Earl of Derby has given substantial proof of his affinity to the cause he has recently espoused by letting it be known that he has become a member of the Devonshire Club.

THE adventures in the Alps of Mrs. Burnaby the wife of the renowned Colonel Burnaby, will be among the curiosities of literature of this season, and we are told will be extremely amusing.

MR. BIGGAR was asked what he thought of the Explosives Bill. He had no objection, he said, save that it would be possible under its provisions for the authorities to seize his whiskey as an explosive substance. A recent trial informed us that he likes the article strong.

THE Deceased Wife's Sister Bill is to be introduced in the House of Lords during the Derby week. Lord Dalhousie, who has charge of the measure, is unfortunately unwell, but he hopes to be able to be present. There will be a flood of petitions in a week or two.

"I AM against all retrospective legislation," said a keen Liberal the other night when it was being urged that the Explosives Bill should be made to apply to the men in custody. "Then," said a genial Tory member, "you will vote against the Affirmation Bill."

A MUCH-liked man is Inspector Denning of the House of Commons; he can even do the part of chucker out courteously. Is it not true, Mr. B.—? Those of the House who appreciate him have presented him with an album of rather a superlative character, having fixings in gold, and there is a higher honor awaiting him ere long—so it is said.

THE Government have it in contemplation to make a grant to the detectives who have been instrumental in making the recent discoveries of dynamite in London and Birmingham. This is a movement which will commend itself to most people, since many of these men have not only run considerable risk, but have suffered much in other ways over the matter.

MR. EDWARD JOHNSON, the member for Exeter, has been making special experiments with dynamite, and he has demonstrated the fact that three ounces of the material, properly placed at the roots of an elm, blows the tree one hundred yards into the air. Does this not render any future exploits of the Premier in the tree-felling way unnecessary? He can be nowhere in a competition.

MR. NEWDEGATE has reason to be thankful that Mr. Bradlaugh did not employ counsel. But the bill of costs which the hon. member will have to pay will be very heavy. His own amount is understood to be three thousand pounds, and the other side will, of course, claim a considerable sum. Mr. Newdegate is a generous, but he is not a rich man, and it may therefore be supposed that some of the persons who have so loudly expressed their admiration of him will insist upon helping to pay his costs.

It was very rough on Sir William Harcourt, that ill-timed burst of laughter. The Home Secretary was questioned about the dynamite captures, and a perfect shriek of glee arose when in stately and solemn tones he declared that the fearful consignment had Birmingham for its place of manufacture. And what was still more unlucky was the fate which compelled Mr. Chamberlain to answer the next question. The laughing was all good-tempered enough, but the association of ideas was irresistibly funny. The Radicals profess to be highly indignant at his frivolous treatment of a remarkably serious subject.

THE electric light is coming slowly but surely to the front in the lighting of large public buildings. Some of the best appointed theatres and large halls in London are now fitted with incandescent lamps, whose soft diffused light seems to meet with general acceptance. The latest edition is the library and dining-rooms of the House of Commons, rooms which were previously well lit with gas, but which it has been found advisable to fit up with experimental electric lamps. Altogether some 260 lights were used, and the general verdict of members of Parliament seemed to be satisfactory.

LORD HENRY LENNOX's forthcoming speech on the condition of the navy will cause some consternation outside the naval circles. Lord Henry has made up his mind to lay bare the condition the navy has been reduced to by the parsimonious action of the Government. Without wishing in any way to anticipate his lordship's speech, he will lay great stress on the fact that while other countries are strengthening their navies ours is almost at a standstill. The noble lord will also show that several of our ships are unseaworthy, and the failure of contractors to keep their contracts will be a strong point. The supply of guns and the purchase of ships will also form salient portions of the argument in favor of greater naval activity.

A GOOD story was related by Mr. Joseph Cook, of Boston, in one of his recent Monday lectures. During the Civil War Mr. Tennyson met an American gentleman, a Northerner, at a party in London. "I wish you to understand, sir," said the Poet Laureate, "that my sympathies and those of society here are on the side of the South." "I wish you to understand, sir," the American replied, "that we of the Northern States do not care where your sympathies lie. We expect to fight this war out on our own plan, for our own good and that of the human race." It is said—and we hope it is true—that Mr. Tennyson treated the American with increased respect after this speech. Mr. Cook asserts that America has ceased to be excessively sensitive to European criticism, or even to British.

THE home of explosive mirth just now is undoubtedly Toole's Theatre. The popular comedian has revived Mr. Burnand's farcical comedy *Artful Cards*, in which he depicts the embarrassments of a middle-aged gentleman who has been inveigled into the society of swindlers, whom he takes for members of a foreign aristocracy. The police make a raid, and Mr. Toole escapes through a window with a trombone, which he tries to persuade his wife he took by mistake for an umbrella. All the episodes are of a most laughable description, and no gravity could withstand the spectacle of Mr. Toole in an agony of invention when he has to explain his disordered appearance in evening dress and somebody else's overcoat. Farce on the stage is by no means so popular as it was, but its vitality at Toole's Theatre is unmistakable.

ARTISTIC.

BONNAT exhibits at the Salon this year a portrait of Mr. Morton, the United States Minister at Paris.

MISS RUTH M. WINTERBOTTOM contributes to the present Academy Exhibition, some sculptures which give good promise of future achievement. The artist is yet in her teens.

EDWARD TRENCHARD, 886 Broadway, has a cabinet-sized picture of Hermann Wunderlich's, entitled "The Young Amateur," representing a miss in her teens sketching from nature at Rye Beach, N.H.

THE Perry monument fund at Newport, R.I., is now complete, or will be made so by the funds voted by the city and State, which will be forthcoming at once. There were sixty-seven contributors. The highest amounts was one hundred dollars and the lowest one dollar.

HERBERT HERKOMEF, the distinguished English artist, is to deliver a lecture before the Historical Society of Brooklyn. He is to be in New York again the last week in May, when it is hoped he may be persuaded to address the public on some topic connected with his art.

RUSKIN has recently paid three thousand dollars for a manuscript book made by a Miss Alexander, a young American lady residing in Florence, Italy. It is a large quarto containing folk-lore of the Tuscan peasants, and is engrossed in a copper-plate hand and illuminated with pictures that are said to be gems of art. The work is to be placed in the Sheffield (England) Museum.

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