

Wandering Jew would not in itself be a defect if it were skilfully done, but it is not skilfully done. He is an unreal character working among men and women who differ but little from Americans of the Nineteenth Century; the element of the supernatural in him is aided by no weirdness of tone in the rest of the book; he is an attempt at mysticism by a writer whose talent is essentially one of concrete description. The White Lady of Avenel is no exorcism on "The Monastery"; the Three Witches are no exorcism on "Macbeth"; but the Wandering Jew is a decided exorcism on "The Prince of India," and his necessity to the plot makes the plot itself unreal. The book is certainly an interesting one, and much of the description—a line in which Wallace excels—is very fine. There is material in it for a fine novel, but with all the care that the author is said to have spent on the details, it is a pity that he did not pay more attention to their digestion.

SOME RANDOM SPECULATIONS.

Aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus.—HORACE.

The editor of this worthy JOURNAL has, of his own free motion, kindly placed at my discretion a certain portion of his coveted space. His motive, if I take it rightly, does him infinite credit. He wishes that I may have opportunity to explain to a world sadly in need of it some universal and infallible scheme for its social regeneration. After what manner this acute editor chanced to make the discovery that I had a scheme of this kind in reserve, I am indeed at no small loss to determine. But, seeing that the matter is already so far exposed, it were vain to seek longer to conceal the fact that I really have in possession a scheme of this nature. In truth, though a person of invincible modesty, the consciousness that I am still the sole possessor of this ideal system, and thus, after a fashion, hold a possible future of the world in my power, is, I confess, a source of infinite solace in times of public neglect or ill fortune.

Think not, however, that I am about to divulge this transcendent scheme, Oh, no! Once already have I suffered such a bereavement. Ask me not to inform you closely of the cruel fate of that dear first-born of the imagination, so carefully nurtured, so tenderly sheltered from the chill blasts of public opinion, until it went forth, under an ill star, on its mission to charm and redeem an ungrateful world. On the very threshold of what should naturally have been a brilliant course it fell into the hands of those monstrous beings, the critics, who, with savage glee and in the presence of heartless multitudes, tore it limb from limb, and finally dashed out its tender brains against their adamantine wall of hard facts.

In one sad day my hopes were blasted, my proud though modest sense of superiority gone, and myself

reduced to a state of common mortality. Afterwards, the first sharp pangs of grief allayed, I roused myself from the serious mood into which I had fallen, and determined once again to have the world at my feet. In this I have succeeded beyond my hopes. Like Hamlet, though in a far more important matter, I am the sole possessor of a mighty secret; for I could a scheme unfold whose slightest breath would stir the soul, and call forth insatiable longings for that paradise among men which its application to society would insure. Yet the world has but itself to reproach if this treasure is reserved for subjective consolation, rather than given forth for objective edification. I am sorrowfully but steadfastly resolved that neither the ancient and respectable wild horses, nor the modern and surreptitious hypnotism will avail to drag from me my secret. Something more modest therefore must fill the space allotted to me.

I have an acquaintance with whom I am accustomed to hold frequent converse, often on matters of a subtle and instructive nature. As this gentleman is usually outspoken on subjects of a delicate and controversial import, I think I may not be regarded as betraying any confidence in giving public expression to certain of his views. My friend, I may add, is very ready at that sort of discourse which has a paradoxical turn.

Not long ago, in the course of our speculations, we chanced to hit upon the question, to what degree even the well-informed natives of a country are aware of the general turn which their collective affairs may be taking at any set time. In this connection my friend took occasion to remark, that the period in a nation's history of which the nation itself knows least, is the very age in which it lives. This statement appeared to me so abundantly doubtful that I immediately questioned it, pointing out, in support of my caveat, the prodigious amount of news gathered and issued through the newspapers from day to day. Whereupon, with sudden energy, he demanded to be informed of the kind of ideas which reach us through the newspapers. But as I showed some backwardness in answering his demand he began to resolve his own question.

"The newspapers," said he, "give us no account of the normal and usual conduct of human affairs. On the contrary those who supply them practice a skilful industry to lay before us from day to day a most rare and curious assembly of fictitious facts and genuine fictions, the former culled from a very wide field of normal and common daily life, and the latter drawn from the public discourses of the politicians. In a word, when we ask the editors for bread they give us a skilful concoction of spices, and when from the politicians we desire a fish they deliver us a sea-serpent."