

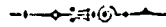
petent judges as the critics themselves, and we have a thorough contempt for that partiality which is really no criticism at all.

But it will be found that even the honest critic has often a great deal of opprobrium hurled upon his head, and is stigmatised by the would be friends of a young author, as cruel and ungenerous, because certain faults of a book are shown up, without any reserve or apology. Be gentle and charitable with one, who is trying his or her, best to earn a living and a name in the paths of literature, is the argument used against the critic on these occasions. Now we maintain that literature is a marketable article, in purchasing which the buyer expects the value of his money, and the author has no more right to be held above criticism than the woman you engage to cook your dinner. Suppose the latter is only a novice at the vocation she has chosen, are you not therefore to point out her faults, but continue to eat an indifferently cooked dish for the reason forsooth that the girl is doing her best to earn a living? We see no difference—apart from a sentimental one—between her and the author. The one sends up bodily, and the other mental food, and the critics appointed to taste the articles, should not hesitate to give a straightforward opinion. The dishes may be both irretrievably bad, or each may be passable, only requiring more seasoning, but in either case the critic is there to criticise not to advertise the cook or the author, as if he is the latter, he is merely fit “to suckle fools and chronicle small beer.”

There is much maudlin sentiment thrown up, as an entrenchment, round authorship, but no critic ever made or marred a writer any more than a taster can make or mar a cook. If the talent is there it will come out in spite of denunciation, just as in a like manner the converse is true, for we may say of an author as of a poet “nasetur non fit,” although we readily admit that we cannot look for equal merit for “one star differeth from another star in glory.”

The best critic is he, who never slurs over the defects out of a mistaken com-

passion, and on the other hand will give honor where it is due. Like a judge, he should render an unbiassed judgment, which will stand the test of time, and may afterwards be referred to as being both wise and just.



THE EDITOR'S FYLE.

As was prophesied in our opening number, some curious productions have found their way to the Fyle, and the Review of Rider Haggard's “Nada the Lily” has drawn forth contributions of a type so terrific and appalling, that the Editor has been the victim of horrid nightmares during the past week. One thrilling story—which ought to have been written in red ink, since there is blood in almost every paragraph—is entitled, “The Hero of the Congo, or the Price of Murder.” The last word should surely have been in the plural number, for the first chapter contains no fewer than three murders, the details of which are not in the least left to the imagination, but described to the minutest particular, allowing the reader to gloat over the deep gashes and the hot spouting gore, until a dissecting room in a hospital, would be a very mild affair in comparison. The Editor need hardly add that the hero is a magnificent specimen of the true African, before he was enslaved by the white man, or that the heroine is as beautiful as polished ebony. The tale was accompanied with a letter stating that the author was confident of gaining fame and popularity, both for the “Antidote” and himself by the publication of what was far more suited to the present taste than the obsolete novels of Dickens or Thackeray. Oh shades of David Copperfield and Colonel Newcome,

“Are all your conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils
Shrunk to this little measure?”

Not quite yet, the Editor thought, as he consigned the contribution to the waste paper basket. Two days later he received another letter from the ambitious follower of Mr. Haggard expressing surprise at not hearing from him, as hitherto all his MSS. had been invariably returned promptly, at which the Editor certainly expressed no surprise!

CHARACTER SKETCHES.

NO. 3—OUR LADY KILLER.

Of course there is nothing of a tragical nature attached to the above title. The man, who poses in the character of a lady killer, calls up more smiles than tears, and indeed usually belongs to a type of the male sex, of which it is difficult to determine whether, he could be a greater fool than he looks, or look a greater fool than he is. His upper apartments are not overburdened with furniture, while his lower extremities generally have a half malingering, half tripping gait, the combined result of conceit and tight boots. Our Killer has always a vacuous smile upon his face when on parade, which smile may extend into a meaningless guffaw, according as to whether some fair creature merely bows, or deigns to stop and vouchsafe a word. He has no active vices, but he is very young indeed (whatever his absolute age may be) and his height of enjoyment is to walk up and down a shopping street at four o'clock of an afternoon, and raise his hat on an average, once every half minute.

You have doubtless all seen the vapid donkey, as he makes his salute with a side glance, which he has no doubt is perfectly destructive to the recipient's peace of mind, and for our part, we have gathered consolation by overhearing such a remark as “Isn't he just silly? I should so like to pinch him.” Darling girl! Substitute the word “kick” for “pinch” and we are with you, for we never catch sight of the waxed moustachioed whippersnapper, without having an almost irresistible desire to raise our foot.

Sometimes our Lady Killer becomes engaged, and it is amusing as well as ridiculous to note the airs he gives himself, when he cannot “deny the soft impeachment.” He would have you believe, he is throwing himself away, and that with Othello his “occupation's gone.”

To this we subscribe (a prayer of thankfulness, for we have felt like Hotspur, what it is to be “pestered with a popinjay” such as our Lady Killer is.