

TWILIGHT.

 TWILIGHT hour of faint and mystic light,
When shadows fall across the fading land,
And long-forgotten voices of the past
Float back and chant, like spirits of the night,
In voices sad and solemn, till at last
Wav'ring, they cease in the uncertain light.

When mists along the water rise and drift
And hang upon the rippling wavelets clear,
In which the dark reflections of the trees
Shadowy, indistinct and dim appear.

Like spectres tall and gaunt the cedar trees
Stand dark against the golden tinted sky,
Whilst from their topmost boughs the settling crow
Utters its desolate and direful cry.

The undulating reeds sway to the breeze
That o'er them sighs its plaintive, wailing note ;
In the twilight hush like vespers soft it sounds
As o'er the tranquil water it doth float.

O silent hour, dreamlike and indistinct,
When long-forgotten voices of the past
Return and hold communion with the soul !
O sad and sacred hour of dying day,
Whose death the hallowed Angelus doth toll,
Kneel thus to silent night and his dreads way. S.

GEORGE MEREDITH.



AT a time when Mr. Rudyard Kipling is compared to Dickens, because he has written a few clever stories, it is worth while to point out the fact that we have a great novelist in Mr. George Meredith.

It is not uncommon to-day to hear reading people, and by no means dull people, say that there is, alas ! no writer of fiction to fill the shoes of Scott, Thackeray and Dickens, to use the lancet and wave the wand of George Eliot,—in a word no great English novelist. And this is true in a great measure, as such broad general judgments are very likely to be. A great novelist must have not only brain and heart to feel and philosophize, eye and opportunity to study mankind, but also the art of pleasing the people, of simplifying the profound and popularizing the abstruse. Some have had the latter qualities in a great measure, and the former in scant measure. Scott, for example, and Dickens, must surely have lacked true insight ; some have had the insight and the pleasing style in fairly equal proportions ; Thackeray for example. George Eliot would seem to have more insight than any of the others, and an expression almost as clear, simple and powerful to come home to men's hearts as any. Meredith,

on the other hand, is rather hard reading ; no stupid person need open his books, nor any lazy and careless student of books. Oscar Wilde has called him "the Browning of fiction," though the æsthetic Englishman was not the first to use that epigram, which was used by a Canadian authoress some time ago. Meredith is hard reading, but he is worth reading ; his knowledge of the heart, of the motives by which we act, even when we do not ourselves grasp our own motives, is beyond all such knowledge even shown in fiction ; not even the great Marian Evans herself has penetrated the deep mysteries of the human bosom so satisfyingly as this author. It is scarcely exaggeration to say that his intellect, within certain limits, is Shakespearean, and that his analysis of men's words is in a sense final and absolutely true.

After a vain search for a well-bound copy of *The Egoist*, the Canadian reader will content himself with No. 1150 Seaside Library, pocket edition. The book fills two double numbers, and is therefore a very long story. The reader who would like to see this work for himself, should be warned that it is long, heavy, lacking in sensational plot and not very exciting ; but if he is willing to put up with these drawbacks and to forgive the obscurity, he will, if he be not lacking in appreciation, find an ample reward, and probably he will read the book a second time with great pleasure and greater profit.

The Egoist is the most characteristic, and in most respects the greatest of Meredith's works—what is called his masterpiece ; though his other books are not mere repetitions of a small stock of ideas and characters.

The story is so short and simple that it may be told at once, without in the least lessening anyone's interest in the novel. Sir Willoughby Patterne is a wealthy young English baronet, a typical Englishman in appearance, manner, love of sports and of society, and in his desire to be known as a generous and lordly aristocrat. In spite of all his good qualities, he is unaccountably jilted by two girls, who should have been proud and happy to marry him, and he finally has to beg humbly for the hand, without an accompanying heart, of a poor lady not in her youth, whom he had formerly jilted himself.

In the analysis of such a character, Meredith fairly revels ; the situation is so difficult, the explanation so impossible, that it challenges his ingenious knowledge of the heart to come to the rescue and clear up the mystery, and he does it to our entire satisfaction ; indeed, when one puts down the book, one says involuntarily, "of course it is clear that Constantia and Clara could never have married that wretch," and yet, to the undiscerning, it is wildly improbable that they should have declined the honor.

What is the secret of the repulsiveness of the society pet of an English county ? Is he miserly, ignorant, stupid, lacking in sensibility, in manners, in popularity, in influence, or in the desire to help others ? By no means. He is kind to his servants, he is as sensitive as a woman, as brave as a man, a good horseman, a fine scholar, a