

OUR LONDON LETTER.

The Author, the organ of the Incorporated Society of Authors, has now reached its eighth number, and in it Mr. Walter Besant, who is mainly responsible for the formation of the society and for the editorship of the paper, again urges the desirability of a club for authors to be modelled somewhat on the same lines as the Authors' Club of New York. Mr. Besant, among other things, says that it might add to the self-respect—which he says is now lamentably deficient—and so “they may be persuaded to cease exercising their wit in epigrams and criticisms on each other, while there remain so many excellent subjects in the world outside.” What a glorious thing that would be! Can anyone fancy Mr. Robert Buchanan ceasing to exercise his wit on Mr. William Archer, for instance? Perhaps, too, the little difficulties which are always cropping up about plagiarism might then be settled in the club without reaching the ears of the outside world. Mr. Walter Besant is, however, very serious on the subject, and suggests two alternative courses, one of which might, he thinks, be pursued with advantage. His first suggestion is that of a club, pure and simple, for which “everybody would be eligible for election who was connected professionally with any branch of literature. Journalists, for instance, would be eligible; also, every man and woman who writes books.” Rather a large order that last, Mr. Besant. The second proposal is that of an “Authors’ House.” That is to say, a house would be taken in Bloomsbury, near to the British Museum, which would be used as a club and a working centre, where rooms could be engaged by members who required to work, alone and uninterrupted for any length of time. I shall be curious to see how Mr. Besant’s schemes turn out. The position of the author wants improving, and Mr. Besant is just the man to do it.

How General Booth’s book has ‘taken on’ in England! in spite of Professor Huxley’s attack on the schemes, in spite, too, of Robert Buchanan’s defence of it, already one hundred and twenty-five thousand copies have been sold, and the demand goes on. The book, too, has been translated into every European language. As an instance of the extraordinary way in which it has taken hold of the reading public, we may mention that in the Christmas number of *The Review of Reviews* Mr. W. T. Stead (who is more than suspected to have had a large hand in writing the book) happened to say, in reporting the progress of the great scheme, that Mudie’s Library, after having given their order for copies for the circulating library withdrew it. This, apparently, was incorrect, and the directors of the library thought that the damage that had been done to their reputation and business was so great that they threatened that if an apology was not at once inserted in the daily papers an action for libel would be commenced. Of course, Mr. Stead apologized; but, clever man as he is, he managed to turn the apology into the best of advertisements, both for the scheme and for the *Review of Reviews*.

By the way, we hear that Mr. Bramwell Booth is writing a biography of his mother under the title of “From the Banks of the River.” The inner life of the whole Salvation movement is, to a very large extent, laid bare in this book.

There is nothing particularly stirring just now in the theatrical world. Managers are all husbanding their resources for boxing day. Mr. Augustus Harris is preparing for the Drury Lane pantomime a very elaborate version of “Beauty and the Beast,” under the authorship, we think, of himself and Mr. Harry Nicholls, with Lady Dunlop as the chief female character. Alarming rumours are being circulated as to the clown and the harlequinade being entirely left out this year at Drury Lane. Past years have seen the gradual curtailment of this portion of the entertainment, it is true, but it will be nothing short of a national disaster if it is entirely left out this year. To our little ones the antics of the clown and Joey are the best fun of the evening. Mr. Augustus Harris is also producing, in conjunction with Mr. Harris Sedge, a musical version of Thackeray’s “Rose and the Ring” as a Christmas treat for the children of all ages. Visitors to London in the winter of 1886 may remember the charming musical version of “Alice in Wonderland,” by Mr.

H. Savile Clarke.” The “Rose and the Ring” is by the same author and will be produced at the same theatre (the Prince of Wales). Among the few theatrical novelties which are worthy of note is the homecoming of Mr. Wilson Barrett and his company, although he is without Miss Eastlake. In London Mr. Barrett has generally been unlucky, although in the country and, we believe, in America he is one of the most popular actors of the day. This time he has come to stay and, we hope, to conquer. Mr. Charles Wilmot, of the Grand Theatre, Islington, has built him a wonderfully commodious—although rather shoddily built—theatre, and with a reduced scale of prices for seats Mr. Barrett hopes to revive the successes of the old Princess Theatre. Of his new play, “The People’s Idol,” written by himself, in conjunction with a new author, Victor Widnel by name (a young man of 26 years), nothing much can be said except that it is of the ordinary melodramatic type, with a touch of the “Silver King” in its composition. It will be in the future chiefly notable as being the first of the many plays which are sure to spring up round the capital and labour controversy. “The People’s Idol” is a strike leader, but he is totally unlike the real article, and all the other labour types are equally unnatural. Mr. Barrett’s leading lady is Miss Winifred Emery, whose part is certainly unworthy of an actress of her great powers.

Not content with carrying away in one year Cardinal Newman and Canon Lyddon, Death has also taken Dean Church. As a literary man Dean Church was remarkable—his criticisms on Dante being some of the purest pieces of modern English writing known. His learning, too, was profound. Few men knew mediæval history and literature to the extent that he did.

Sir Edgar Boehn, R.A., is gone, leaving behind him a blank in London artistic life. It was in 1881 that he was elected Sculptor in Ordinary to the Queen, but it was before that date that much of his finest work was done. The equestrian statue, at the Hyde Park corner, of the Duke of Wellington is perhaps his best known, a most popular piece of work; but it was Sir Edgar who was responsible for the hideous effigies of the Queen which disgrace the Jubilee money. In this, however, he was not so much to blame, for it is said the Queen herself exercised her own choice very much in the matter and gave him very little room for artistic effect. Sir Edgar was born in Vienna in 1834, so that he was at the time of his death only 57 years of age.

The Rudyard Kipling boom has partly subsided here in England, but whether it has left him with a reputation or not cannot yet be said. His first long story has just appeared in *Lippincott’s Magazine*—a journal which makes a practice of publishing every month a long and complete tale by a well known writer—under the title of “The Light that Failed.” It has not had time yet to make a sensation—if it is going to—for here in England it takes a full month for a book to get known and talked about; but it has been well reviewed in more than one paper, although the critics seem afraid that his wonderful knowledge, for a young man, of the details of life is more or less false, and that his psychology is only “faked.”—Clever as it undoubtedly is, “The Light that Failed” deals with English life and has a certain interest, as it is supposed to be to a large degree autobiographical.

Before Mr. Robert Browning’s death, Colonel Gouraud showed the phonograph and got him to recite into it the poem, “How They Brought the Good News to Ghent.” The other night, at a reception given by the Rev. H. R. Hawsie, the phonograph was turned to recite before a distinguished audience, including Mr. Lewis Norris, Dr. Furnivall (the president of the Browning society), Mr. Oscar Browning and Canon Farrar. In reciting the poem Mr. Browning had to stop in the middle, as he had forgotten the words of his own poem. Everything was distinctly heard, including the poet’s apologies for his forgetfulness, but the taste of such a performance was certainly questionable.

“Ravenswood,” in spite of its picturesqueness and the poetic qualities of Mr. Herman Merivale’s adaptation of “The Bride of Lammermoor,” has not been a success,

and has been taken off before its hundredth night. It is followed by the revival of “Much Ado About Nothing,” a play in which Mr. Irving and Miss Terry are seen at their best. Mr. William Terris takes, for the first time, the part of Claudio with the greatest success.

The other dramatic novelty of the week is the production at the Strand Theatre of an adaptation by Mr. F. C. Burnand of Valbrèque’s “La Sécurité des Familles,” under the title of “Private Inquiry.” The first night was not exactly a success, as the play—which is of the risky French farce nature—undoubtedly wants pruning. Mr. Willie Edouin, the manager, as Harry Hooke, a private detective, was intensely amusing. Miss May Whitty, a young and capable actress, scored a success as Mrs. Buckleugh.

Mr. D’Oyly Carte’s new theatre, the Royal Opera House, will be opened next month with Sir Arthur Sullivan’s grand opera on the subject of Sir Walter Scott’s “Ivanhoe”—the libretto being written by Mr. Julian Sturges, a young novelist who is at present unknown as a dramatist. An excellent dual company has been engaged (the chief performers only acting on every other night) including Mr. Ben Davies, who, it is said, has been engaged at a salary of two hundred pounds a week. Mr. D’Oyly Carte is making strenuous endeavours to induce Madame Patti to return to the operatic stage and to take the chief female part in “Ivanhoe.” Miss McIntyre, who has lately come to the front in a wonderful way, will take one of the principal characters.

The Incorporated Society of Authors have just drafted a new copyright bill, which is to be introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Monckswell. At present the law on the subject is very obscure, besides being very unsatisfactory, and is embodied in eighteen distinct Acts of Parliament. The present bill protects the copyright for forty two years, or for the life of the author, plus seven years, which period happens to be the longer. The new bill provides for a uniform period of copyright for all classes of work, both literary, dramatic and artistic, consisting of the life of the author and for thirty years after his death. Provisions are also made for the vexed question of dramatization—only the authors themselves will have the right of dramatizing, or of allowing others to dramatize, their own novels, and the same applies to the authors of plays turning their plays into novels.



OUTING.

The January number of this deservedly popular magazine appears in a brighter dress than usual, and its contents are all of interest. The article which most Canadians will first turn to is the initial one of a series on “The Active Militia of Canada,” dealing especially (in this number) with the Victoria Rifles, Montreal. The illustrations are good, the article is well written and fairly accurate, although we note extraordinary promotion accorded to one of the gentlemen whose portrait is given. We await with interest the succeeding articles in this series. Other good articles are: “The Mystery of a Christmas Hunt,” “Flash-light Photography,” “The Last Paper-chase,” “Lost in the Rockies,” “How to Sail on Skates,” “In a Far Countree,” “Fair Women on Modern Wheels,” “The Princeton Cane Spree,” as well as copious sporting notes.

THE ARENA.

This magazine presents in its January number a well-varied collection of literary essays. One of the most interesting is the first, by Dr. Wallace (of whom a good portrait is given), entitled, “Are There Objective Apparitions?” instancing a large number of ghostly phenomena, chiefly gathered from the collections of the Society for Psychical Research. An article by Dr. Oswald, “Was Christ a Buddhist?” will attract attention from the extraordinary views expressed by the writer, while we fancy that few will be convinced by his arguments. Fiction finds place in a story by Miss Davis, in which hypnotism becomes passion’s slave. Other articles of interest are: “Grover Cleveland,” “A New Declaration of Rights,” “Migration a Law of Nature,” “Silver Coinage,” and “Would We Live Our Lives Over Again?” *The Arena* Publishing Co., Boston.