

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT TO THE NEW AGE

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[GRATIS.]

Vengeance.

OVER the wall the gold hair hung,
And the foul fiend gibbered and blinked beside.
The hollybush swooned with his purple breath;
A pale, pale wind muttered and cried,
And the castle halls were hollow with death.
Straight and long, the gold hair hung,
Caught and abandoned. (Whose the bride?)
A clot of blood to the lattice clung,
And a bird screamed, and a bird screamed.
Did a head bleed on the other side?
On this, down the grey stone the gold hair dropped,
And the foul fiend jerked it and tugged again;
He gibbered and grinned, oh, a merry game:
The hollybush shuddered when he stopped.

Up in the turrent crouches Fear,
With bated breath and bursting heart.
Only the room in horror creaks,
And a bird shrieks, and a bird shrieks.
The air has a weight too heavy to bear.
The dying sun, in a crimson mist,
Shines through the lattice: what is kissed?
A clot of blood and a jewelled hilt,
Gleaming alone, gleaming alone,
Founded in flesh, in a riven heart,
In the dark upbuilt.

From afar through the glooming air is borne
The note of a jubilant horn: no more.

The foul fiend gibbers and grins and jerks,
Perched in the hollybush blanched all hoar.
Evil in every corner lurks.

F. S. FLINT.

REVIEWS.

Our Daily Bread. By Clara Viebig. (Lane. 6s.)

"Sermons to Young Men": "Sermons to Young Women" announce inflammatory-looking placards over the town; not one, we know, will deal with anything pertaining to the real things. Endless the novels that pretend to touch on life; rarely will you find one in this country that dares picture existence as it is actually faced by the multitude; that presents the ambitions, struggles, of the mass as forces driving it centripetally towards—Food. Clara Viebig treats of hunger as it is felt by half-starved young things, and you feel a gnawing at the stomach; when food and warmth break upon starvation you feel a sense of repletion. The story is concerned with a discussion now and ever proceeding in countless households throughout all civilised lands—the Servant question. Here it is not presented from the point of view of mistress or maid; we are treated to a simple description of common every-day facts with the fidelity and directness of the artist.

Bertha is in service with a model housewife who carefully counts and locks up the cakes, sweets, fruits; the girl is charming, dainty in herself and with a great joy in pretty things around her; her one strong animal passion is for tolerable food. Instead she has to complain: "If only the food was better. She had never thought that she could loathe beef as she did. Her stomach turned against it. She could not eat the cabbage that they had perpetually, nor the dry potatoes either. She always sniffed about the air when a pudding was browning for the dining-room."

To satisfy her fierce desires for sweet food she must

snatch at the cook's dishes; "two fingers dived into the cook's artistic erection, the hot tit-bit was gulped down in such a hurry that the tears came into her eyes, and it burnt like fire in her stomach." We should like to see these passages distributed broadcast, read and remembered by every woman about to become a wife and a servant employer. After a big party her mistress, Mrs. Schiyer, locks up all the goodies. "But the sweet smell became stronger and stronger. Yes it was that cake that she smelt! Bertha lies in bed in an adjoining pantry. She could stand it no longer. Through every crack came the streams of sweetness. She rushes to the sideboard and finds a key to unlock the sideboard. She took both hands to the cake—there, she had broken off a point. She stuffed it into her mouth. Another!"

The young master discovers her; after a struggle, during which a piece of cake falls, she escapes to her room. She fears lest he inform her mistress that she is the thief, and she must find some way of getting him to keep silence. "She half triumphed, was half afraid, and the whole time thought of the piece of cake which had fallen from her hand. She would be there before the others were up, pick it up from the carpet and eat it."

Poor Bertha, with her pretty natural ways, goes from one situation to another, till finally, entirely against her inclination, she becomes a waitress "in the Friedrichstrasse, a reg'lar bad part." We do not know if the lot of her friend Mina—the two had set out together for service from the same village—is less bitter. Mina becomes a mother, and her struggles to keep her child: at first boarding her out and afterwards with her, fill a large part of the book. Arthur, the child's father, and afterwards Mina's husband, is perhaps the best drawn character in this powerfully written story. Clara Viebig understands life too well to raise the feeble cries of betrayal; indeed, we are made to feel rather something more than sympathy for Arthur, the incompetent, ill-educated, ill-regulated, half-starved youth, when, as father of a family he has to take work which revolts and sickens him.

The simple natural facts of life are more appealing than the huge incubus of artificial emotions and degrading conditions that civilisation has needlessly built.

This is quite one of the best of the problem novels that we have read. Much praise is due to Margaret L. Clarke for her excellent rendering of the sufficiently difficult dialect. It is a clever piece of translation.

The Early History of the Levant Company. By M. Epstein, M.A. (Geo. Routledge and Sons. London, 1908. 2s. 6d. 270 pp.)

The author of this most interesting little book states that he owes its suggestion to Mr. Sidney Webb. Both Mr. Webb and the author are to be congratulated.

The history of the Levant Company is really an account of the difficulties which the pioneers of British trade in the Near East had to contend with. The first charter of the Turkey Company was granted in 1581. Queen Elizabeth, in that year, issued letters patent to Sir Edward Osborne, Richard Staper, and certain other London merchants, to trade in the dominions of the Great Turk. Camden states in his "Life of Queen Elizabeth," that the Company found it "a very gainful trade," a phrase which would be interpreted nowadays as "a good thing."

The Venetian Ambassador in Constantinople, in 1585, reported to his Government: "Four days ago an English ship arrived with a cargo of cloth, tin and other

goods. The Turks were glad, for the city is almost without cloth for clothing."

On the accession of Charles I, considerable friction arose between the King and the Company, owing to the former's insistence on nominating the Company's "agent or ambassador elect" at Constantinople. Petitions were presented to the Privy Council and to Parliament against the King's high-handed proceedings; but eventually the Company gave way, and appointed the King's choice.

It is amusing to observe that a nominee of the King, with the somewhat apt name of "Crow," played the Company a scurvy trick. This ingenious gentleman entered into an agreement with the Company in 1636, one of its clauses being that the Company should advance him a sum of money before he sailed. The Company did so; but the Crow refused to fly; he wished to enjoy the pickings among the gaities of London, rather than Constantinople. There is no record of the final outcome of this incident; but Crow appears not to have arrived in Constantinople till the end of 1638. Moral: "Never pay in advance." Crow was described in the documents of the period as "His Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople."

Space precludes us from giving any adequate summary of this able book. Every student of the rise of British commerce should obtain a copy of it. The Appendices contain many rare documents, which have never been printed before.

Psyche. By Louis Couperus. Translated from the Dutch by B. S. Bevington, B.A. With 12 Illustrations by D. C. Calthrop. (Alston Rivers. 3s. 6d.)

This book breathes the soft fragrance of dead flowers. It is a poem, a piece of music; it whispers in a sweet undertone of divine things. The story is of the pilgrimage of the soul from the Kingdom of the Past to the Kingdom of the Future, of its loves for Chimera, the glorious flying horse, the Ideal; for Eros, the sane, human, simple, commonplace, everyday beauty; for Bacchus and the satyrs and the dark heady delights of the grove; it shows how with Bacchus she lost her wings, those thin delicate wings with which she could not fly; how she wearied of Bacchus, and sought again the Kingdom of the Present, and found it laid waste and Eros dead, and the foul spiders of the past spinning their black webs above it all; shows how, a penitent pilgrim, she made her way back to the Kingdom of the Past, and how her sister, the Queen of it, "the powers that be," the crystallised, the done with, the established, sought to wage her in her service to find the magic jewel that would place the Past upon the throne of God.

How she suffered and died and triumphed and how, with the help of Chimera, she found the Kingdom of the Future (the only land that does not lose its magic glow when you reach it), and how she found there Eros and her father, the old King of the Past, who had in his dotage half believed in the Kingdom of the Future—all this you shall read in the pages of this beautiful book, and many more things that are a delight and a paradox and a song. There is a subtle play of allegory in it like the dancing of sunbeams. It is a book with a purpose, but a purpose so finely suggested, so deftly veiled that it were an insult to call it didactic. Science grows blind through peering at the stars; blind Astra who believed the Universe limited, and saw the infinite mystery of it in one last flash before the final blindness overtook her, might call it didactic, but not we.

Let us confess that the first chapter or so did not grip us, but the story improves chapter by chapter, and ends triumphantly. The translation, too, which begins crudely, soon ceases to trouble one. On the whole, the Englishing has been well done. But we noted some unlovely phrases which we are sure had quite another air in the original. For instance, the translator has not a sufficient stock of synonyms for infinity.

The drawings of Dion Clayton Calthrop are weak, derivative, and confused, and do not in the least represent the spirit of the allegory, which is always very precise in its imagery, however intangible its meaning

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may sometimes be. In fact, the illustrations are just what one expects the illustrations of a fairy tale to be, and this is not a fairy tale, but an allegory of the progress of the soul. It will be time to turn our dogma upon us with the retort that so is every fairy tale when we have learnt to treat our folk-tales as something more noble than toys.

Low Wages and No Wages. An Essay on the Economic Causes of Poverty, Unemployment, and Bad Trade. By Oswald St. Clair. (Swan Sonnenschein and Co. 1908. 2s. 6d.)

The first four chapters of this book are a clear statement of modern conditions and their effect upon employment and wages, but the last chapter is as remarkable as it is petty and futile. It is entitled the "Distribution of Wealth"; it is in reality a lamentable attempt to prevent the natural flow of conclusions which follow from the study of the previous chapters. One could forgive the author more easily had the earlier chapters been less able and convincing.

What is one to make of the following passage on page 215: "If in every country there were but one landlord and that landlord the State, it is difficult to see that individual enterprise and pushfulness would be impaired or diminished in the least. There is nothing Socialistic in the measure except in the best sense." What does this mean? This talk of "Socialism in the best sense" is sheer childishness.

The crux of the whole matter, the author insists, is a more equitable distribution of wealth, for that means a greater demand for commodities, and that, in turn, means a greater demand for labour. This is insisted upon with convincing monotony, and yet on page 210 the author laments the fact that Socialism could not preserve "the resourcefulness, ingenuity, zeal, alertness, sagacity, and unsparing effort" characteristic of capitalism. It is "unsparing effort, alertness, etc.," which is the whole trouble. It was all so clear at the beginning, but now in these last pages the author has forgotten his own pleading. He wants to have his cake and eat it, too.

The book closes with a piteous attempt to assure the reader that on no account would he (the author) advocate anything Socialistic. "But on one point there should be no mistake: the measures here suggested are not Socialistic." About one thing there will be no mistake. The first four chapters spell unmistakably the nationalisation of the means of production, and the last chapter fails miserably to make any difference.

Faust. By Stephen Phillips and J. Comyns Carr. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.)

We see no reason why one should pay 4s. 6d. for this travesty of Goethe's great work, when it is possible to buy for a shilling in the Everyman's Library a translation and an edition that are in every way admirable. Coleridge, who conceived in old Michael Scott the subject of "a much better and more likely original than Faust," once debated within himself whether it became his moral character to render into English the "vulgar, licentious, and blasphemous" Faust. That was before the days of Marie Corelli and Messrs. Phillips and Comyns Carr. Was it not the sorrow of Marie Corelli's Satan that all his seductions had but one end:—

Still to the same result I war with God.
I will the evil, I achieve the good;

to quote the last two lines of this version. Needless to say, such a sentiment is not to be found in Goethe's work. The Devil may be baffled and balked of his prey, but he does not become lachrymose over it. The truth is that Messrs. Phillips and Carr have gone one better than Coleridge. They have tempered the wind to the shorn lamb—in this case the British public, with Mr. Redford, the guardian of its "moral character"—and have very carefully left out anything that would seem "vulgar, licentious, and blasphemous," in intention. Mr. Phillips probably supplied the pretty writing, while Mr. Comyns Carr, having consulted Mr. Tree, arranged the scenic effects. And so the British public gets the spectacle—fireworks, quick changes, thunder

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and lightning—that it loves so much (does it really, Mr. Tree?); Goethe remains unscathed, Mr. Tree fills his theatre (at least, we hope so), and Messrs. Phillips and Carr pocket their fee. The author of "Marpessa" no doubt feels satisfied; and all we protest against is that he should have the—well, aposiopesis—to publish the joint (and jointed) performance as a book. There are many much worthier translations of the Faust. Taking only the one already mentioned, we are ready to stake Mr. Phillips' reputation that it is more poetic than his version. Let anyone compare the translations of the songs. Our only curiosity now is whether Mr. Tree's subtle sense of the fitness of things has caused him to have blazoned over the proscenium opening of his theatre, for the benefit of his Marie Corelli-spooned audience, the words Mephistopheles wrote out for the anxious student: "Eritis sicut Deus scientes bonum et malum."

Prolegomena. By Jacques Cohen. (Swan Sonnenschein. 2s.)

The God-policing of the world goes merrily on, and piloted by the Understanding or the Reason, a presiding or perfecting deity appears as Image or Idea, as Aristotelian or Platonist, realist or nominalist concept. Coleridge observed that every man is born an Aristotel-

ian or a Platonist. Mr. Cohen was born both; he is an Aristotelian with Platonist ideas. To him God is both Image and Idea, both Man and Superman. His scheme briefly stated is $G=M=0$, i.e., God without man is an impossible idea. The neo-anthropomorphist position which he thus assumes in his introduction to a text-book to theism is apparently a variation of the Descartes extension theory that the idea of perfection implies a perfect deity. Mind, says Descartes, is a thinking substance; body an extended substance. Man, says Mr. Cohen, is a thinking substance; God an extended substance. In other words, without consciousness there can be no existence, which is an absurdity, since we cannot be conscious of a thing unless it exists. His whole theory is based upon the isness, thatness, whatness of things, and has the common fault of such extensionism of emphasising the fallacies of the contents of consciousness. For instance, he explains that God being a content of man's consciousness, has a man-made mind and attributes, and, like man, is able to think kindly about the fair sex. Some day, when the Suffragettes have succeeded and the God-mind springs from woman's nervous organisation, the deity will be able to think about the unfair sex, also. His thoughts will be shattering, shilling-shocking, and snappetising.

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