

APRIL 17, 1897.]

THE ACADEMY.

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lives. And after all this one's mind reverts to Gloucester, where, within a few miles of Jenner's own home, a foolish revolt against vaccination has but lately played havoc with the population, and left behind it a sorry trail of scarred and blinded children, and one wonders whether to a certain class of intellect facts present any meaning at all.

In the current number of *Blackwood* Dr. Louis Robinson has given a fresh turn to the lament for the vanishing naturalist. The latter is, he says, a survival of the prehistoric instinct, and, therefore, worthy of utmost cultivation, instead of the snubbing which it is his lot to receive at British Association meetings, and so forth. I like the pretty imaginative touch which Dr. Robinson has. His vision of the cave-man sallying forth to hunt, and of the signs that befall him by the way, is as convincing in its manner as a description by Fenimore Cooper of a Red Indian on the trail. Dr. Robinson's article, by the way, is a plea for the cultivation of Darwinism by amateurs, quite as much as of amateurs by professionals, and puts very forcibly the advantages of a thorough scientific training to those who intend to pursue the study of nature. I think he rather ignores the influence of field clubs and the like in encouraging this pursuit, and regards the amateur as more nearly extinct than the facts fully warrant. Otherwise there is no doubt that the tendency of the times is for field naturalists to diminish or become converted into laboratory specialists, and that the habit of minute observation, especially when accompanied by an instinct for reasoning back to causes or forward to effects, is associated with the earliest needs of man, and is as vital to his nature as the olfactory sense is to that of the dog.

H. C. M.

CORRESPONDENCE.

National Liberal Club: April 10.

In his review of my *Adventures of John Johns* your reviewer says: "Much of the book is an undoubtedly clever adaptation to English surroundings of the plot of the French novel" (Maupassant's).

Will you therefore allow me to deny that there is any adaptation in my story of the plot of *Bel-Ami*? If in some few features there is a slight resemblance, it is either fortuitous or incidental to development from a somewhat similar starting-point.

I am obliged to your critic for his assurance that there is "no real realism" in my portrayal of the journalist in John Johns; but my experience has been different to his. It is, however, a frequent error of reviewers to imagine that whatever they do not happen to have met with in real life cannot exist.

FREDERICK CARREL.

WORDSWORTH AS PROSE WRITER.

Balham: April 12.

In your review of Mr. Knight's prose works of Wordsworth (ACADEMY, 10th inst.), a couplet from Swift's "Poetry, a Rhapsody," is attributed to Byron. The passage runs:

"Read all the prefaces of Dryden,
For these our critics much confide in,
Though merely writ at first for filling,
To raise the volume's price a shilling."

AVARY H. FORBES.

BOOK REVIEWS REVIEWED.

"The Wise and the Wayward." By G. S. Street. (John Lane.)

"THE commonness of the theme [an unhappy marriage] is not," says the *St. James's*, "associated with commonplace treatment. Nothing could be further removed from the undistinguished and the ordinary than Mr. Street's method and style." "Seldom," writes the *Pall Mall*, "do we find a story-teller whose style and thought are in such perfect harmony. Just as the effectiveness of Mr. Street's tale does not depend upon glaring incident or impossible smartness of dialogue, so his style disdains the noisy altogether. . . . His humour is not obtrusive but of the pervasive sort." So also the *Chronicle*: "His smartness is well restrained, his cleverness is not troublesomely in evidence. . . . Mildred Ashton is delightful but just a trifle overdrawn. Mr. Street has underlined her too much. . . . It is a seamy world to which he introduces us; a world of tepid amours, of feeble and futile flirtations, of paltry intrigues inspired by the narrowest kind of selfishness. But Mr. Street knows his world, and presents it with fidelity and with literary dexterity." "A favourite blemish of the author's," says the *Manchester Guardian*, "is a certain frivolous egoism in his comments."

"Hilda Strafford." By Beatrice Harraden. (Blackwood.)

"THE curious, elusive charm," writes the *Chronicle*, "with which Miss Beatrice Harraden succeeded in investing" her two earlier works "is strangely wanting in these two stories. They are good, straightforward, well-told stories, but . . . Californian life and scenery seem to have had a deleterious effect upon Miss Harraden's imagination. . . . The book is not so strong or so interesting as we had been led confidently to expect from Miss Harraden's earlier work." "The volume maintains the high level reached by Miss Harraden in her former work," says the *Daily News*; also, her talent "has a certain quality of uniqueness in its delicacy and quaintness. It is at once very feminine and very original. . . . The tragedies she records are rather implicit than explicit." "Slight, but good," the *Standard* pronounces the tales to be; and "the book has a value, apart from that of a story, in the hints it gives of what life must be in those far-off regions that some imagine must hold fortune simply because they are distant." To the *Manchester Guardian's* mind the contradictions in the character of the heroine "are not convincingly reconciled."

"The Man of Straw." By Edwin Pugh. (Heinemann.)

SAYS the *Telegraph*: "... *The Man of Straw* places its author in the front ranks of the new realism: . . . every stroke of his pen carries conviction with it. . . . The author writes, nevertheless, with the instinct of an artist; he selects his incidents with marvellous skill." But "there can be no excuse for any contemporary of Mr. Whistler who persists in seeing only dirt in a misty day." The author's "whole mental horizon is pervaded by gloom, and Nature shares for him in the degradation of humanity."

His cleverness "is in no way proportionate to the requirements of a book of this nature," says the *St. James's*, "... and the essentially horrible elements of the story entirely outweigh Mr. Pugh's literary capacity." "At times," says the *Athenaeum*, "Mr. Pugh shows considerable literary skill. . . . But the gruesome narrative soon comes to the surface again, and effaces every pleasant impression." So also the *Manchester Guardian* opines that the author's "undeniable power . . . fails to reconcile the reader to his choice of a subject." An "epic of scoundrelism," pronounces the *Chronicle*, which has not felt so miserable for a long time; for "he writes with an air of reality that carries unquestioning conviction. With the best intentions in the world, we are unable to doubt a word he says."

"Clarissa Furiosa." By W. E. Norris. (Methuen.)

"PERHAPS the elaboration may be a trifle in excess of the limit which art imposes," writes the *National Observer*, "but having regard to the difficulty of the main motive [which the *Athenaeum* hints might be suspected to be a *reductio ad absurdum* of *A Yellow Aster*], and the obstacles standing in the way of its refined treatment, the delicacy of Mr. Norris's method more than compensates for any excess of elaboration." The *Pall Mall* has only to regret that in the case of Loosemore the author "has broken his rule of compassionate large-minded tolerance, and written vindictively." To the *Standard* it is "a little unexpected to find Mr. Norris suddenly dealing with the marriage question," but it is "with so much good humour and moderation that his book becomes at once a notable one." *Clarissa*, to the mind of the *Telegraph*, carries its author "a step higher than any point to which he had previously attained." The amalgamated *National Observer* and *British Review* devotes an article to the book under the heading, "A Novel by a Gentleman."

"Lads' Love." By S. R. Crockett. (Bliss, Sands.)

"DECIDED symptoms of decline and deterioration" are noted by the *Pall Mall* in Mr. Crockett's new book: "it shows how limited is his range of characters, how slender his ingenuity in devising a plot, and how commonplace his diction." "Rarely," writes the *Athenaeum*, "has the author drawn more truly from life than in the cases of Nance and the Hempie . . . never more typical Scotsman . . . than Peter Chrystie," their father, and so of the rest. "The charm of the book lies in its healthy sentiment" ["vague sensuality": "Criticism" in the *Saturday*], "its overflowing humour, and its sympathetic insight into life and character." "Are they human? Are they Scotch? Are they anything?" inquires "Criticism." Also "Criticism," in his article "Muscular Presbyterianism," observes: "That he happens to hit so exactly the public's taste is not his fault, but rather his misfortune. No one reading this book will really suppose that Mr. Crockett is a hypocrite who loves not his own work. . . . I am sure that Mr. Crockett is a really stupid and (if I may say so without impertinence) a really good man."