

7 December, 1901

The Academy.

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AGNES (*with a wan look*). We all follow shadows here.

LYLE (*tentatively*). Miss Font, there is something about you that tells me you are not made to waste your life on shadows any more than I am.

AGNES. Like us all, you, too, are after shadows.

There you have a specimen of the interminable Ibsenesque chatter which the characters indulge in. *With a wan look!* It would have been more honest to preface the play with a stage direction that the poor heroine must wear a "wan look" continually, condemned as she is to expose her borrowed and facile far-away-ism through four mortal acts. As for the plot:

MISS FONT (*with a veiled look*). I have suspected it for some time, and now I am sure that this strange boy is not the real Guy, son of Piers Font.

AGNES (*mystified*). Not the real Guy—who is he, then?

MRS. FONT. Don't you understand? Don't you notice how odd and fairie-like he is?

AGNES. Mother, you are not serious. You don't mean—

MRS. FONT. Yes, girl, I know, he is an evil spirit changed in place of the real Guy, whom the fairies have taken.

AGNES (*with a quiet conviction*). Mother, you do not believe this.

But she does believe it. Such themes are merely absurd when forced into an apparatus of modern realism. They cannot be treated as Mr. Martyn has tried to treat this one, and if Mr. Martyn had any vital knowledge of dramatic art he would have known as much. We do not actively dislike "The Enchanted Sea" because its theme is queer, or because it is aggressively and crudely Celtic, or because the people in it talk as no real people ever did or could talk, or because its philosophy is often shallow and often foolish. (We recognise in it a spirit not by any means without fineness and the love of justice.) We actively dislike it because it does not convince, because it is not dramatic, and because it is clumsy and pretentious. It aims at certain effects, and fails, through incompetence, to achieve them. That is all, and it is more than enough to render the play nugatory, even did the loftiness of Mr. Martyn's purposes outsoar the Eiffel Tower.

"The Tale of a Town" it appears from a preliminary note, was the basis of Mr. George Moore's "The Bending of the Bough." Surely this fact should have been stated when Mr. Moore's piece was published. The two plays are naturally very similar, and as we have already discussed "The Bending of the Bough" we need not discuss its ancestor.

Fiction.

The First Men in the Moon. By H. G. Wells. (Newnes. 6s.)

HERE Mr. Wells returns to the kind of subject in the treatment of which he first won success. Though he can apply his faculty for the pursuit of intricate analogy to the workings of souls, or, at any rate, of brains, can convince and lay hold, it is in the action and interaction of physical laws and the possibilities of matter that he stands alone.

The hero of this book is the law of Gravitation. Mr. Wells, making his morning meditation upon this dogma of Physical Science, has hit upon the happy hypothesis: Suppose just one thing in the world to break loose from the law which moves everything in the place where it is, so that at a given moment it could not be elsewhere. That, we believe, rather than any passion for exploiting the moon, which (once by balloon and once by gun) has twice already been visited, is the germ of the story. The journey in the isolated sphere abounds in such delightful consequences as any of us might have foreseen, but certainly should

have missed. The voyagers land upon a body whose "pull" is no more than one-eighth that of the earth, as that to fall over a thirty-foot cliff is to float down like a snowflake. The process of the lunar day (a fortnight long, of course) is wonderfully imagined; the first show of the Corona interspersed by atmosphere; the mounds and hummocks of seeming snow reeking up in grey vapour, and in a few moments, as the sun light strode on with seven-leagued boots, spreading a blue firmament beneath the blackness of the star-spangled void; presently the movement of stirring vegetable life making haste to spring, and flower, and seed against the time of returning darkness fourteen days later.

The inhabitants dwell—there remains no doubt when once you have read it here—in a system of galleries and chambers with which the lunar frame is burrowed. As the environment suggests, they are rather antlike than human. They are extremely differentiated according to the various functions assigned to them in the social order, and many of them are of enormous intellectual capacity. The intercourse, which is telegraphed in fragments, between their captive and the earth that it was no longer possible that he should ever reach, gives occasion for a certain amount of satire, in which the author seems divided between a purpose of showing, by the method of reduction to the absurd, the iniquity of our social system, and an intention of deriding us for that we have not yet carried it out to its furthest consequences. Here is the description of the Grand Lunar as he appeared in the midst of the learned court of interpreters, engineers, understanders, rememberers, and whatnot:

At first [signals Cavor], as I peered into the radiating glow, this quintessential brain looked very much like an opaque, featureless bladder, with dim undulating ghosts of convolutions writhing visibly within. Then, beneath its enormity and just above the edge of the throne, one saw, with a start, minute elfin eyes peering out of the glow. No face, but eyes, as if they peered through holes. At first I could see no more than these two staring little eyes, and then below I distinguished the little dwarfed body and its insect-jointed limbs, shrivelled and white. The eyes stared down at me with a strange intensity, and the lower part of the swollen globe was wrinkled. Ineffectual-looking little hand-tentacles steadied this shape on the throne.

It was great. It was pitiful.

But the main interest of the book, to our mind, ends with the race for the sphere, against the scorching cold of the on-sweeping night.

The Firebrand. By S. R. Crockett. (Macmillan. 6s.)

"He licked his lips slowly, and smiled; a tiger does that when, after a full meal, he moves the loose skin over his neck twitchy-ways, and yawns with over-fed content." Further—"His heart hasted forward to Dolores and over-leaped boundaries, as a dog leaps a wall." Further—"Go home, fool," hissed a voice in his ear, "Your wife is with her lover." Further—"God's blood, for this I will have your life." Further—"He threshed through the tangle as an elephant charges through the young jungle." Further—"The Albacete dagger was driven deep between the shoulder-blades; the young, lithe body drew itself together convulsively, as a clasp-knife opens and shuts again; there was a spurt of something hot on Ramon's hand . . ."

During a pause for breath we may fitly recall a line from Mr. Iwan Müller's parody of Swinburne's *Dolores*:

And bathe the brutal butchers in blood.

And these final lines:

But you came, O you procuratores,
And ran us all in.

To continue: "She danced the dance of her native Andalusia with a verve and abandon which she had never excelled. And—*Ping! Ping!* 'Two rifles' bullets sang close past the brigand's head as he lay in his rocky fastness. And—the secret of the hidden passage was safe with him. And—he drew a bead on the exposed limb; the piece cracked, and with a yell the owner rolled back."

In such wise the narrator threshes through the tangle of Carlist agitations (The deep, underlying anger leaped up fiery red into the eyes of the guerilla chief), until at last (the vultures slowly and reluctantly withdrew on heavy flapping pinions) he arrives thus at serenity:

"Rollo," she said, softly, "you can come up when you like—when you have quite finished your politics—just to look at baby. He has not seen you since morning."

In pursuance of his expressed intention to "uphold the banner of belief in the field of fiction," Mr. Crockett produces with admirable regularity some three books per annum. He may at least be congratulated on his industry. And there can be no doubt that *The Firebrand* is much less tiresome than, for instance, *The Lilac Sunbonnet*.

Notes on Novels.

[These notes on the Week's Fiction are not necessarily final.
Reviews of a selection will follow.]

THE HOUSE DIVIDED.

By H. B. MARRIOTT WATSON.

Mr. Marriott Watson is faithful to the eighteenth century. In his new romance he gives a stirring picture of English county and Court life in the reign of George the Second. Adventures abound. "'Are you from the brig White Rose?' called out the lawyer, above the clatter of their landing. 'Aye,' said one, and they all turned to peer into the mist at the speaker. 'Out of Boston in his Majesty's colony of Massachusetts?' inquired Kempe. 'Aye,' was the answer again." (Harper. 6s.)

THE VELVET GLOVE.

By H. S. MERRIMAN.

"I know that Juanita has inherited a fortune from her father. I know that the Carlist cause is failing for want of money. I know that the Jesuits will get the money if they can." We need only say further that the motto on the title page is: "Now put your shields before your hearts; and fight. . ."; that the story begins and continues in the Peninsula; and that it is by the competent author of *The Sowers*. (Smith, Elder. 6s.)

THE MAN FROM GLENGARRY.

By RALPH CONNOR.

Mr. Connor's former story, *The Sky Pilot*, was received with enthusiasm in certain quarters. *The Man From Glengarry* is longer and more ambitious. It deals with the life of a Scottish Highlander among the lumbermen of Canada. "In the Canada beyond the Lakes," says Mr. Connor, "where men are making empire, the sons of these Glengarry men are found—men with the fear of God in their hearts." (Hodder. 6s.)

A WOMAN OF THE WORLD'S ADVICE.

By F. C. PHILIPS.

A collection of thirteen short stories and sketches by the author of *As in a Looking Glass*. The tale which gives the title to the volume comes to an end on the twentieth page. Others are called, "You Don't Always Know Your Luck," "Not So Bad, After All," and "Our Honeymoon." They are all slight, unaffected, and, to the unexact, sufficiently interesting. (Macquenn. 6s.)

THE FIELDS OF DULDITCH.

By MARY E. MANN.

This is one of those deserving books of which we have welcomed more than one this year, wherein the author sets down the life that is passing near at hand. The place

in this case is Dulditch, a name chosen with intention. In a series of sketches Mrs. Mann describes incidents in the lives of the people about her, and the effect of their environment upon them. Among the titles are "Our Mary," "A Dulditch Courting," "David Peck's Love Affair." (Digby, Long. 6s.)

IN OLE VIRGINIA.

By T. N. PAGE.

A new volume in the Dollar Library. "One afternoon in the autumn of 1872 I was riding leisurely down the sandy road that winds along the top of the watershed between two of the smaller rivers of eastern Virginia. . . I was aroused from my reflections by hearing someone ahead of me calling 'Heah!—heah!—whoo-oop! heah!' Turning the curve in the road, I saw just before me a negro standing with a hoe and a watering-pot in his hand." (Heinemann. 4s.)

JOE WILSON.

By HENRY LAWSON.

A collection of stories and sketches by this popular Australian writer and poet, under such titles as "A Double Buggy at Lahey's Creek," "Poisonous Jimmy Gets Left," "The Buck-Jumper." At the beginning are some verses called "The Author's Farewell to the Bushmen," and at the end more verses called "The Never-Never Country." (Blackwood. 6s.)

SPORT AND SPANGLES.

By BYRON WEBBER.

Thirteen stories about—sport and spangles. The dedication is to Mr. John Corlett: "You and I have been actively engaged in one of the vocations of Sport for a good many years; and both of us know something about Spangles. Our acquaintance, which began in the sixties, became comradeship in journalism, and ripened into a friendship that has never for a single moment been weakened or impaired. For that matter, whenever we find ourselves chatting about old times, I feel that we are nearer to each other than ever. So many 'boys of the old brigade' to which we two belonged have passed away! Simply on the ground of our old friendship, I inscribe this little volume to you." (Chatto and Windus. 2s.)

ARDNARIGH.

By MELVILLE GRAY.

The sub-title is "A Novel Drawn from Real Life," the dedication is, by permission, "To the Vicar of St. Andrew's, Newcastle-on-Tyne." The story is long and the characters are numerous. Here is the opening of Chapter 10: "It is the London season of 1880. Doris and Freda have both entered on their nineteenth year; they have bid farewell to the schoolroom, and to-night, the first of April, are to make their first appearance in Society at the Duchess of Walmiston's ball." (Drane. 6s.)

THE ORLOFF COUPLE AND MALVA.

By MAXIM GORKI.

More Gorki, with another portrait (his hair is rather blacker this time), and with another biographical note, by Miss Dora Montefiore, who, assisted by Miss Emily Jakowleff, has made the translation. Of the two stories in this volume, *The Orloff Couple* fills 130 pages, and begins: "Almost every Saturday, just before supper-time, the dirty old house of the merchant Petounukoff was the scene of a violent and murderous attack." *Malva* has 91 pages. It begins: "The sea laughed." (Heinemann. 6s.)

We have also received: *Lady Joan's Companion*, by Florence Warden (Digby, Long. 6s.); *King Midas*, by Upton Sinclair (Funk and Wagnalls Co. 6s.); *Borrel's Bog*, by F. Hainsworth (Drane); *Gelta*, by Nadage Dorée (Simpkin, Marshall.)