

RECENT FOREIGN LITERATURE.



ROMAIN ROLLAND'S 'Jean-Christophe' is drawing to an end. 'Les Amies,' the first volume of the concluding part, which bears the general title 'La fin du Voyage,' is now available, and two more volumes will complete the whole. The subject of 'Les Amies' is love, lovers, and love-making. Neither Jean-Christophe nor his friend Olivier are at their best as lovers, and none of the various ladies concerned are particularly attractive. But although neither the main theme nor the progress of Jean-Christophe's adventures is as interesting here as in the former volumes, the deep thought and the pregnant reflections are as striking as ever. In a book dealing chiefly with love, women naturally occupy a large place, and Rolland, as might be expected, says much that is both sympathetic and suggestive about their relations to men and their present position in society. The following passage is, I think, worth quoting in full:

'Combien la femme est seule! Hors l'enfant, rien ne la tient; et l'enfant ne suffit pas à la tenir toujours: car lorsqu'elle est vraiment femme, et non pas seulement femelle, lorsqu'elle a une âme riche et une vie exigeante, elle est faite pour tant de choses, qu'elle ne peut accomplir seule, si on ne lui vient en aide.

L'homme est beaucoup moins seul, même quand il l'est le plus : son monologue suffit à peupler son désert ; et quand il est seul à deux, il s'en accommode mieux, car il le remarque moins, il monologue toujours. Et il ne se doute pas que le son de cette voix qui continue imperturbablement de se parler dans le désert, rend le silence plus terrible et le désert plus atroce pour celle qui est auprès de lui et pour qui toute parole est morte que l'amour ne vivifie point. Il ne le remarque pas ; il n'a pas mis sur l'amour, comme la femme, sa vie entière comme en jeu : sa vie est ailleurs occupé. Qui occupera la vie de la femme et son désir immense, ces millions de forces ardentes et généreuses qui depuis quarante siècles que durent l'humanité se brûlent inutiles, offertes en holocauste à deux seules idoles : l'amour éphémère, et la maternité, cette sublime duperie, qui est refusée à des milliers d'entre les femmes, et ne remplit jamais que quelques années de la vie des autres ?'

Rolland believes that women at the present moment are too free, and yet not free enough, and that therein lies the trouble. More free, they would seek ties, and find in them pleasure and security. Less free, they would resign themselves to ties that they knew they could not break, and by so doing suffer less. But the worst thing in the world is to have ties which do not bind you, and duties from which you can free yourself. Rolland believes that democracy spells irresponsibility, and although it is, perhaps, putting the case rather strongly, the point deserves consideration. He makes some acute observations on the lot of the woman who is forced to earn her living and to live alone, and is thus condemned to solitude without obtaining any of its benefits.

No conclusion is reached, except that it is much more difficult to be a woman satisfactorily than it is to be a man. A man can absorb himself in some intellectual passion, or in some activity. Only seldom can a woman do that without suffering. Life, indeed, is not a simple matter for any of us, but Rolland believes that if men and women would think a little less of themselves, and a little more of each other, the solution of the problem would be brought nearer.

Christophe's *liaison* with a great actress calls forth some excellent remarks on the art of the stage. Rolland characterises it as the most perfect of the arts, the 'instrument tragique du rêve humain,' compares it to fresco-painting, art in its place, and therefore the human art *par excellence*, because it is the living art. In much contemporary art Rolland finds that the veil is torn aside from all the mysteries of the heart, and that there is only too often a lack of modesty and a lack of taste. Jean-Christophe dreamed dreams of remedying this deplorable condition, at least in music, and projected a 'Sinfonia Domestica' very different from that of Richard Strauss. He would not attempt

'à décrire ni des personnages, ni des actions, mais à dire des émotions, qui fussent connues de chacun, et où chacun pût trouver un écho de son âme propre, peut-être un réconfort.'

The first movement would express 'le grave et naïf bonheur d'un jeune couple amoureux, sa tendre sensualité, sa confiance dans l'avenir, sa joie et ses espoirs.' The second movement would be a lament

for the death of a child, but there would be nothing realistic in it, no individual figures :

‘ il n’y avait qu’une grande misère,—la vôtre, la mienne, celle de tout homme, en face d’un malheur qui est ou qui peut être le lot de tous. L’âme atterrée par ce deuil se relevait peu à peu par un douloureux effort, pour offrir sa souffrance en sacrifice à Dieu.’

There is a fine appreciative passage on Dickens, whom one of the women characters eagerly reads in a French translation. Rolland hits the nail on the head when he says, ‘ les gens d’aujourd’hui qui lisent vite et mal ne savent plus la force merveilleuse qui rayonne des beaux livres que l’on boit lentement.’ It is difficult nowadays to persuade anyone to read long books,—I have heard young people offer one phrase of criticism on such works as ‘ Childe Harold,’ and the novels of Scott and Dickens—their length !

Mme. Tinayre’s latest novel, ‘ L’Ombre de l’Amour,’ might have had for a motto ‘ Pity is akin to love.’ Love may conceivably be born of pity, or pity of love, but here pity would seem to be a substitute for love, and so inevitably spells disaster. A woman out of pity gives herself to the consumptive hero on his death-bed, and a girl for a similar reason, a girl of deep religious conviction and feeling, reclaims, as she thinks, a brutal poacher. He, however, ruins her, his physical strength making resistance on the girl’s part futile, and when she finds she is to become a mother, she drowns herself. Mme. Tinayre does not, of course, put the facts baldly in this fashion.

She wraps them round with much art, and much beautiful writing. But notwithstanding the great literary charm of the book, the characters and their actions do not carry conviction. A woman who, like Denise, had reached her twenty-eighth year, brought up by her father, a sceptic, a doctor, a man of scientific attainment and great common sense, would not have been likely to act towards Jean as she did. She would have realized that Jean was only in love with her because no other younger or more attractive woman was at hand, and because her admirable nursing made her indispensable to him. Perhaps it is only the exceptional woman who is a good judge of her admirers, and Denise in allowing herself to be moved 'par cette adoration perpétuelle qui la suit et l'enveloppe' was only acting after her kind. But I suspect Mme. Tinayre means Denise to be an exceptional woman. Maybe the point is not worth discussion, and in the hands of a less accomplished writer would attract no attention. But the invalid hero is not a type to be encouraged, and the similarity of a scene in this book with one in a novel of Zola, and in a German novel less known to fame, make me ask myself once again whether such abnormal types should form the heroes and heroines of our novels.

The book contains some admirable descriptions of village customs and superstitions, which seem to linger longer in France than in England, the Roman Catholic religion, perhaps, accounting somewhat for the fact.

A little book entitled 'Le livre d'Heures,' by M. H. Jorys, gave me a couple of hours' pure

enjoyment. There is no story to speak of, no profound thought, perhaps, but the great charm of the style and the fine point of the wit are inimitable. It reminds me of the best conversation of cultivated French men and women. The hero is a middle-aged student who loses his eyesight, and the heroine, a young woman, is a student, too, in a sort of dilettante way. The two fall in love, and in the process talk about everything that affects human beings. The delicate handling of the situations, and of the phases of feeling is masterly.

Pierre Mille's volume of short stories 'La Biche Ecrasée' proves that the art of which Maupassant is perhaps the finest exponent, is still alive in France. The stories are not all pleasant, neither are some of them suitable reading for the young, but for artistic skill, for sustained interest, for psychological exposition in brief compass, they are admirable. The story that gives the volume its title, with its frank cynicism relieved by one touch of pathos, is sufficiently striking, but the best is a tale entitled 'Le Secret,' in which a husband and wife each discover separately that their baby is deaf and dumb, and then hating to hurt each other, and each thinking that the other has not found out the calamity, keep silence about it. One day an accident reveals what they each have known so long. The relief at the discovery, and the various conditions of mind previous to it, are most skilfully depicted.

'Le Chateau de la Belle-au-Bois Dormant,' by Pierre Loti, is likewise a volume of short stories, or rather sketches, chiefly reminiscent of Loti's

childhood and youth. He cannot reconcile himself to the progress of time, and is for ever lamenting the time that is past and gone. The mood naturally induces melancholy in the reader, and sometimes even somnolence. Even though he may be middle-aged, Loti can do better than this, and we refuse to believe that, as he hints in his preface, it is to be his last production.

In 'Quellen im Sande,' by C. G. Reuling, we have a German novel of reasonable length. The theme is akin to that of Goethe's 'Wahlverwandtschaften.' The portrait of the egoistical professor who domineers over his wife, is most cleverly drawn. He actually saves himself and his little boy by means of a raft of his own fashioning during a terrible flood, coolly leaving his wife behind in the almost submerged house, since the raft would not hold three persons, promising to return for her later. And he does this from no desire to be rid of his wife, of whom he is very fond, but because he really thinks she is the least important of the three. She is rescued by a friend, a man with whom she afterwards falls in love, and she determines to divorce her husband. But she gives up the notion before any harm is done for the sake of her little boy, and consents to go on with her old life. As a matter of fact the two wives in the story care more for their children than for husband or lover: in the one case it made for the right, but in the other the mother's persistent love for her dead children brought ruin to her husband. The description of the flood is admirable; but the episodes of Berlin life are poor and crude.

Clara Viebig has again published a volume of short stories dealing with village life in the Eifel district. There are seven stories in the volume, which is entitled 'Die heilige Einfalt.' They are for the most part tragedies, in which pity plays a bigger part than terror, for the pathos lies in the belief in good that is ingrain in many simple hearts. Although we become interested in the psychology of these simple souls and say, as we read, 'Oh, the pity of it!' we cannot help feeling at the same time that it is not all the truth, and that there must be a brighter side to village life, even in the Eifel. The literary skill and beautiful style of the tales is indisputable.

The most important recent work in French belle-lettres is Jules Lemaître's 'Fénelon.' It is a difficult book to describe, and it lacks something of the charm of his 'Rousseau' or 'Racine.' Lemaître states that the lectures on Rousseau led him to those on Fénelon. Indeed, he puts Fénelon, Rousseau, and Chateaubriand together as a spiritual dynasty, 'une dynastie de rêveurs, d'inquiets, et d'inventeurs.' Fénelon, M. Lemaître declares, is not easy to know, and cannot be summed up in a formula. Everyone must admit that he was an infinitely attractive man, for no one was perhaps more ardently and faithfully loved, and his friends were certainly of the elect of the earth. The conclusion reached is that Fénelon was before all a mystic, but, like St. Catherine of Siena and St. Theresa, 'un mystique actif.' Such combination of the contemplative with the administrative power, of the passive with the active, so to speak, is rare.

Perhaps the most interesting parts of the book are those dealing with Mme. Guyon and with quietism. The account of what quietism exactly is and means, is excellent. In the desire to confess himself, as in his views on education, Fénelon was a forerunner of Rousseau, while in subordinating reason to feeling, he presages Chateaubriand. It is the light thus thrown on literary evolution that makes the work of these French critics so valuable.

Foreigners continue their studies of English writers. I need not more than mention here Feuillerat's book on 'John Lyly,' for since it is published in England, it has gained general notice in the press. Paul Gallimard who is engaged in a study of the genius of Keats, and of the literary movement of England between 1800 and 1820 has just issued a complete translation of Keats's poems. It is always difficult to judge the quality of a translation of a poet one knows and greatly loves, but M. Gallimard's version proves him to be a careful student, and to possess the right feeling for the beauty of Keats's poetry.

But more interesting is Maeterlinck's prose translation of and introduction to *Macbeth*. Of the former I will again say nothing, but that it may serve for those who know no English. The introduction, however, is a suggestive piece of criticism. Maeterlinck feels deeply the wonder of the language of the play, its fine imagery, and the deep hidden springs of thought that lie beneath the spoken words. It is not the external, but the internal that interests: the crime is no more, he finds, than an occasion or pretext; its committal brings to the

surface a life born of depths that no less terrible act would have penetrated. Maeterlinck's point of view here as everywhere is that of the mystic. But he expresses a great truth about Shakespeare's characters, one that all lovers and students of the great dramatist hold, when he writes, 'on croit les connaître, mais ils demeurent toujours inattendus.' I quote his general summing up in full :

'Après avoir parcouru ce qui survit, marqué de l'approbation des siècles, dans tous les théâtres que connaissent les littératures,—exceptant seulement celui de Shakespeare même,—qui oserait signaler une œuvre dramatique qui égale les trois premiers actes de *Macbeth*? On lira dans Corneille et Racine des scènes plus touchantes, plus nobles, plus héroïques ou plus harmonieuses ; et chez les tragiques grecs, plus pures et plus grandioses. Peut-être même en rencontrera-t-on deux ou trois, parmi les contemporains du poète,—Webster, Beaumont et Fletcher et John Ford, —où la situation est plus âpre encore et plus poignante. On en trouvera sans doute, chez Goethe et chez nos modernes, qui sont plus savamment conduites et où les pensées, en tant que pensées pures, sont plus vastes et plus élevées. Mais nulle part on ne découvrira trois actes dont la substance tragique soit aussi dense, aussi sombrement plantureuse, aussi naturellement profonde ; où, tout en demeurant aussi simple, aussi journalière, en apparence elle soit cependant d'une qualité poétique aussi haute, aussi ardente, aussi précieuse. Nulle part on ne contempera un groupe humain, entouré de son atmosphère propre, qui prolonge dans les mots, dans le livre et sur la scène, son existence effrayante et secrète, à la façon de ce groupe-ci. Voilà le grand mystère et la merveille de *Macbeth*.'

A delightful study of fairies in the literature of all lands, from Merlin and the Breton Cycle down

to Hans Andersen, may be found in Mme. Lucie Félix-Faure Goyau's 'La vie et la mort des fées: Essai d'histoire littéraire.' The author gives a great extension to the term 'fairy':

'Si je m'attache au symbole des fées, c'est pour ce qu'il renferme, de psychologie humaine et spécialement féminine, c'est pour les reflets de vérité que, comme un miroir imparfait, nous renvoie cette fiction. N'y a-t-il pas des êtres humains dont l'existence, également, est une fiction? Des êtres dont l'âme n'habite que le monde du paraître, et qui ne réservent rien pour celui de l'être?'

English literature plays a large part. There is a chapter on Spenser, in which the Faery Queen is characterised as 'la féerie polemique,' and on Shakespeare, where it is said that nothing is more individual than 'la féerie Shakespearienne.' The 'fairies' in Keats, Shelley, and Tennyson are treated in much detail. The subject certainly gains from the lightness of touch that belongs essentially to a woman of taste and cultivation. Mme. Goyau's study is full of suggestion. She appeals more to the human element in her subject than to its folklore or scientific aspect. And as would seem inevitable in these modern days of material storm and stress, she ends on a note of melancholy.

'Ce monde n'appartient plus aux fées; n'ayant aucune prise sur lui, elles sont réduites à l'ignorer. Aussi c'est en vain qu'elles pleurent et se réjouissent: rien n'est grand, sinon ce qui vient de l'âme pour aller à l'âme.'

The new book by Jean-Edouard Spenlé on 'Rahel Mme. Varnhagen von Ense' is somewhat of a disappointment. It purports to be the history of a 'salon romantique en Allemagne,' and to some

extent it is. But Rahel's fascinating personality is over-weighted by the mass of not very well digested detail with which it is surrounded. Is it indeed ever possible to reproduce the spirit of these salons, dependent as they were for their very existence on the charm and personality of an individual? And of Rahel's personality it has been said that it was incomparable, and to it are applied her own words, 'unique au monde, autant que la plus grande des merveilles.' The book is certainly full of information, even if it lacks the literary touch that gives life to such studies.

To some extent Maspero's new book, 'Ruines et Paysages d'Egypte,' may be regarded as a companion volume to his 'Causeries d'Egypte,' published in 1908. The later volume deals more with the aspect of modern Egypt. He notes in his voyages up and down the Nile the changes, progress or decay as the case may be, of the various places he passes. In many ways these impressions of modern Egypt help to the right understanding and appreciation of ancient Egypt. Maspero describes in delightful fashion how some of the scenes that pass before him might have walked out of the paintings in the tombs, and shows how all the modern civilization in the world cannot stamp out the old Egypt. It is the case of the trained observer pointing out a thousand things the ordinary man would pass by. Most attractive is it to have such places as Siout, Rodah, Keneh, Denderah, Esneh, Edfou, Assouan, Louxor, and Philae described both in their modern aspect, and in relation to their ancient history and monuments.

A pamphlet by Joczsa Savits (formerly director of the Shakespeare Theatre in Munich) on 'Das Natur-Theater' contains much that is interesting. It is an essay on the particular advantages of the open-air theatre, with special references to those of Thale, in the Harz, and of Hertenstein, near Lucerne. It is shown that all dramatic performances began in the open air, and that in Germany, in comparatively modern days, Klopstock and Goethe favoured them. It is not possible to state here all the arguments brought forward by Herr Savits in support of open-air performances, but one interesting piece of psychology may well be mentioned. He declares that it is a much better thing that the spectators of a drama should be able to see each other, and so note the effect of the play on the audience, as is of course impossible in the darkened auditoriums that now prevail. He believes that thereby the dramatic enjoyment, pleasure in the tragic and delight in the comic, are enhanced and strengthened, and that at the climax of the play there is brought about a momentary ideal condition of equality and fraternity among the spectators. Whether this is true or not I cannot undertake to say, but some of us are seriously disturbed by the darkness of our modern theatres, a darkness that is fast extending from the auditorium to the stage itself, where often through a whole act it is impossible to distinguish the faces or gestures of the actors, or to see where they are on the stage.

I should like to draw the attention of students to an admirable series of French critical editions of poets and prose-writers now being issued under the

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auspices of the 'Société des Textes français modernes.' For the small annual subscription of ten francs members receive the volumes as they appear. They are edited by distinguished scholars who cast their net widely, for the volumes I have seen extend from 'Maître Pathelin' to Sénancour. Sixteenth century poets, most often so difficult to obtain either in contemporary or modern editions, are especially dealt with. Joachim du Bellay and Antoine Héroet are already published, and a complete edition of Ronsard with a good text is promised.

I have also received a specimen of the books issued by the 'Deutsche Dichter-Gedächtnis-Stiftung.' This is a society whose object is to issue at a low price reprints of carefully chosen works of German literature so as to spread a knowledge of the best books among the people. Dr. Ernst Schultze, who is evidently a reader of 'THE LIBRARY,' has sent me a volume containing a story by Paul Heyse. It costs fourpence, it is of 136 pages, beautifully printed on good paper with a frontispiece by Ernst Liebermann—admirable black and white work, it goes without saying—a portrait of the author, and an excellent two-page introduction by Adalbert Meinhardt. For a small subscription, beginning as low as two shillings a year, members of the society receive the publications, which include examples by many modern German writers whose works are expensive to purchase in the ordinary way. Some of the smaller Free Libraries, and certainly school libraries in this country, wishing to collect good German books,

may find such volumes useful. They are chosen by a committee of distinguished literary men, and so an English librarian whose knowledge of German is slight, need have no fears in putting them on his shelves.

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The following recently published books deserve attention:—

Amitiés de Reine. Par Jacques de la Fave.
With a preface by the Marquis de Ségur.

A chronicle of the private life of Marie Antoinette with a few excursions into the domain of her political life. It contains some new material.

Savants et Écrivains. Par H. Poincaré.

Essays chiefly on men of science, Lord Kelvin among them, with the author's 'discours de réception' at the French Academy on the poet Sully Prudhomme.

Les Idées de Stendhal. Par Jean Mélia.

A complement to the same author's 'La vie amoureuse de Stendhal,' and a minute study of Stendhal's 'Beylisme,' *i.e.* his belief that happiness consists in an exact knowledge of the circumstances of facts.

Bibliographie Critique et raisonnée des Ana français et étrangers. Par A. F. Aude.

There are brief notes on the volumes, some of which are very rare and curious.

Le Théâtre des Poètes, 1850-1910. Par J. Ernest-Charles.

A short history of the poetic drama in France during the past sixty years. It begins with Ponsard and Augier and ends with Rostand. 'L'humanité vient d'elle-même se rafraîchir à cette source française, car elle est douce, elle est pure, et elle est vivifiante.'

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Agrippa d'Aubigné. Par S. Rocheblave.

A volume of the series 'Les grands écrivains français.' An excellent account of a man who was 'un poète épico-lyrique, un historien moraliste et politique, un romancier satirique,' one of the most fertile writers of his time, and thus most difficult to classify.

Le marquis de Bièvre, sa vie, ses calembours, ses comédies. 1747-89. Par Comte Gabriel Mareschal de Bièvre.

A biography that adds something to the picture of a vanished society. Bièvre was one of those 'gentilshommes lettrés, spirituels et frondeurs, qui, les yeux bandés, couraient à la Révolution.'

L'Amiral D'Estaing. 1729-94. Par M. Calmon-Maison.

A full and careful biography.

Der Junge de Spinoza. Leben und Werdegang im Lichte der Weltphilosophie. Von Stanislaus von Dunin-Borkowski S. J.

Treats of Spinoza's life up to 1656, the year of his expulsion from the synagogue. A second volume will follow entitled 'Die Reife.'

Anthologie des Prosateurs Français contemporains (1850 à nos jours), Par Georges Pellissier. Les Romanciers.

The first volume of a new series most excellently edited with a brief general introduction, and a brief biographical, bibliographical, and critical note to each author selected from Victor Hugo to Mme. de Noailles. It will be followed by two more volumes dealing in similar fashion with prose writers in other departments of literature.

Nouvelles Pages anthologiques. Par G. Walch. Vol. I.

A selection excellently edited from the works of minor nineteenth century poets.

ELIZABETH LEE.