

BURNS.

BY JOHN NICHOLSON.

His lyre he took to hill and glen,
To mountain and to shade;
Centuries may pass away, but when
Will such a harp be played?

His native strain each bird may try,
But who has got his fire?
Why, none! For Nature saw him die,
And took away his lyre.

The New-York Tribune.

ILLUSTRATED SUPPLEMENT.

SUNDAY, APRIL 13, 1902.

The appearance of two new editions of popular novels, to which we refer on another page to-day, reminds us of the strange fate which seems to attend certain publications in this field. Mr. Davis's "Soldiers of Fortune" is put upon the stage and interest is straightway revived in the novel. It is forthwith reprinted. "Sir Richard Calmady" puts the name of its author on everybody's lips, and the publishers of another novel by Lucas Malet, "The Carissima," find it worth while to reprint it. But ordinarily, unless some special incident provokes it, many a clever novel seems to pass into oblivion almost as soon as the poorest possible trash. The interesting novel, not great, but not dull either, is one of the most familiar phenomena of the day. But after the season in which it appears has ended, it is surprisingly apt to be wiped out of existence. No one has changed his opinion about it; it is simply that no one, apparently, ever thinks of it at all. Is fiction, then, so completely a matter of fashion? Is the novelist nothing more than a public entertainer, to be good naturedly entertained for a space and then forgotten like some minor figure of the stage? He is apt, we fear, taking himself, as he so often does, with prodigious seriousness, to assume that he is necessary to the universe. Some day he may awake to the truth and suffer a fearful shock, and we could not, in every case, be sorry for him. There are times, however, when the neglect into which the "novel of the moment" falls moves us not simply to compassion, but to surprise that good work should be so unfairly treated.

Mr. Kipling was bound to write a poem on Cecil Rhodes, and, under the peculiar circumstances of the occasion, criticism would naturally be considerate, to say the least. Mr. Rhodes was the poet's friend, as well as the object of his admiration on public grounds. Yet this very fact should have helped Mr. Kipling to produce lines more satisfactory than those printed in "The London Times" the other day and promptly cabled to this country. He had a theme certain to excite his sympathy, one in the treatment of which personal emotion might well have given an added impetus to his pen. Here is part of the result:

It is his will that he look forth across the lands
he won—
The granite of the Ancient North, great spaces
washed with sun.
There shall he patient make his seat (as when
the death he dared),
And there await a people's feet in the paths
that he prepared.

There till the vision he foresaw splendid and
whole arise,
And unimagined empires draw to council 'neath
his skies,
The immense and brooding Spirit still shall
quicken and control.
Living, he was the land, and dead, his soul shall
be her soul.

It is better than, in all probability, Mr. Austin would have made it. Yet it suggests, as some other recent poetry by Mr. Kipling has suggested, that he may come to change places with the Laureate in the public mind after a very unflattering fashion. His is not the art that can adapt itself to sudden rushings into print, upon all and sundry occasions.

There is a delightful skit in the current number of "The Atlantic Monthly" on "The Rise of the Penny Dreadfuls." The author, an anonymous member of "The Contributors' Club," indicates with a humorous touch the transformation of a writer for the mischievous boy into a writer for the mature individual. Master Penny Dreadful is introduced upon the scene, discoursing with his publisher, who speaks to him thus: "Then in the matter of names. You Penny Dreadfuls have always been your own enemies there. Only a publisher knows what's in a name. . . . The Gentle Reader will not stand it to have a spade called a spade! Why, . . . you couldn't sell six copies of 'Dutch the Slugger' to Gentle Readers; but revise the story a bit, change the dates, and bring it out in cloth as 'The Iron Hand of the Last Patroon, a Tale of New-Amsterdam,' and it would sell like hot cakes." The advice is taken. Penny Dreadful departs, tingling with the new idea, and, our author tells us, "six months later, under the title 'Lancelot of the Shining Shield,' the youngest of the Penny Dreadfuls was elevated to the Library Shelf by acclamation." It is a pretty parable, and, somehow, there is something very suggestive about it; something, however, which out of our boundless good nature we will refrain from talking about.

THE TIME OF LOUIS XV.

ITS CHARACTERISTICS DRAWN BY AN EYEWITNESS.

JOURNAL AND MEMOIRS OF THE MARQUIS D'ARGENSON. Published from the autograph MSS. in the Library of the Louvre. By E. J. B. Rathery. With an Introduction by C.-A. Sainte-Beuve. Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley. Illustrated with Portraits from the Original. In Two Volumes. 8vo., pp. x, 401, xi, 331. Boston: Hardy, Pratt & Co.

The writings of the Marquis D'Argenson have long been valued for the light they throw on the court of Louis XV. He was clear eyed and candid. In his pages the conditions and events which paved the way for the Revolution are set forth with prophetic insight; he was not a man of action, but a thinker, and while he shared in the public life of his time and continued to have relations with the court even after he had retired from active participation in affairs he was disposed from the beginning to study all things with a curious detachment. Capable occasionally of deep prejudice, he could never remain for any serious length of time insensible to truth and justice. As Miss Wormeley re-

in 1733, when he was in his thirty-ninth year, "she tried to persuade me to present myself for a place in the French Academy, an honor which she declared suited me and which I suited." He was not sure of that himself, and says, with perfect sincerity, that he "dreaded the noise, the envy and the satire of the little minds who aspired to the place, whether authors or men of the world; also the burden of making an hanague in public." "So much fiddle faddle," he adds, "repelled me." He knew his own mind. Fiddle faddle anywhere was repulsive to him. He had a natural disdain for the sort of thing of which he gives us a glimpse in his journal for 1739. "The French Academy," he writes, "has been engaged for a whole year in deliberating on a great question: Ought we to say the patton of a shoe or p^{at}on—the a short or long?" Nevertheless, the Marquise de Lambert was right. D'Argenson had the genius and the limitations of a born academician. "I burn with ardor for the welfare of my fellow citizens," he declared, but he loved ideas too well to grapple masterfully with things as they were. "I shall always pronounce myself," he says, when touching on the unlikelihood of his ever accomplishing anything in the state, "as liking better to be nothing than to be something creeping and in-



THE MARQUIS D'ARGENSON.
(From a contemporary portrait.)

two years' tenure of office as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, his golden epoch, he acquitted himself honorably, but with neither the brilliance nor the force necessary to make him a permanent figure in French history. As the protégé of Chauvelin, the Keeper of the Seals, under the regime of Cardinal de Fleury, he had the opportunity not only to win immediate success, but to make himself indispensable. Instead, he seems always to have missed by a handsbreadth the distinctions he sought, and in his criticisms of Chauvelin, as in his rueful comments on the insinuating cleverness of his brother, Comte D'Argenson, we read, between the lines, a revelation of his incurably academic nature, from which much that was good, but little that was creative, was to be expected. Turning from the man, with his coldness, with his brutal candor in the discussion of his family, with his streak of mediocrity vitiating a character distinguished in many ways—turning from D'Argenson himself to the things he observed, and vividly, shrewdly reported—we turn to the real source of interest in the volumes before us.

As a moralist and as a fastidious gentleman he was revolted by the corruption in court circles; as a citizen of liberal tendencies and essentially humane feeling he was stirred by the social and economic deterioration of the country at large. "There are but three words in our language," he says, "to be used as to the present state of things—this cannot last"; and all through the long tale of mismanagement and suffering that he tells he writes with the emotion of one to whom present ills are the more tragic because of what they foretell. And such ills as they were! A king incompetent and profligate. A court sunk in the vilest intrigue and controlled in every one of its actions by self-interest. Rascality everywhere, with envy, hatred and malice in its train. Above all, the baleful influence of wicked women at whose feet the king sat, ruling his dominions chiefly with reference to his own whims and the wishes of his mistresses. The example of the court produced abuses throughout the length and breadth of the land. Paris went mad over games of chance, and in the provinces administration grew fouler every day, under the auspices of men whose chief purpose in gathering the taxes was to feather their own nests. "Famine has occasioned," writes D'Argenson, in 1739, "three uprisings in the provinces—at Ruffec, Caen and Chinon. They murdered women on the high road who were carrying bread. . . . Men were eating grass like sheep and dying like flies." Where was the responsibility to be placed? Partly upon the whole selfish and senseless drift of the old regime; but largely, also, upon the king and his women. D'Argenson snorts with disgust over the Comtesse de Mailly and her sister and successor, the Duchess de Chateauroux, but he reserves the full force of his condemnation for the Pompadour. He never tires of commemorating her evil deeds. Here are two specimens of his talk about her:

It was only too well foreseen that the cabinets of pleasure would sooner or later become the senate of the nation, the lady's chambers appointing the ministers of State. All careers are open now to the recommendation of the mistress. A great promotion of three hundred and eleven general officers has just been made, nearly all of whom are the selection of this lady. It is now a question of soon renewing the leases of the farmers-general, and of the sub-farms. The mistress has declared that she wishes twelve farmers-general of her own making, and two hundred new sub-farmers; she has a cabinet all full of petitions for these places; everybody now addresses her openly. The other day there were persons standing and waiting the hour of her toilet at the foot of her little staircase, while two of the Paris brothers were with her discussing the affairs. . . .

She does, in fact, more business, and has more authority than ever Cardinal de Fleury had. She besets the King continually; she shakes him up, she agitates him, she never leaves him a moment to himself. Formerly, he used to work for some hours in his cabinet; now, she does not leave him one-quarter of an hour alone. She says this is for the good of his health, and to distract him from melancholy thoughts; but it is much more to keep him from all idea of changing his ministry and attending to the government himself; in this she does the greatest harm that can be done to a kingdom.

They have just doubled the workmen employed on the new Chateau de Meudon; there are now fifteen hundred at work there; they are restocking the menagerie; all expensive occupations which distract the king from useful and serious work. The ministers, and all others, are forbidden to speak to him of vexing things—there are plenty of such topics.

D'Argenson was not, perhaps, altogether just to the Marquise. Her advice in matters of state was not invariably pernicious, and, as Miss Wormeley points out, the critic in these vol-



LOUIS XV.

(From the portrait by Van Loo.)

marks in a brief preface to her admirable translation, "these notes are the thoughts of an honest man." The critical tone characterizing everything he writes, even when he means to do no more than record the facts, is, on the whole, dispassionate and philosophical, and in all that great mass of contemporary literature in which the traits of his time are reflected there are no volumes surpassing his in truth and living interest.

There are many disclosing more sympathetic personal qualities. D'Argenson compels esteem most of the time, but inspires unqualified liking seldom, if ever. Alluding to an old friend of his, the Marquise de Lambert, he says, writing



THE MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR.
(From the portrait by Drouais.)

triguing." We must applaud his refusal to use the baser arts of the courtier. Yet in the very moment of applauding him we cannot help but pause, wondering if, after all, there were not something else at the bottom of his failure to render, as he was in so many respects fitted to render, substantial service to his country.

Suspicion deepens into certainty when, in one of those passages of speculation on what he would do if he were prime minister, in which he often indulged, we find the plain indication that, after a fashion of his own, he was willing to enter into the corrupt spirit of the court. In this "dream," as he calls it, he proposes an arrangement which would support the King in his immorality, only throwing a veil of respectability over it; and, while protesting that he wants "no other salary than my pension," he blandly adds that "if, for extraordinary expenses—the extinguishment of my debts, the completion of my buildings at Argenson—I should ask for anything as the reward of my toil, it would be for some 25,000 or 30,000 livres now and then." In other words, this honest man, sound as he was in nine cases out of ten, was not sound all through. That he could palter with kingly vices, when he hated them; that he could talk of accepting a large sum of money "now and then," when he knew that every sou was needed in the public service, not simply shows that he could adapt himself to the ways of those around him; the fact that he could think of the policy and yet not act upon it leads us to the belief that there was a fatal strain of weakness in him.

If he had adopted the tactics of the court and had accomplished something, it is not merely cynical to say that he would have left a more favorable impression. As it is, we are driven to conclude that he lacked the courage of even a discreditable conviction, and all along the line this conclusion is ratified. He talked too much and did too little; he wrote valuable memorials to the King on public affairs, but was only a capable—not a powerful—official; and during his