

LANDOR.

A New Edition of One of His Masterpieces.

PERICLES AND ASPASIA. By Walter Savage Landor. (The Chiswick Library of Noble Authors.) Folio, pp. xi, 235. Privately printed for the Scott-Thaw Company.

Hitherto the finest edition of "Pericles and Aspasia" has been that printed on large paper, with the rest of Landor's works, by Dent, of London, in the early 90's. It is an exquisite piece of press work, but the present volume outshines it. This is, indeed, a beautiful folio, worthily inaugurating the series of reprints of classics to which the publishers give the alluring title of "The Chiswick Library of Noble Authors." Paper of a very fine quality has been used, showing the handsome typography to the fullest advantage. Decorative initial letters adorn the page, which is further enhanced by the use of titles in red ink on the margin. Of shapely proportions and well bound in boards, the book makes a stately appearance, is light in the hand, and is held open without effort, and without cracking. It is, in short, an almost impeccable publication. The items open to criticism are the title page and the frontispiece. The former is overloaded with decoration, and in the latter a fine portrait of Landor is surrounded by too heavy a border, with fluttering ribands distinctly ungraceful and commonplace. These details can be so easily remedied that it is to be hoped that further volumes will show improvement where they are concerned. We may add that of this edition only two hundred copies are for sale in this country.

No better choice than "Pericles and Aspasia" could have been made for the first volume in a series of "noble authors," for in that book Landor wrote some of his noblest prose and poetry—which is one way of saying that this is one of the noblest things in English literature. It is not its sumptuous form alone that detaches the present edition from the general run of reprints and urges the reader to turn its pages with a special interest. One begins by turning them for the sake of the typography. One ends by yielding to the temptation to re-read every line in this enchanting product of the creative imagination. "Pericles and Aspasia" has two aspects, the human and the critical. One is inclined, perhaps, to substitute "historical" for the first of these words, until one realizes that here is no formal narrative of an epoch and its salient figures, but a kind of loose dramatization of only such elements as the author has cared to wreak himself upon in a certain passage of Athenian story. Criticism has always recognized that Landor brought learning to his task. It has not sufficiently recognized his resources of raciness and realistic truth. Partly he has himself been responsible for this, because he has so illuminated certain of his writings with the sunbeams of Greece, has so filled them with the atmosphere of pure classic beauty, that his charm has, so to say, taken precedence of his truth. "Ionia is far more beautiful than Attica, Miletus than Athens," writes Aspasia to Cleone in the first of these immortal letters, "for about Athens there is no verdure, no spacious and full and flowing river, few gardens, many olive trees—so many, indeed, that we seem to be in an eternal cloud of dust. However, when the sea breezes blow, this tree itself looks beautiful; it looks, in its pliable and undulating branches, irresolute as Ariadne when she was urged to fly, and pale as Orithyia when she was borne away." Yet this very passage illustrates what Landor did with his material. It begins with a fling at Athens, but as it ends we have a sense of something fine and beautiful. The process is merely reversed in the broad character of "Pericles and Aspasia." We are all along conscious of something delicate and radiantly beautiful—too beautiful for us to grasp at once its associations with the solid earth. Then, as we reflect on the gleaming fabric, we perceive its essential fidelity to life, the reality of the movement that murmurs through it, the flesh and blood actuality of the people in it.

Could any professional romancer, practised in the evocation of scenes and human figures, paint more vividly than Landor has painted the arrival of Aspasia upon the scene, her hurried descent upon the shore, and the staring young men in the theatre, dazzled as, disguised in the dress of an Athenian boy, she takes her seat and absorbs herself in the "Prometheus" with such passion that she swoons in her place? It was not learning that taught Landor how to revive thus authoritatively the very carriage and color of an ancient time; it was the dramatic instinct guiding him to preclude the right effect. And how natural is the episode of the young Alcibiades, coming from Pericles to offer his assistance to the fair stranger! With what animation, and yet with what restraint, does Landor handle the following scene between Aspasia and Eptmedea! Again and again through the book we come upon passages the modernity of which, in everything that means vitality and flexibility, is only surpassed by the austere glamour of the writer's style. That touch of comedy which enters in the long letter to Cleone on Polus and his amazing supper disclose in full measure the spirit which more delicately reveals itself everywhere, the spirit of an author who has in imagination carried himself back across the centuries and lived in delight-

ful intimacy with men and women of the remote past. He is inimitably true, giving us almost the accent of domesticity, as well, in the account of Epimedeia and her emeralds and Aspasia's refusal to wear the latter as earrings. Then, with the Landorian tendency to generalize from details, to pass from a specific incident to discourse on classical ideas and ways, the heroine's adornment of her arm with her friend's gift is made the excuse for remarks like these:

Epimedeia, it appears, has not corrupted very grossly your purity and simplicity in dress. Yet, remembering your observation on armlets, I cannot but commend your kindness and sufferance in wearing her emeralds. Your opinion was formerly that we should be careful not to subdivide our persons. The arm is composed of three parts; no one of them is too long. Now the armlet intersects that portion of it which must be considered as the most beautiful. In my idea of the matter, the sandal alone is susceptible of gems, after the zone has received the richest. The zone is necessary to our vesture, and encompasses the person, in every quarter of the humanized world, in one invariable manner. The hair, too, is divided by nature in the middle of the head. There is a cousinship between the hair and the flowers; and from this relation the poets have called by the same name

claims, scattered broadcast through the book, on which again and again one would wish to pause, and finally there is the abundant talk of Pericles, so full of matter, so full of suggestion. But in this masterpiece the poetry no less than the prose is constantly arresting the reader and moving him to the happiest mode of illustration. The lines to Dirce have been reproduced thousands of times, but it is hard to refrain from reproducing them again, and so with the poem on Eriopis, the little gem on Cupid tearing a rosebud, the enchanting "Hesperus," the dainty "Perilla" and a round score of other exquisite pieces. But in taking leave of this beautiful work of genius, we content ourselves with giving only one of the poems, a single bit of the matchless workmanship in words and music with which Landor embellished his triumph of English style interpenetrated with the classic spirit. It is more than familiar, and, like all masterpieces, it is ever new:

Pyrrha! your smiles are gleams of sun
That after one another run
Incessantly, and think it fun.

Pyrrha! your tears are short sweet rain
That glimmering on the flower-lit plain
Zephyrs kiss back to heaven again.



WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.
(From the portrait by Sir William Boxall.)

the leaves and it. They appear on the head as if they had been seeking one another. Our national dress, very different from the dress of barbarous nations, is not the invention of the ignorant or the slave; but the sculptor, the painter and the poet have studied how best to adorn the most beautiful object of their fancies and contemplations. The Indians, who believe that human pains and sufferings are pleasing to the deity, make incisions in their bodies and insert into them imperishable colors. They also adorn the ears and noses and foreheads of their gods. These were the ancestors of the Egyptian; we chose handsomer and better tempered ones for our worship, but retained the same decorations in our sculpture, and to a degree which the sobriety of the Egyptian has reduced and chastened. Hence, we retain the only mark of barbarism which dishonors our national dress, the use of earrings. If our statues should all be broken by some convulsion of the earth, would it be believed by future ages that in the country and age of Sophocles the women tore holes in their ears to let rings into, as the more brutal of peasants do with the snouts of sows?

In every page of the prose in "Pericles and Aspasia" there is something that tempts to quotation. There is the allusion to Hesiod, and his one verse worth transcribing for the sake of the melody—"In a soft meadow, and on vernal flowers." There is the brief but eloquent characterization of Sappho in the forty-seventh letter. There are notes innumerable like that one in which Cleone warns her correspondent against the darts of the comic muse. "Beware, my dear Aspasia, never to offend him, for he holds more terrors at his command than Aeschylus. The tragic poet rolls the thunders that frighten, the comic wields the lightning that kills. Aristophanes has the power of tossing you among the populace of a thousand cities for a thousand years. A great poet is more powerful than Sesostris, and a wicked one more formidable than Phalaris." There are criti-

Pyrrha! both anguish me; do please
To shed but (if you wish me ease)
Twenty of those, and two of these.

GENIUS.

Its Absorption of a Man's Best Faculties.
From Notes and Queries.

To be a great lawyer is incompatible with being a great poet. Nevertheless, Shakespeare was fond of showing his little legal knowledge, and Bacon has written some verse. There have been writers of eminence, like Walter Scott and Thackeray, who were lawyers by profession, but they must have made law quite subordinate to literature, although some of them, like Walter Scott, have got money by following the law. Hoffmann, the author of "The Pot of Gold" and other imaginative stories, was a man of genius, who was also a judge or a magistrate. I think, however, that his legal duties sat lightly on him. His connection with the law seems somewhat similar to that of Walter Scott. It was neither absorbing nor permanent. Politicians turn to literature. Literary men, like Chateaubriand and Lamartine, have held high places as politicians, but they never were real statesmen, and I should not call them men of great genius. A man of action may be great in more fields of action than one. Julius Caesar and Napoleon Bonaparte were statesmen and generals, but they were not, and could not be, poets, though Julius Caesar was a writer. Among the ancient Greeks and later Spaniards and Portuguese we find poets who were soldiers and even generals. They, however, were not wholly military. Only a part, and sometimes a small part, of their lives was spent in service. Horace's experience of military life was very short, and although he was a military tribune he was not a distinguished soldier. A man may be excellent in more ways than one, but he cannot be a man of genius in two different ways. A few instances, such as that of Sheridan, might be given which seem to be exceptions to the rule; I doubt whether they are so. The same inclination made Sheridan an orator and a writer of comedy.

FICTION.

The Reappearance of Colonel Carter.

COLONEL CARTER'S CHRISTMAS. By F. Hopkinson Smith. Illustrated by F. C. Yohn. 12mo, pp. xi, 153. Charles Scribner's Sons.

AN IRISH COUSIN. By E. G. Somerville and Martin Ross. New and Revised Edition. 12mo, pp. 396. Longmans, Green & Co.

PLACE AND POWER. By Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler (Mrs. Alfred Laurence Felkin). Illustrated. 12mo, pp. viii, 321. D. Appleton & Co.

BARBE OF GRAND BAYOU. By John Oxenham. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. 313. Dodd, Mead & Co.

THE PROMOTION OF THE ADMIRAL, AND OTHER SEA COMEDIES. By Morley Roberts. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. 238. Boston: L. C. Page & Co.

Mr. Smith's lovable old Southerner reappears in "Colonel Carter's Christmas" with his charm undiminished. He is the same childlike and chivalrous type, and his deeds, like his personality, have the same winning savor that took Mr. Smith's readers captive a long time ago. In this latest brief narrative of Colonel Carter and his doings he is represented at the outset as being at daggers drawn with Mr. P. A. Klutchem, the hard fisted money maker whom we seem to have met before. The trouble between the two is complicated by events affecting the fortunes of the colonel's old friend, Fitz. The well meant efforts of a man of kindness, but of small experience of the world, to save a difficult situation only lead to something very like disaster. But Mr. Smith, in telling a Christmas story, has not, of course, set out to harrow up our feelings. The colonel's discomfiture at a New-York police station is of the most fleeting character, and out of the episode there flows ultimately a happy readjustment of affairs. A little girl is introduced into the tale to give an added turn to its sentiment. She and all the other characters are effectively drawn, and the whole composition has the true atmosphere of the Christmas book. It is one of Mr. Smith's most artistic performances.

Encouraged by the success of "Some Experiences of an Irish R. M." and "All on the Irish Shore," the authors of these capital books have brought out a new and revised edition of "An Irish Cousin," which they first published in 1889. For American readers it is practically a new book, and though it is not so good as either of the volumes we have just mentioned, it is decidedly worth reading, for Messrs. Somerville and Ross have a way of their own in sketching Irish life. In their better known works they have sketched it with a peculiar feeling for its humors. There are odd humors, deftly hit off, in "An Irish Cousin," but these are only incidental. The main drift of the novel concerns a young woman who has come to Ireland from Canada to live for a time in the house of two kinsmen—an uncle of hers and his son. There is a mystery in the family, but the authors have thought well to approach the solution of it without the aid of the usual dramatic expedients. Through most of the chapters we are interested chiefly in the picture that is given of what we suppose is a typical Irish household, with the delights of the hunting field and the ways of a rural neighborhood thrown in for the sake of variety. The tragic note only clearly declares itself as we near the end. This is probably the first book of the authors. Certainly it suggests the amateur. Just as certainly it has some individuality and is entertaining.

"Place and Power" differs from all of the novels with which Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler (Mrs. Felkin) has thus far amused her public. It contains hardly any of the flippant chatter and machine made epigrams in which her characters have been accustomed to indulge, and for this we are not sorry. Unfortunately, in trying to be serious, Mrs. Felkin seems to have lost her grasp of her material. The man whom she presents to us as a type of irreligion, defying the Church and all its precepts, and thereby drawing down a kind of curse upon his head, is not in the least credible or interesting. He is a mere puppet, and no one else in the book shows any closer resemblance to ordinary humanity. The curse aforesaid being launched at Conrad Clayton early in the book, the reader perseveres through many pages simply out of curiosity as to the outcome, not because he feels any sympathy for the men and women presented. When the climax is reached it is seen to be of a melodramatic nature, and to be rather poorly handled into the bargain. In fact, Mrs. Felkin has produced on this occasion an inert and wearisome story.

There is nothing inert about "Barbe of Grand Bayou." On the contrary, it bristles with excitement. A murder of very revolting character is talked of on the first page. The keeper of a lighthouse on the French coast is the criminal, and at the time of the opening of the story Barbe is living with him, a child growing in the shadow of his morose nature like a flower in the cranny of a blood stained wall. She, as she grows up, witnesses things hardly less horrible than the murder to which we have alluded. The sea is constantly claiming its victims within sight of her home. In one scene she plays the part of a heroine, and rescues a young sailor from the grave. Thereafter, to all appearances, happiness should be her portion, but when love enters rivalry follows, and again horrors are piled on by the resourceful author. Mr. Oxenham even goes so far as to drag in a sea monster, a beast something like a devilfish, only