

FICTION.

A New Book by Agnes and Egerton Castle.

INCOMPARABLE BELLAIRS. By Agnes and Egerton Castle. 12mo, pp. liv, 289. Frederick A. Stokes Company.

STELLA FREGELIUS. A Tale of Three Destinies. By H. Rider Haggard. 12mo, pp. x, 361. Longmans, Green & Co.

CALDERON'S PRISONER. By Alice Duer Miller. 12mo, pp. 294. Charles Scribner's Sons.

The peculiar gift of the authors of "Incomparable Bellairs" is for a gayety as blithe as a breeze in spring, as sunny as sunshine itself. In their latest volume they re-introduce characters already made familiar in "The Bath Comedy," and they revive all of the charm of that delightful book. The heroine is the same Mistress Kitty Bellairs, the most adorable of eighteenth century flirts, and her adventures have the daintly romantic savour which we expect where she is concerned and when Mr. and Mrs. Castle are at their best. Several years ago we hailed these writers as having unique significance in the field of fiction which they more particularly affect, since in that field where artifice ordinarily flourishes, they produce work that is spontaneity, naturalness, itself. The scenes of "Incomparable Bellairs" are laid in the London and Bath of the most decorative epoch in English history, when men in their laces and satins were only eclipsed because the women rose to phenomenal heights of elegance in costume and demeanor. In those days of powder and patches life seems almost to creak under the weight of convention in dress and manners, but human nature was the same then as it is now, and the Castles, looking beneath the surface of the furbelowed society whose outward grace and brilliance they know so well how to paint, make their characters men and women who are not only alive but lovable.

"Incomparable Bellairs" is as clever a piece of artistic craftsmanship as a painted fan of the Regency, but in its perfect sincerity this page of old romance is as touching as a bit of modern realism. Mistress Kitty, so fair and so petulant, with the subtly shrewish touch so characteristic of her time, holds our sympathy no matter how cruel she may be to her unhappy swains, and if it is partly the ingenuity of the authors in devising new situations for her to confront that carries the reader through this book at one sitting, it is also the sympathetic traits in this unreasonable young heroine to which our interest in her story is to be traced. Furthermore, she has an admirable foil in the Quaker turned actress, Rachel Peace, who is brought upon the scene at once to be the means of teaching Kitty her needed lesson and to widen the scope of the book. The two women, disputing the centre of the stage together, throw a flood of light on the types and ways of a bygone era. It would be hard to say which of the two ultimately lingers longest in the memory. Kitty is, in her sparkling way, indeed incomparable, but the statelier beauty of Rachel Peace and the infinitely greater depth of her nature, move the authors to a tenderness which forms one of the best elements of their work. "Incomparable Bellairs" brims over with incident. At one moment we are in the heroine's boudoir, watching her fence with her gallants, at the next, we are on the highway, witnessing perilous encounters, and one episode follows another until the book seems a veritable panorama. But it is admirably constructed, it has not only the briskness but the deftly ordered form of a good comedy. A brighter, better written, more wholesome romance than this we could not ask.

In a brief prefatory note to "Stella Fregelius" Mr. Haggard confesses to the feeling that he "owes some apology to his readers for his boldness in offering to them a story which is in no sense a romance of the character that perhaps they expect from him." The wise reader will protest that no apology is needed. He may grant that "Stella Fregelius" is not so steadily nor so obviously exciting a book as almost any one of the author's earlier novels. But he can hardly fail to be impressed by the skill and feeling with which Mr. Haggard has worked out an audacious and most suggestive scheme. His hero is an electrician who has drifted away from the ordinary lines of scientific research to absorb himself in the development of an instrument which will enable men to talk to one another without the intervention of wires, though they are a great distance apart. The inventor is more and more tempted, as he perfects his machine, to speculate on the possibility of breaking down the barriers that exist between our own world and the unexplored vastnesses of the universe. To throw his mystical preoccupations into sharper contrast with life as it exists for all human beings, Mr. Haggard places his hero in an environment drawn from rural England, and marries him to a woman whose mind rejects all fantastical things with frank contempt. But at a critical moment in Morris Menk's career, he sends him, impelled by mysterious influences, to rescue from death a woman with a temperament as curious as his own, and thenceforth the spiritual element in the story is more and more to the fore. "Stella Fregelius" is a fantasy, in great measure, but the author never loses his grasp of things as they are, and gives to the novel a remarkable plausibility. In his new vein Mr. Haggard is as successful as in the old.

Mrs. Miller's two novelties, brought together in a volume which takes its title from the first one, both deal with the type of woman whose mind can be made up only under pressure exerted by some masterful temperament, or by some overpowering circumstance. The heroine of "Calderon's Prisoner" is an American girl to whom fortune has been so kind that she seems to have nothing left to desire. But she is bored, most of all, by the idea of marrying the man who, like everything else in her life, seems to have been made to order for her, and in a fit of restlessness she goes to seek distraction in the home of some friends living in a Spanish-American republic. There we expect her, as a matter of course, to find her fate, but as we pointed out in reviewing the author's earlier book, "A Modern Obstacle," she is resourceful in giving an unexpected turn to her plot. Miss Lea leaves the scene of her most exciting adventures with her heart's future apparently unsettled, and she returns to the old life at home before she takes the step that gives Mrs. Miller's story its fitting climax. "Cyril Vane's Wife," the other novelette in the book, is not so well constructed. We have a lively suspicion, when the crisis is reached between Vane and his wife, of just what the end of it all is

LITERARY NOTES.

The reprint of "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies" is to appear exactly in accordance with Mr. Whistler's wishes. He chose the type for the first edition of the book, and the general arrangement of it was designed by him. Mr. Hefnemann, his publisher, says that Whistler wanted the book, whenever it should be republished, to be printed in the style he had himself chosen.

Lovers of Balzac will watch for the volume soon to appear in Paris embodying the articles on Balzac as a printer which M. Hanotaux published some time ago in a newspaper. The author has presumably amplified the work for its appearance in book form, since it is announced that he has a collaborator in the present enterprise, M. Georges Vicare. The pages will be illustrated by M. Lepere, which is one way of saying that they will be perfectly illustrated.

Novelists have often done their best to analyze in their books the emotions of the soldier under fire. A valuable contribution is made to the subject by Lord Wolseley, who in his recently published memoirs makes these remarks: "And let me here confess what I have never told any one. I have often been asked by foolish people if I never felt nervous when in danger. I don't think that many men when in

volumes which are presently to appear. He says that he has often been asked, since his return from South America, "Why do they have so many revolutions there?" In his book he attempts to answer that question.

Very little personalia concerning Henry Seton Merriman (H. S. Scott) has found its way into print since his death. The only new fact concerning him which has reached us, is that he was a business man, "by training and practice."

An English newspaper announces that, "according to a Laffan telegram from New-York, Mr. Rudyard Kipling has sold Brattleboro, his Vermont estate, which he bought in a moment of enthusiasm some ten years ago," etc. This announcement is well calculated to strike terror to the soul of any inhabitant of Brattleboro who may be at the moment sojourning in London.

Mr. W. G. Hutchinson, who compiled a book called "Lyra Nicotina," some years ago, is preparing an anthology of drinking songs and poems. The verses in it will range from Walter Mapes to Mr. W. E. Henley.

The shifts to which the journalist is put who commits himself to discoursing on somebody's birthday in every issue of his paper receive amusing illustration in "The London Daily Chronicle." Mr. Herbert Trench, the minor poet, having reached his thirty-seventh birthday, we are gravely reminded that "thirty-seven was also the age at which Giovanni de Medici became Pope Leo X." Was it, indeed?

Mr. Robert Bridges, the English poet, contributes to the current number of "The Speaker" an interesting dialogue in verse on "La Gloire de Voltaire." A and B, starting from Beranger's tribute to his fellow countryman, argue the case for and against the latter in well turned lines, some of which we quote:

A. Nay, Voltaire's teaching never cured the heart; The lack of human feeling blocks his art; When most his phrase with indignation burns, Still to the gallery his face he turns.

B. Now Voltaire had of Nature a rich ground, Two virtues rarely in conjunction found, Industry, which no pedant could excel, He matched with gayety inexhaustible; And with heroic courage held these fast, As sailors nail their colors to the mast, With ruling excellence atoning ail, Though, for the rest, he still for praise may call Prudent to gain, as generous to share Le Superflu, chose si necessaire. To most a rare companion above scorn, To not a few a kind, devoted friend Through his long battling life, which in the end He strove with good works richly to adorn, I have admired, and why should I abuse A man who can so long and well amuse?

A. To some Parisian art there's this objection, 'Tis mediocrity pushed to perfection.

B. Judge not, say I, and ye shall not be judged!

A. Let me say, praise men, if ye would be praised, Let your unwholesome flattery flow ungrudged, And with ungrudging measure shall men pour Their stifling homage back till ye be crazed, And sane men humor you as fools past cure, But these wise maxims deal not with the dead; It is by example that the young are led, And judgment owes its kindness but to them; Nor will I praise, call you me hard or nice, One that degraded art, and varnished vice, They, that praise ill, thereby themselves condemn.

B. Beranger could not praise.

A. Few are who can; Not he; if ever he assay'd to impart A title loftier than his own renown, Native irreverence defied his art, His fingers soild the lustre of his crown, Here he adored what he was envious of, The vogue and dazzling fashion of the man, But man's true praise, the poet's praise, is love.

B. And that, perhaps, was hardly his affair . . . Pray, now, what set you talking of Voltaire?

A. This only, that in weeding out my shelves, In fatherly regard for babes upgrown, Till they be grown to garden for themselves, Much as I like to keep my sets entire, When I came out to you I had just thrown Three of his precious works behind the fire.

IBSEN'S LANGUAGE.

Is It, in His Plays, Danish or Norwegian?

From The London Daily Chronicle.

An interesting discussion as to the language in which Ibsen wrote his plays is just now being waged in Russian literary circles. A translation into Russian of all the great Norwegian dramatist's works is being undertaken by two Danes, who, in the preface to the first volume, lay special emphasis on the fact that the translation is from the Danish. Commenting on this point, the "Russkiya Viedomosti" remarks that it was a great advantage to Ibsen to write in the Danish language, for he used the tongue that is understood by both Danes and Norwegians. But what really led to the present discussion was the following comment made by the above mentioned journal: "There are some of Ibsen's translators who maintain that they translated his works from the Norwegian. This, however, is calculated to create a misunderstanding, for at the time Ibsen wrote his earlier plays there did not exist an organized Norwegian language. The attempt to create a Norwegian language is a work of recent years." Continuing its argument, the "Russkiya Viedomosti" says: "We do not know which language is alluded to by those gentlemen who claim that their translations are from the Norwegian."

It was but natural that this should bring about a chorus of protest from the translators, M. Poliakoff among others, who hold that Ibsen's works are written in Norwegian, and that their translation is produced from the latter language; and, of course, they once more declared, and still declare, point blank, that in this view they are absolutely correct. They quote in support of their statement Professor Sturm, who, on the occasion of the dramatist's eightieth birthday (in 1898), published a pamphlet entitled "Ibsen und die Norwegische Sprache." But the well known Danish writer, M. Brandes, is reported to have said that "the language of Ibsen is the purest Danish, and so also is that of the majority of the best known Norwegian writers, and that Ibsen spared no pains in acquiring a most thorough knowledge of the purest Danish dialect, which is principally spoken in Copenhagen."



SIR THOMAS MORE.  
(From the portrait by Holbein.)

going to be. But this story, like its companion, is throughout interesting.

SIR THOMAS MORE'S "UTOPIA."

The Scott-Thaw Company has followed its superb edition of Landor's "Pericles and Aspasia," in the "Chiswick Library of Noble Authors," with a reprint of Sir Thomas More's "Utopia," in the translation of Ralph Robynson. It is good to have this memorable example of sixteenth century idealism in any form, but the lover of literature and of well made books must rejoice mightily in this particular edition of it. Added to the "Utopia" is the life of More written by his son-in-law, William Roper, and the edition also includes a number of the letters that passed between Margaret Roper and her father. The shapely folio is exquisitely printed, the marginalia appearing in red ink, which has also been used for the chapter headings. Hans Holbein's magnificent portrait of More serves as frontispiece, and there are two of Ambrose Holbein's illustrations, taken from the Basel edition of 1518. In this volume, as in its predecessor in the series, the frontispiece and title page are not altogether satisfactory. The fine photogravure of the portrait is too large, and has not a good border. The title page is too heavy. But in every other respect this is a truly splendid piece of book making.

JOAN OF ARC.

From The London Globe.

The cause for the canonization of Joan of Arc has taken a distinct step forward. To-day the Congregation of Rites, under the personal presidency of the Pope, meets for a final decision upon the question as to whether Joan did or did not practise virtue in a heroic degree. If that is decided in the affirmative, enough will have been secured to justify beatification. From this, however, to canonization, there is, as the song says, "a long way to go." Indeed, the cause will only have covered the preliminary stage. Three well authenticated miracles will have to be proved to the satisfaction of the Devil's Advocate, and this stage nearly always occupies some years.

action have time to be nervous, or at least to analyze what is the real condition of their feelings on the point. But I often thought to myself before the bullets began to whistle near one, whether I should be killed or not that day. I can honestly say the one dread I had—and it ate into my soul—was that if killed I should die without having made the name for myself which I always hoped a kind and merciful God might permit me to win. All through my life—sinner though I have been—I trusted implicitly in God's providence, I believed He watched specially over me, and intended me for some important work. My numerous hairbreadth escapes in action confirmed me all the more in what perhaps others may deem my presumptuous belief. But, though it may have been presumptuous, still there it was to support me through many trials and to cheer me on to fresh efforts."

Mr. Rider Haggard has written a story of the Crusades, entitled "The Brethren." It will be published serially during the coming year, before it appears in book form. While collecting material for the novel the author had an odd experience. At Jerusalem he accidentally trod on a Mahometan tomb, and stones were promptly thrown at him for his pains.

More than half of Mr. Hall Caine's new novel has been written, and the book is promised for next autumn. This is, of course, an intensely interesting and transcendently important announcement.

Two additions are soon to be made to the Goupil series of sumptuously illustrated historical monographs. We have already announced the life of Queen Anne, to be written by Mr. J. Churton Collins. The other new book will be devoted to James I of England and VI of Scotland, and will be written by Mr. T. F. Henderson.

A life of Father Ignatius, written by the Baroness de Bertouche under his authority and supervision, will appear early next year. It is stated that "it contains a faithful record of his remarkable life, and an analysis of his simple but much misrepresented doctrines."

Recent events attach a special interest to "The South American Republics," a book originally intended for the "Story of the Nations" series, but which the author, Mr. Thomas C. Dawson, found growing so rapidly on his hands that he concluded to publish it in the two large