

TRISTLE-DOWE

BY H. R. ENSON.

Drifting by
Across the sky
Whence?—whither?—why?
Perhaps to pillow a queen's rest,
Perhaps to soften a bird's nest,
Perhaps to rot;
Helpless things,
I know not.
Yet they have wings.

The New-York Tribune

ILLUSTRATED SUPPLEMENT.

SUNDAY, MARCH 6, 1904.

"If we know anything of that rare thing called poetry, this play is the true matter, great in theme, great in conception, and great in form. An assurance of style, a dignity without parade, a plain poignancy of thought and expression are essential for lasting work, and all these gifts are Mr. Howard's." Thus a critic in "The Athenæum," writing about "Savonarola: A City's Tragedy," by Mr. Newman Howard. Is it possible, then, that a genuine poet has arisen? We sincerely hope so, and await the arrival of the book in this country with intense curiosity. The illustrations of Mr. Howard's work given by his enthusiastic reviewer include an address to Florence by Strozzi, one of the characters of the play, from which we take this fragment:

So shalt thou be, O Florence,—dead, thy Freedom,
Perished thy crafts; and if there yet endure
One voice, one seeing eye, one plastic brain,
The offspring of our honourable years,
Doomed to outlive the cataclysmal age,
Hardly his soul shall fashion, hardly sing,
Save but 'mid pillared loneliness to mourn,
Crooning in stone the swan-song of our Fate!
Dawn, Day and Dusk and Night one vasty tomb:
Dawn that saith "Wake me not"; Day tired of toil;
Dusk, glad because of sleep; and Night—ah night!

Mr. Edmund Gosse is favored of the gods. In the first place, he has been appointed Librarian of the House of Lords at a salary of £1,000 a year. One cannot but sigh over the queer way in which mundane affairs are sometimes managed. Matthew Arnold, who was so immeasurably the superior of Mr. Gosse both in poetry and in prose, strove in vain to secure the post of Librarian to the House of Commons. But all things seem to come Mr. Gosse's way. Recently he was invited to Paris to deliver a lecture there on the influence of French literature upon English poetry, and afterward the Society of Men of Letters gave him a dinner, everybody saying all manner of amiable things about him. Here is one of the things said by Mr. Gosse to those who came to listen to his lecture: "I cannot help nourishing a confident belief that in the future, as well as in the past, the magnificent literatures of France and of England will continue to interact, that each will at the right psychological moments flash color and radiance which will find reflection on the polished surface of the other." This is prettily expressed, and it must have pleased the audience; but it is far more pleasing than convincing. The indebtedness of English literature to French in the historic past cannot do away with the fact that, as time has gone on, the differences between the literary genius of the one country and that of the other have only been the more clearly emphasized, that in essentials they have steadily shown less and less disposition to interact. But we suppose that it will now be quite impossible for any one to contradict Mr. Gosse. He it was, it will be remembered, who in a tilt with Sir Edward Clarke, on the subject of literature and criticism, inspired "Punch" to write this cheerful squib:

DE GOSSIE-TIBUS NON DISPUTANDUM.

"I am a blessed Bendevere:
'Tis mine to speak and yours to hear";
You've but to learn and I've to teach;
You must be silent while I preach;
And when I've finished—not till then—
You may assent with an "Amen!"
Of this the application mark,
Pro tem, I'm parson, you are Clarke.

If the late George Gissing never had the popular success which has been the portion of many inferior writers, the way in which he is mourned shows that "the English Balzac," as he has been called in France, has made a deep impression upon thoughtful Englishmen. One who believes that Gissing will be remembered by London as her second great interpreter after Dickens, tells us that the author felt that what was needed in English life was the Hellenizing of the barbarian; and he thus summarizes Gissing's convictions in the matter: "Seek first the things of the mind, and the evils of society will disappear. Indifference to the beautiful, hatred of ideas that cannot be turned to immediate profit, contempt for intellectual things, stamp our civilization as at least undeserving to survive in its present form. 'Is it really so certain,' Gissing asks of the Anglo-Saxon, 'that all virtues of grace dwell with those who can rest amid the ugly, and not know it for ugliness?' We regret the loss to realistic fiction caused by Gissing's death, but we regret still more that his life came to an end just when he was beginning to exert, through books like "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft" and "By the Ionian Sea," the very influence which we now know he was so well qualified to bring to bear upon English life and letters. His passion for the beautiful could not but have stimulated many of his readers in the right direction.

"JEHAN KOMPANI."

England's Great Trading Monopoly.

LEDGER AND SWORD; or, the Honorable Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies (1599-1874). By Beckles Wilson. Two volumes. Octavo, pp. 452 and 434. Longmans, Green & Co.

In these volumes Mr. Beckles Wilson tells in full and consecutive detail the history from foundation to extinction of the great East India Company—otherwise "John Company" or "Jehan Kompani." He has apparently left no collection of material unexplored, and he has not permitted the military and political phases of this great romance of trade to cast into the shade what he calls the "ledger aspect." This is not the story of British rule in India, but the biography of John Company, "the richest, the most romantic, the most colossal private commercial, military and governing body that ever flourished or now ever can flourish on earth."

The Elizabethan prologue opens in September, 1588, when the gentleman-adventurer, Thomas Cavendish, came back from buccaneering in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, and heard, off the Lizard, that the Armada had been de-

stroyed. Here was news for a practical and respectable pirate who knew in the course of business what opulence the hated Spaniard drew from further India! England sorely needed a "trade outlet," but Queen and merchants alike had dreaded the Spanish navy and observed punctiliously the long-existent policy of non-interference with the rights claimed by Spain under the Papal decree. Cavendish felt that the time had come for England to share in the commerce with that wondrous East of gold and gems and silks and spices—commodities which the Englishman then obtained only from "the hands of Dutch and German middlemen." He straightway sat down in his inn at Plymouth and wrote to a friend at Court concerning his adventures in heathen regions "where," he said, "our countrymen may have trade as freely as ye Portugals if they themselves will"; and later in London he discoursed copiously to the solid men of the Royal Exchange to the same effect. They urged him to draw up a memorial on the subject, and this, being presented to Elizabeth, drew from her consent to a trading venture—no doubt a reluctant consent, for the Virgin Queen, as we know, did not care to get into avoidable difficulties with other nations. Three ships were sent forth by the London merchants in April, 1591. One of them soon returned with a crew stricken by dire disease; one was lost at sea, and the third, after great disasters, struggled home with a half ruined cargo of spices. The author points out the significance of the fact that this expedition left England full four years before the Dutch merchant adventurers "first began those solid and splendid attempts to oust the Portuguese and make the chief commerce between Europe and Asia their own." The thing could be done, said the London merchants, but while they hesitated the Dutch had undermined the Spanish-Portuguese monopoly.

land of the seventeenth century a cargo so valuable that the company felt obliged to provide for the longshoremen who brought it to land "six suits of canvas doublet and hose without pockets." This and the next voyage of the company returned, it is said, a clear profit of 95 per cent on the outlay. The great enterprise was well started. But at what a cost of life and energy! For many years the English struggled desperately to gain substantial footholds in the Indies, and were worsted over and over by their rivals, the Dutch and the Portuguese. There was no theory of "live and let live" about these haters of the new company—they were frankly determined to keep the trade for themselves, by dint of battle, murder and intrigue with native potentates. Of all the tragic episodes portrayed by the author that of the Amboyna atrocity men will longest remember.

In this island of the Moluccas, an island rich in spices, and a centre of traffic, was a strong fortress built and occupied by the Dutch. The English merchants and factors of the East India Company—there were only nineteen all told—lived in a house of their own in the town, and were practically unarmed. The Dutch Governor, Van Speult, resolving to be rid of the English, hatched a scheme to accuse them of a murderous plot. Several wretched Japanese were arrested and cruelly tortured until they

valry was successfully concluded. There was no port or island in the archipelago which was not under Dutch influence. The terrible story of Towerson and his men was told by others, as well as the four survivors. Van Speult omitted all mention of the torture from his version, but other Dutchmen were not so careful. London flamed with wrath, and King James I broke down and wept when the narrative was read to him. "John Company" sought redress in vain—and went on sending out trading ships, never lacking for volunteers. Into India, Persia, Japan, China, the English factors made their way; and as time went on the Dutch retreated before them, riches poured into their hands, and they worked their monopoly to its full value. Let the name of Quarles Browne, agent in Japan, be remembered; he it was who first perceived a future for the herb "tee" if "it could once be made fashionable in Europe."

The later history of "John Company" is not unfamiliar to the readers of to-day. For many years it tactfully suppressed or absorbed "interloping" companies that sought to break up its monopoly. It was during the reign of James II that it was at the flood tide of its prosperity. Then a little less than a hundred years old, it had everything that it wanted in the way of royal charters and of undisturbed management of Anglo-Indian affairs. The King himself was



THE BIRTH OF THE COMPANY IN FOUNDER'S HALL IN 1599.

(From a drawing by Maurice Greiffenhagen.)

It was not until 1599 that a band of English burghers, all men of substance, met to form the "Society of Adventurers to the East Indies." A year later they received their charter from the Queen, collected the necessary funds from their members, and dispatched their first fleet. Three years passed before the first of its ships brought back rich store of pepper, cloves, cinnamon and gum lacquer. It was in the Eng-

"confessed" that they were "in league with the handful of unarmed English at Amboyna for the capture of the fortress, which was held by two hundred soldiers and twenty-four guns." A drunken Englishman, a barber-surgeon, who was shut up in the castle prison for a minor offence, was shown the racked and blistered Japanese, was told what they had "confessed," and was himself subjected to the agonies they had suffered, until on the rack he affirmed whatever statements his tormentors put into his mouth. It was enough to seal the fate of the English company's men. They were all arrested, and on Sunday, February 16, 1623, after the Dutch Governor and his companions had had formal prayers, they spent the rest of the day in fiendish torture of nine Englishmen. Torments by the rack, by fire, by water, they endured until in delirium they moaned out whatever they were bidden to say. The bravest of them all was one Clarke, who was subjected to the water ordeal three or four times "until his body was swollen to twice its size and his eyes protruded so far in their sockets as to frighten the beholders, that his tormentors relaxed, averring that he was devil or wizard that could bear so much." Then they burned him carefully with a lighted candle till the poor creature's wits went wandering and they "eventually wrung a 'yea, yea,' to [the] story of a plot to seize the castle and put the Governor and the rest of the Dutch to death." Towerson, the agent at the head of the English band, who had been on terms of friendship and hospitality with Van Speult, was spared until the following day. Then

The prisoners were summoned ostensibly to prepare themselves for death. While they were there, "holding themselves as steadfast as they could," two soldiers approached Towerson. He was singled out from the rest; he was conducted to the torture chamber. Two great jars of water were borne in after him, and the others shuddered, well knowing what these things portended. What Towerson went through will never be known. His drawn and livid features were only seen by them on the following day on the scaffold. Yet it appeared that he also had been forced to subscribe to a "confession."

Only four of the Englishmen were released when the others were executed; they were transported to Batavia, and Master Herman Van Speult's process of ending commercial ri-

a member—and it is recorded that his most profitable asset, when he went into exile, was his East India stock. The Sword had come to the support of the Ledger, and dusky monarchs, hung with pearls and rubies, yielded homage or friendship to "Jehan Kompani." Mr. Beckles Wilson's detailed accounts of dealings with the Great Mogul and other Eastern rulers fill many interesting pages. Clive, Warren Hastings, Wellesley, pass across the scene. The company acquired great territorial power, and, in return for a pension, the feeble Nawab of Bengal surrendered to it the Dewani, or the collection and administration of his revenue. "The process thus begun," says the author, "was to continue until all India would acknowledge the company's government." With the Mutiny of 1857 this power passed forever, and in 1874 the company was finally dissolved by Parliament. Mr. Beckles Wilson quotes the abuse bestowed upon the company as venal and ignorant; but the result of his study is apparently the conviction that it and its servants were, on the whole, just, broad minded and honorable. He has a curious description of the orderliness of life in the company's Oriental factories in the seventeenth century:

The youth who stayed out at night or came in after the gate was shut had to pay 40s. (or five weeks' salary) to the poor. For absence from prayers the fine was 5s. 6d. on weekdays and 5s. on Sunday; for an oath, 1s.; for being drunk . . . 2s. 6d.; for striking or abusing persons not in the company's service, "three days' imprisonment in irons." . . . Duelling was rewarded by imprisonment for two months on rice and water.

A letter written by one of the young men employed by the company goes to show that the factory was "indeed more like unto a Collegia, Monasterie or a house under Religious orders than any other."

A final chapter on the "Muse in Leadenhall Street" gives us some agreeable glimpses of the literary figures who for all readers of English literature are happily associated with the old East India House. Chief among them was Lamb, whom all his fellow clerks called "Charley" with "love and tenderness." "Jokes and jests, great and small," wrote one of them, "were his constant pastime, and every one around him came in for a share." Sir George