

SONG.

BY JOHN CUTTS, 1661-1707.

Only tell her that I love:
Leave the rest to her and Fate;
Some kind planet from above
May perhaps her pity move;
Lovers on their stars must wait.
Only tell her that I love!

Why, O why should I despair?
Mercy's pictured in her eye:
If she once vouchsafe to hear,
Welcome Hope and farewell Fear!
She's too good to let me die.
Why, O why should I despair?

The New-York Tribune.

SUNDAY, MARCH 18, 1906.

The troubles of the modern book buyer are never ended. Somewhere, in some way or other, his feelings are always being hurt. The latest plaint is raised by a correspondent of "The London Academy," who is disgusted at the practice of issuing novels at a uniform price, "irrespective of quality or contents." In illustration he cites three new stories by Beatrice Harraden, Maxwell Gray and Eden Phillpotts. It seems that the book by the first of these writers runs to only some 6,532 lines, where Maxwell Gray gives her readers about 13,716 lines, and Mr. Phillpotts lavishes upon his appreciative public something like 14,560 lines. The disgruntled correspondent wants to know why the public should be asked to pay the same price for 6,000 of Miss Harraden's lines as for 14,000 by Mr. Phillpotts. Without going into the merits of this particular case, we may nevertheless express sympathy with the inquirer. It is quite true that, where fiction is really good, no rational person would quarrel because he received small measure for his money. But we have never been able to understand the publication as a novel, at the usual price of a full fledged novel, of the sort of thing that is only to be described as a long short story. This has been done too often on the strength of the author's name, the publisher assuming that a writer of "best sellers" does not need to look to questions of scale in preparing his wares for the market. It is only the great writer who can legitimately set an arbitrary price upon his work.

As for the troubles of the modern author, we are sometimes half inclined to believe that he does not know the meaning of the word. At all events he is pampered in a way that even a prima donna might envy. Consider the prodigious seriousness with which he is taken, often by people in whom we expect certain powers of discrimination. There is, for example, the case of the late William Sharp, who has been revealed, since his death, as the author of the books published over the name of Fiona Macleod. Just because he was successful in concealing his relation to his pseudonymous writings, there have been floods of gush printed about him—as though his little mystery really mattered. Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton has published a new edition of "The Coming of Love," whereupon "The Athenæum" gives nearly four columns to the subject, dragging in Aristotle, the old Thespian drama, Hardy, Swinburne, Rossetti, "Festus" Bailey, Burns, and so on. If any sense of proportion were abroad would this sort of thing be done? Mr. Maurice Hewlett is a charming and a successful novelist. He presents a little play, and immediately the said play is handled by the critics with positively appalling gravity. One paper even seizes the occasion to print a long and generally eulogistic account of all of Mr. Hewlett's work. The list of similar instances of good nature might be lengthened indefinitely. No doubt an austere rule of conduct in these matters might lead, on occasion, to neglect which would be cruel. But there is apparently no reason for fearing that the modern author will ever be overlooked. In fact, if he is killed off it will be by kindness.

The spring publishing season is just opening, and we may gather some idea of its probable character. It promises to be interesting, though not, perhaps, productive of quite as many books as it has ordinarily brought forth in recent years. In England the political campaign just closed seems to have had a restraining effect upon the lists of the publishers. At any rate the latter make fewer announcements than they have customarily made in March. Whether the printers' strike here has seriously curtailed the activities of the publishers remains to be seen, but in the mean time the quantity of new books is a trifle lighter than it has been at the same stage of other seasons. Fiction, of course, is getting itself published as freely as ever. For the rest, biography and science are in the ascendant. Science, especially, is gaining this year as it has been gaining season after season. Biology and psychology are almost as conspicuous, we may add, as electricity. There will be new art books this spring, as there were in the autumn and around Christmas. We observe now, as then, a tendency to confine this form of literature more and more to books on a modest scale. As regards history, we may say that while the number of monographs is increasing greater attention is being paid to schemes of an encyclopaedic character. The most popular enterprise of all in this field is the one which assigns different sections of the history of a given country to a different writer, eight or ten specialists thus producing as many volumes.

SCOTT.

An Ideal Brief Monograph by Andrew Lang.

SIR WALTER SCOTT. By Andrew Lang. (Literary Lives Series. Edited by W. Robertson Nicoll, LL. D.) Illustrated. 12mo, pp. xii, 216. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Mr. Lang has long been known as a man sealed of the tribe of Sir Walter Scott. His busy pen has never been too busy to pay tribute, in or out of season, to one who has, indeed, not only his admiration but his grateful affection. In a word, Mr. Lang loves Walter Scott, and he has shown this so often that there ought not to be anything surprising in his having written an ideal monograph on the great romancer. Yet this little book really seems almost too good to be true; it is so sympathetic, so well written, so altogether suited to the occasion. The occasion, by the way, does not perfectly commend itself

Scott's mind, of his predestined devotion to the romance of his native land; and as he proceeds he is at pains to show how consistently the nature of the novelist was developed, how much a matter of course it was for him to write just the sort of books that he wrote and no others. In short, he has learned the first lesson of the biographer, to take his man for what he was, thus sweeping away many of the difficulties with which critics would envelop the subject and sparing us a good deal of futile writing. His point of view, and the truth of his interpretation, are made manifest in one portion of his first chapter, which, though a little long, we must quote intact:

People blame Scott because he has not the depth of Shakespeare or Wordsworth, because Homer, a poet of war, of the sea, of the open air, is far more prone than Scott to melancholy reflection on the mystery of human fortunes. But Scott was silent, not because he did not reflect, but because he knew the futility of human reflection. "Humana persessi sumus" is a phrase which escapes him in his age, when he looks back on a lost and forgotten love, on a broken life, on what might have been, and what had been. "We are men, and have endured what men are born to bear"—that is his brief philosophy. Why add words about it all?



SIR WALTER SCOTT.
(From the Chantrey bust.)

to Mr. Lang. We infer that, if he had his way, readers desiring light on Scott would be rigorously sent to Lockhart's famous book. But Mr. Lang is nothing if not good humored. He realizes that many readers simply will not take the time to read Lockhart, and, since he could not refuse to do missionary work for Scott, he supplies the short cut to the subject which is needed in our day. He relieves his exasperation against the public that "has no time" by playfully rapping it now and then over the knuckles. This is one way of saying that Mr. Lang brings his accustomed vivacity to the latest of his innumerable tasks. This monograph is as entertaining as it is sound.

We like it best for its skilful portraiture of Scott as a man. It is easy enough to string together more or less descriptive analyses of the novels. It is not so easy to make this purely literary inquiry take on a more human relation, as a thing concerned at once with the novelist's everyday life and with the development of his genius. Mr. Lang, with his inimitable tact, strikes just the right balance, and he does this not only in the matter of form, but where the subtle questions of feeling for character, of taste and of critical judgment are concerned. Somehow it is very comforting to find that he can get along without calling his hero "Sir Walter" on every page; that he can avoid harping on Scott's "nobility"—a subject on which the sentimentalists have become positively nauseous—and we certify, with rejoicing, to the fact that it has not once occurred to this biographer to drag in the fantastic appellation which nine writers out of ten can no more avoid in dealing with the author of "Waverley" than they can avoid talking platitudes about him. The story of his life and works is here summarized not only with simplicity but with as much freshness as could fairly be expected in the handling of so well worn a theme.

The secret of Mr. Lang's excellence as a historian would seem to be more particularly his freedom from prejudice, his indisposition to look in Scott's character for anything that is obviously not to be found there. He starts with a clear consciousness of the historical bent of

the silence of Scott better proves the depth of his thought, and the splendor of his courage, than the finest "reflections" that poets have uttered in mortal words. It is not because his thought is shallow that he never shows us the things which lie in the deep places of his mind. "Men and houses have stood long enough, if they stand till they fall with honor," says his Baron Bradwardine. "Hios must perish," the city of Priam of the ashen spear," says Homer—and what more is there to say, for a man who does not wear his heart on his sleeve? Knowledge of Greek poetry would not have induced Scott to write a line in the sense of the melancholy Greek epic poetry; a noble melancholy, but he will utter none of its inspirations. On the side of precision, exquisite proportion, rich delicacy of language, "loading every reef with gold," as Keats advised Shelley to do, Scott would have learned nothing from Greece.

His genius was of another bent—
Flow forth, flow unconstrained, my Tale!
He says, knowing himself to be an improviser, not a minutely studious artist. He knew his own path, and he followed it, holding his own art at a lowly price. No critic is more severe on him for his laxities, for his very "unpremeditated art," than he is himself. But, such as that art may be, it was what he was born to accomplish, and, had he read as much Greek as Tennyson, he would still have written as he rode.

Without stop or stay down the rocky way,
and through the wan water of the river in spate. He was obedient to his nature, and all the Greek Muses singing out of Olympus could not have altered his nature, or changed the riding lilt of "Dick o' the Cow" for more classical measures and a more chastened style.

There is much useful suggestion here for the readers of Scott, who, if they are discouraged from intimate intercourse with his works, are discouraged, as often as not, because they come to him with an imperfect sense not only of his merits, but of his limitations. Mr. Lang's argument, aimed at the placing of Scott in a true perspective, is strained, perhaps, at more than one stage of his examination of the novels. "I am unable to think the worse of him," he says, "because he imposed on himself limitations which Byron triumphantly broke through, though Scott's limits now militate against a high appreciation of his work by the admirers of M. Guy de Maupassant and M. Catulle Mendes." This is to set up, for the pleasure of demolishing it, a man of straw. Many a reader of wide sympathies and cultivated taste has rebelled against Scott's limitations without thinking for a moment of what he might have done if, like the Frenchmen named, he had gone "hunting for personages and situations in dark

malodorous corners." It is, similarly, a little disingenuous for Mr. Lang to indulge himself in flings like the following:

In an age when an acquaintance with Fitz Gerald's "Rubaiyat" of Omar Khayyam, an exhaustive ignorance of all literature of the past, and an especial contempt for Scott, whom Fitz Gerald so intensely admired, are the equipment of many critics, we must be very cautious in praising the "Waverley" novels. They are not the work of a passionate, a squallid, or a totally uneducated genius. They are not the work of any Feeble Tom who studies woman in her dressing-room, and tries to spy or smell out the secrets of the eternally feminine. We have novels to-day—novels by males—full of clever spyings and dissections of womankind, which Scott would have thrown into the fire.

The accuracy of Mr. Lang's description of the equipment of "many critics" is no excuse for his tacit foisting of their stupidity and vulgarity upon numerous well meaning readers whose good faith is doubtless equal to his own, but who happen to lack his instinctive toleration for much that is tedious in Scott. However, we will not, in turn, look at a point in Mr. Lang with heat or impatience, for he is in the main too just to excite serious disapproval. Indeed, no one could show greater fairness than he has shown in exposing certain defects in the novels, and, moreover, he is always bringing us back in delightful fashion to the personality behind the works. Lockhart himself scarcely treats more luminously the intertwining of Scott's official and literary activities, the growth of the romances and the poems out of his antiquarian enthusiasm and researches, and the gradual development of a career in authorship which was, in a peculiar sense, the career of a man. There was no pompous professionalism about Scott. From beginning to end he was the natural man creature, doing the day's work with gusto, practising a superb hospitality, finding his happiness not in a passionate and selfish pursuit of fame, but in the artless fulfilment of his destiny, in the love of friendship and in the execution of familiar duties. Alluding to Carlyle's censure of Scott, "that he has not a message, and a mission, and so forth," Mr. Lang says: "His mission was to add enormously to human happiness; his message was that of honor, courage, endurance, love, and kindness." Every one of the vivid touches of biography in this book, and there are many of them, goes to confirm this hypothesis, not only as regards the author, but as regards the man. "The pre-eminent merit of Scott," says Mr. Lang, "was that of a creator of characters." He makes us see how the vitality of Scott's characters may be traced to the rich resources of Scott's own manly soul.

Readers—and we speak now of intelligent, well equipped readers, whose suffrages are worth while—will continue to divide themselves into two classes, one embracing those who incessantly return to the novels with increasing devotion and delight, and the other made up of those who cannot for the life of them feel at home or happy amid those romantic pages. Some of us are, more than others, the creatures of our time, and the restless spirit of our time hardly makes for a ready appreciation of Scott. But a book like Mr. Lang's is well calculated to give the hurrying skeptic pause, and, in opening his eyes to unsuspected charms in the great writer, win him to a more zealous reading of that writer's works.

NAPOLEON'S SORROW.

How He Felt the Death of Duroc—Two Who Saw His Funeral.

As an evidence that Napoleon was more sensitive and less unfeeling than he pretended to be, a correspondent of "The London Times" quotes a story told fifty years ago by M. Vial, an ex-cuirassier. It is of that day at Wurtzsch, in 1813, when General Duroc, Napoleon's constant associate, was killed by a cannon shot:

Napoleon exclaimed roughly, "Voilà Duroc tombé; a chacun son tour." The narrator, M. Vial, was doing orderly duty, and he, like others, felt hurt and scandalized.

That night he was doing sentry close to the farm where Napoleon lodged. He heard a step on the wooden balcony above him, and saw Napoleon, his face bathed in tears, clearly visible by the moonlight. Napoleon was loved because he, who put an end to anarchy in France, richly deserved it.

M. Vial, serving Chilly as a cavalry colonel—he was a staunch Republican—was the sole survivor of a regiment of lancers surrounded by Aracanians. Napoleon III made him Vice-Consul of France, and he told this story to my father, H. M. Chagné d'Affaires at Santiago, at whose house he was a frequent guest.

It is a story which those who worship the great man's memory will love to dwell upon.

It was stated the other day that there are only two people living who were present at the funeral of Napoleon at St. Helena. One of them is Mr. George Bennett, of Cape Town, who, as a little boy of four years, was taken on horseback to view the funeral; the other is his sister, Mrs. Owen, who, as an infant just over three months of age, was taken in a carriage by her mother and nurse to the historic interment.

THE FORGETFUL PRINCIPAL.

New Version of an Old Story at Haileyburg.

From H. G. Keene's "Here and There."

During dinner our attention was pretty well occupied, but in a pause he curved his hand over his ear, and loudly demanded, "How is your grandmother, sir?" "She is dead, sir," was my reply.

Before the cloth was drawn occurred another pause, during which the courteous but forgetful old man again asked me the same question. From the pitch of his voice all in the neighborhood were now roused, and amid the curious gaze of surrounding professors, waiters and students, he presently added in some impatience: "I'm asking about your grandmother." Thus urged, I, too, had to raise my voice as I gave the only possible answer, "She's still dead."