

A CLEAR DAY.

BY MICHAEL DRAYTON.

Clear had the day been from the dawn,
All chequered was the sky,
Thin clouds like scarfs of cobweb lawn
Veil'd heaven's most glorious eye.
The wind had no more strength than this,
That leisurely it blew,
To make one leaf the next to kiss
That closely by it grew.

The New-York Tribune.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1907.

When Professor Saintsbury undertook to edit the useful series on "Periods of European Literature," which the Scribners publish in this country, he reserved for himself the privilege of dealing with "The Later Nineteenth Century." From the moment the announcement was made his readers have been awaiting his observations on the subject with special curiosity. The book turns out to be the amusing one that was expected, but even more entertaining are the remarks of those reviewers who do not like all of the vivacious professor's conclusions. They allude, of course, to the difficulty of playing the part of posterity to writers who have flourished in the historian's own time, but on this point we must protest that a good deal of nonsense is nowadays printed. Suppose that Professor Saintsbury does make some wrong-headed remarks about this or that modern reputation? Doubtless the reputation will survive, if it is based on solid achievement. Meanwhile pungent discussion of it does no harm, but, on the contrary, makes perhaps for a re-awakening of public interest. It is silly to assume that the literary historian must throw up his hands in despair over a contemporary and leave him, as a sacrosanct type, to be appraised only by the next generation. The contemporary is rarely so delicate a problem as all that.

Apropos of criticism it is to be recorded that Mr. Hall Caine doesn't like critics—which is natural enough—and has been relieving his mind about them in a new preface to an old book. The thing he chiefly dislikes in them, apparently, is their unwillingness to accept as a great novel a book which merely happens to have what is called "a big sale." On this subject the gentle sarcasm of the London "Daily Mail" is conclusive:

We presume that Mr. Hall Caine is referring to the cases of Miss Marie Corelli and the Rev. Silas K. Hocking, each of whom sells more of a novel than Mr. George Meredith, Mr. Thomas Hardy and Mr. Henry James put together. The critics will persist, in their blindness, in preferring the more unpopular work. They will go on saying, until Mr. Caine gets quite tired, that contemporary popularity is not of the same value as popularity that has stood the test of a hundred years or more. They even point out that Shakespeare did not attain his deserts until long after his death, and that Dryden was considered a greater poet in his time. They will bring up the tiresome case of one Martin Tupper, who had a prodigious vogue as a poet in his lifetime and is now forgotten; and they will point out that Lytton, in his day, was considered at least the equal of Dickens and Thackeray. How much better it would be if they would recognize once for all that anybody who can sell fifty thousand copies of a novel is beyond criticism and is sure of his place among the immortals.

The trouble with the "best seller" is that he takes himself too seriously. Like the rather humorless commentators on Professor Saintsbury, they cherish the belief that any modern book should be treated with a certain awful solemnity. The writer of a popular novel, the minor poet who has been made the object of a little cult, is to be analyzed with breathless care and at great length. It never occurs to these malcontents that the whole character of the works in question may be very rapidly apprehended and quite adequately stated in a few lines.

It appears that there is much good regret wasted on the subject of the undue reading of fiction in this country. The public library of Grand Rapids, with its 15,000 card holders, is suggested as an example of the proportion devoted to novels. Of that 15,000 only 3,800 drew forth fiction last year, while of this last number less than a third drew more than 60 per cent of all the novels taken out. Commenting on this subject, the Chicago "Dial" says:

Even readers of innumerable novels may actually spend more time over a few serious books than over fiction in the course of the year. Ten historical or scientific works might easily demand more hours of reading and study than a hundred novels of the day. The latter are often run through at odd moments as a "rest cure" after strenuous intellectual labors. Furthermore, hundreds and thousands of novels are taken from the library and returned unread or but partly read. A chapter, a page, a turning of the leaves perhaps, or a glance at the end, may convince the borrower that the book has no meat for him, and back it goes. While, then, signs of serious-mindedness are always to be welcomed in public library patrons, there is no cause for despair in statistical evidences of even a greatly disproportionate borrowing of fiction.

These remarks bear in wholesome fashion upon the current superstitious respect for figures. If there is any statistician to be received with caution it is the one who attempts to prove to you, with columns of figures, diagrams and so on, just what mankind is reading. The truth is that for one reader whose doings get tabulated somewhere there are ten whose proceedings it is next to impossible to trace.

OLD VENETIAN LIFE.

A Book About One of Its Most Famous Illustrators.

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF VITTORIO CARPACCIO. By Pompeo Molmenti and the late Gustav Ludwig. Translated by Robert H. Hobart Cust. With Illustrations. 4to. pp. xxxi. 248. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Prefixed to this volume is a passage from a letter written some years ago by Burne-Jones. "Of all things," he writes to Lady Lewis, "do go to the little chapel of S. Giorgio de Schiavoni, where the Carpaccios are. The tiniest church that ever was, like a very small London drawing-room—but with pictures!!! And whenever you see him give him my love." It is in just this spirit that it is well to approach the work of the old Venetian painter. If he is anything he is lovable, a type of singularly sweet and winning art. He found ideal biographers in the authors of the present volume. Signor Molmenti showed long ago, in more than one publication, his peculiar sympathy for Carpaccio, and he had in the late Dr. Ludwig a collaborator who not only shared his enthusiasm but brought

a too sensual realism. Carpaccio instead held the balance between both extremes and was the type of the Quattrocentist painter; not frozen by the narrow ideals of medievalism, nor yet melted by the overwarm sweetnesses of the Renaissance.

The fates conspired to give him precisely the opportunities calculated to be favorable to the development of his gifts. We know that he was employed with Gentile and Giovanni Bellini and others to decorate the Hall of the Great Council in the Ducal Palace with historical compositions, but even if his contributions to this vast scheme had not been destroyed by the great fire of 1577 we would have the essentials of his art in those works which he produced for one or another of the fraternities conspicuous in the social and religious life of his day. These organizations wanted a painter of picture books, and such a painter they found in Carpaccio.

It was customary in old Venice for men and women to form themselves into schools or societies dedicated to the observance of religious duties and to the forwarding of good works. Always these bodies enrolled themselves beneath the standard of some saint. Thus the "Scuola of Devotion of S. Ursula" framed its statutes and rules at once in the service of the Madonna and in that of the martyred Ursula. These were also mutual benefit societies, as may be seen from the decree of the Council of Ten

desire to tell a straightforward and artless story. This is where his naïveté comes in. He is too keen on his narrative to worry overmuch about questions of form and balance. Some time ago Mr. Sidney Colvin pointed out resemblances between episodes in works by Carpaccio and drawings made by one Reuvich for Breidenbach's "Peregrinatio in Terram Sanctam," printed at Mayence in 1486. The authors of this biography have gone even deeper into the matter, and they show that the old Venetian painter made nothing of the introduction into his pictures of buildings and figures from the Reuvich drawings. If he plagiarized it was only in the most innocent and childlike fashion and with no sacrifice of his individuality. He simply took what would help him to build up his simple tale, making it the more natural and picturesque. There was, in fact, a good deal of the ingenious craftsman about Carpaccio.

There was also a good deal of heart, of warm and tender feeling for religious things. His spirituality was none the less genuine because he expressed it in pictures reflecting Venetian types and ways. He was profoundly sincere. The criticism which would pigeonhole and label every manifestation of art would define Carpaccio as a mere illustrator and assign to him a modest place in the hierarchy of Venetian painting. But it is wiser to take him for what he is, as he is taken in this volume; to rejoice in his simple realism and his unworldly spirit.

SIDNEY LANIER.

A Charming Sheaf of His Poems of Nature.

HYMNS OF THE MARSHES. By Sidney Lanier. Illustrated from nature by Henry Troth. 12mo. pp. viii. 60. Charles Scribner's Sons.

In one of his essays Matthew Arnold reminds the critic that there are moments in which it behooves him to "stand aside and let humanity decide." Those are happy moments for the poet in which he contrives to stand aside, as it were, and let nature decide, moments in which he abandons himself so completely to the thing he is celebrating that his words come as though from the heart of that thing itself. The late Sidney Lanier was not always disposed to adopt this attitude. His mind was full of theories. These may very possibly have been remembered by him when he wrote "The Marshes of Glynn" and similar pieces, but they did not control him. If he put his best work into the poem just mentioned it was because the beauty of nature had really touched his soul and moderated his usually excessive solicitude for mere verbal effect. "Somehow," he says,

Somehow my soul seems suddenly free
From the weighing of fate and the sad discussion
Of sin,
By the length and the breadth and the sweep of
The marshes of Glynn.

The scales fell from his eyes. He saw the marshes that so moved him, and he so sang their beauties that he visualized them for his reader. He is the vivid painter of nature in these verses; subjective, after his fashion, and finding romantic inspiration in the

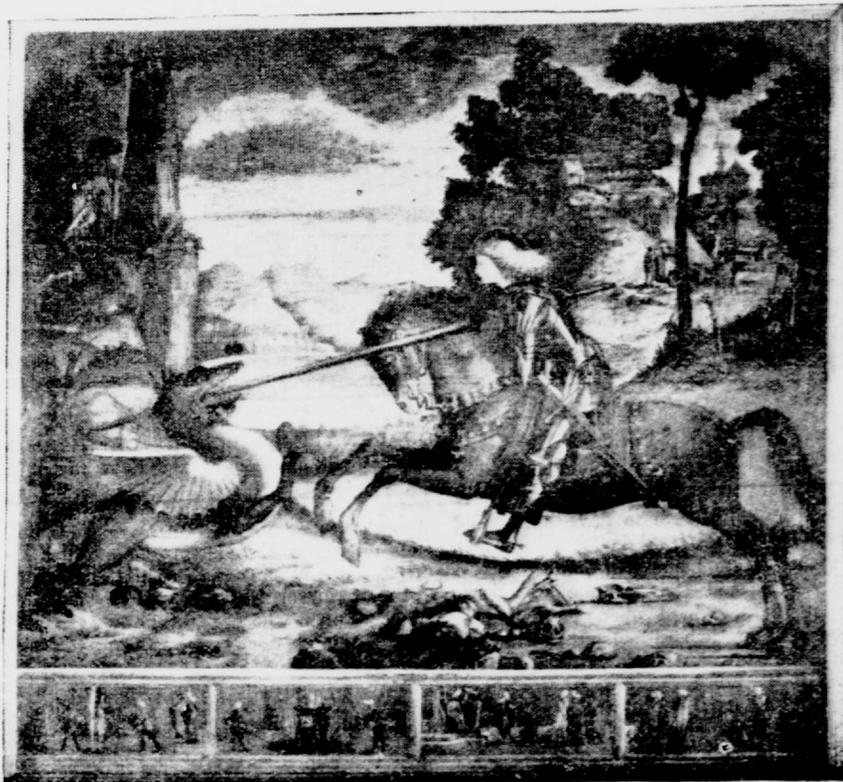
Beautiful glooms, soft dusks in the moonday fire—
Wildwood privacies, closets of lone desire.

but depicting, when all is said, a living landscape, a scene of light and color. For this reason Mr. Henry Troth has been able successfully to do a very difficult thing, to illustrate poetry with the camera. In the Georgian country where Lanier found his material he has taken a number of photographs which, exquisitely reproduced in this little volume, form a surprisingly harmonious accompaniment to the poet's lines. Wisely he has chosen subjects unmarked by figures or any other signs of human habitation. These poems are essentially the fruit of quiet communion with nature; the marshes are rhapsodized for their own sake, and it is in this mood that Mr. Troth has portrayed them. In so far as pictorial composition may be developed by the photographer it has been secured upon this occasion. The different plates are so many well chosen notes of landscape, each conveying a distinct and charming impression. In Mr. Troth's pictures you have presented with almost startling accuracy the kind of thing which Lanier thus describes:

Sinuous southward and sinuous northward the
shimmering band
Of the sand-beach fastens the fringe of the marsh
to the folds of the land.
Inward and outward to northward and southward
the beach lines linger and curl
As a silver-wrought garment that clings to and
follows the firm, sweet limbs of a girl.
Vanishing, swerving, evermore curving again into
sight,
Softly the sand-beach wavers away to a dim gray
looping of light.
And what if behind me to westward the wall of
the woods stands high?
The world lies east: how ample, the marsh and the
sea and the sky!
A league and a league of marsh grass, waist high,
broad in the blade,
Green, and all of a height, and unfecked with a
light or a shade.
Stretch leisurely off, in a pleasant plain,
To the terminal blue of the main.

Some of the illustrations are given a full page, and others, printed on a smaller scale, are placed as headings. The text is in a handsome open type and the carefully printed volume has an attractive binding. It makes a delightful holiday gift book.

A link with Tom Hood has been broken in the death of an old English architect, William Longmore. He was the nephew of Jane Reynolds, the dearly beloved wife of the poet, and he had many pleasant recollections of his visits to that uncle and aunt.



ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON.
(From the painting by Carpaccio.)

to the execution of their common task a gift of his own for documentary research. Together the two friends delved into Venetian history until they had brought to light all that is ever likely to be known about their hero, and while the book was unfinished at the time of Dr. Ludwig's death, it was carried to completion by Signor Molmenti along lines that had been well settled at the outset. It forms to-day the definitive study of the subject, and English readers are fortunate in having it put before them in a good translation, lavishly and beautifully illustrated.

Carpaccio, born in the middle of the fifteenth century, touches hands, so to say, on one side with the tradition of the Venetian primitives, and on the other with that of the golden age. He preserved in his work much of the naïveté of the formative period in the history of the school. We read of him as being summoned in company with his master, Lazzaro Bastiani, to appraise Giorgione's paintings on the facade of the Fondaco del Tedeschi, and this episode vividly brings home to us the fact of his contact with the movement which owed so much to the painter of Castelfranco and to Titian. Yet Carpaccio never developed the glowing tones which were ultimately to dominate Venetian painting. His color, which is sometimes exquisite, is, on the whole, restrained. Indeed, the whole character of his work is that of an artist in no wise impassioned, but trusting always to careful observation of the world in which he lived. His biographers thus characterize the man and his method:

There are certain artists possessed of great imaginative powers who, before handling either brush or pencil, actually see their paintings in complete detail in their mind's eye; others draw more upon their memory than upon the exuberance of their natural abilities, and turning the subject over and over in their minds strive hard to overcome the obstacles set between them and their goal. This, in our opinion, is the case with regard to Carpaccio, who, as we learn from his drawings . . . committed to paper almost with trembling hand the first idea for his picture and then carefully studied the single figures from live models, making his sketches upon beautiful green Venetian paper, indicating the shadows with strokes of his brush and touching up the lights with chalk. Having thus planned out the general lines and details of a picture he copied it on to canvas and with a careful color imparted to the entire composition that force which seeks its effect not in vivid and violent contrast, but in harmony of tone and serenity of expression. He sought no flights of fancy, neither excessive joy nor passionate grief, but tranquil happiness and silent suffering, which inspire the spectator with a sense of intimate repose such as no other art has been able to inspire. In certain master minds, such as Raphael, for instance, the figures appear to be too far removed from real life, and conversely all the poetry in the soul of the Venetian painters who succeeded Carpaccio tended toward

relating to the Dalmatian Scuola officially recognized in 1451.

Having heard the devout and humble petition of certain Slavonian sailors, resident in this blessed city of Venice, moved by piety, knowing and observing the infinite variety of men of their nation . . . stricken to death, or sickness, who perish of necessity and hunger, having no support, nor help from any one in this world because they are aliens . . . leave was implored by the said Slavonians to form in Venice a Brotherhood, otherwise a Scuola, according to the manner of the other small Scuole in honor of Messer S. George and Messer S. Tryphonius in the church of Messer S. John of the Templars . . . by means of which the said supplicants can receive and hold alms for the support of such of their brethren, and besides that the said brethren can go and carry to burial the said brethren for the Love of God, and can place their corpses in the vaults of the said Scuola.

As these Scuole waxed the more popular and prosperous they built their places of meeting the more luxuriously, and, of course, sought the aid of art. Carpaccio appears to have become a kind of painter in ordinary to the Scuole. For the brethren of St. Ursula he painted the canvases which were originally placed on the walls of a building erected beside the church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo, but which are now housed in the Academy. For the Dalmatians aforesaid he made the series which may still be seen at S. Giorgio degli Schiavoni. For the Albanians in Venice he produced the series, now scattered, illustrating the life of the Virgin. He painted other pictures, and some of them, like the "Presentation" for the Church of San Giobbe, now in the Academy, are superb monuments to his genius, but you get the fullest sense of his character as an artist from the "picture books" he made for the Scuole.

We call them picture books because in each set of decorations that he painted he gave himself up to narrative, telling his story in a succession of scenes, which might have, now and again, a certain mystical significance, but which he always interpreted as closely as possible in terms of ordinary Venetian life. He copied the gait and demeanor of his contemporaries, reproduced their costumes with minute care, and in his accessories, as in his broad effect, sought an intimately realistic impression. There is an almost domestic note in his religious designs. His St. Ursula asleep in bed might be a kinswoman in his own house, and the picture he made of St. Jerome in his study was doubtless based on a room familiar to the painter in its every detail. Carpaccio had a fine sense of composition, which comes out magnificently in a painting like the St. Giobbe altar piece mentioned above, but in his Scuole pictures his feeling for design is subordinated to his eager