

Literary News and Criticism

"Frau Aja," the Mother of Germany's Greatest Poet.

THE MOTHER OF GOETHE. By Margaret Reeks. With a photograph from the original MS. by J. W. Bain. Frontispiece. 8vo. pp. 152. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

was all in to her, escaped him. Poetry meant rhyme to him and nothing more. Thus it came to pass that in the night of German letters just before the dawn, he discovered Klopstock's "Messiah," whereas his wife's true vision led her to welcome it with rapture and to read it aloud again and again to her oldest son and daughter.



ELIZABETH GOETHE. (From an illustration in "The Mother of Goethe.")

able to be the mother of the greatest of Germany's poets, softening none of her limitations, which were those of the educational and social environment of her time and place and station—rather, indeed, emphasizing them, in order to bring out clearly what, in the language of our own day, is best described as an exceptional "temperament."

pointing later life the author devotes a brief chapter. Of the other child, a boy, nothing need be said here. Miss Reeks's accounts of the bickerings between the narrow father and the youth in the first flush of his inspirations and aspirations, his first flights into the *poesie des lettres* as into that of poetry, have the merit of the simple realism of a Dutch interior. And ever "Frau Aja" is there, mediating, reconciling, employing her admirable common sense. That name of Frau Aja was given to her in the happy days after the son's return from Strasburg, a doctor of laws, to the intense delight of his father, a rising poet, his genius already recognized, to the pride and the justification of the mother's mounting flight of ambition. It was the day of Rousseau's influence, of wild revolutionary theories and enthusiasms, no doubt also, since youth is always the same, of the desire to *épater les bourgeois*, Goethe's fame and personality draw many young, hot-headed to the stately, staid, paternal home, which heard much talk of tyrants and their removal. The Herr Rath grew restive, Frau Goethe created a diversion by descending to the cellar and producing its choicest vintages:

The scene of the mother bringing her best wine and setting it before the wild youths suggested to their poetic fancies the legend of "Frau Aja," the sister of Charlemagne. She was the wife of Count Aymon, and the mother of four sons. One of these sons had by mishap slain one of the Emperor's sons in a brawl. He therefore, with his brothers, had to flee for safety and to hide in hiding. The Emperor, not being able to find the murderer, seized on their father Aymon and kept him as a hostage, forcing him to swear to deliver up his sons to vengeance should they dare to return. After weary years of exile they ventured to revisit the paternal home disguised as pilgrims. Frau Aja, overjoyed to see her sons, brought food and her best wine from the cellar to refresh them and gladden their weariness, so that they went on their way strengthened and unmolested. Thus from her bright wine did Frau Aja set her name.

She often used it in signing her correspondence. Meanwhile, her mission as mediator in the family, as her son's good genius, had not ended. Rath Goethe, who had refused to supply the funds for the publication of "Goetz," could hardly restrain his impatience to see "Egmont" in print, but soon found a new cause of discontent and distrust in the friendship between his son and the young prince of Weimar. His attitude toward royalty was that of the burgher class of the day. He respected it profoundly, but he seriously doubted the sincerity and durability of such intimate patronage of his inferiors. He had at his command no end of homely middle-class proverbs predicting disaster as the ultimate result of such associations, and, as a matter of fact, young Dr. Wolf, as the poet was called at that time, had to submit to many a careless humiliation at the hands of his august acquaintances, who probably never saw the matter in that light. Again Frau Aja encouraged her son's ambition; she had faith in his genius, and would recognize no barriers to its rise. And so Goethe went to Weimar. The time had come for his unassisted flight into the world beyond.

lectual activity that widened instead of narrowing with the passing of the years. The selections from Frau Aja's letters are excellent, especially those from her correspondence with her son. In brief, the author has made the most of the material at her command. Frau Goethe died in 1807, having survived her husband for twenty years.

OUT OF THE BEATEN PATH The Western Islands of the Mediterranean Sea.

MEDITERRANEAN MOODS. Footnotes of travel in the Islands of Mallorca, Minorca, Ibiza and Sardinia. By J. E. Crawford Fitch, M. A. With a frontispiece in color reproduced from a drawing by G. Biss. 25 illustrations in black and white, and maps. 8vo. pp. 323. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Mr. Fitch informs us in his introduction that he is an epicure of travel. He long since outrew the facile delights of the occasional holiday tourist, whose unwonted idleness and change from customary habits and familiar environment create for him a mirage in which all that is strange is rapturously beautiful; he has outgrown the impressionability of the tripper "with an exhaustless fund of spirits, but no standard of criticism."

I have found the great beauty of this cathedral in that most difficult triumph of the architect's art, the exquisite manipulation of space. Most buildings intrude upon space, so that a window or even a picture on the wall is needed to provide a way of escape. In the perfect building, and herein is the perfection of Palma's cathedral—space is not confined, but rather created; it is no longer negative, but a positive thing; it floods round you like light, not oppressing, but refreshing the senses. The extraordinary modesty of this cathedral, which never overbrings itself, which, in fact, appears to recede as the eye interrogates it, proceeds from the fact that its beauty resides not in obvious ornament, but in its arrangement of plain surfaces and rounded lines, which set the eye as the mould and receptacle of space.

But side by side with this beauty in stone there was the cinematograph at the Teatro Balaia. A sad blow to one fleeing the beaten path, and yet Mr. Fitch saw in its pictures the birth of a new art. He is not least interesting, informing and inviting in his observations and experiences of the people in these islands, nor is there lacking a touch of quiet humor in his view of them. The religion of the Mediterranean, he says, is untouched by Northern mysticism. It is terribly explicit, as in its representation of the Passion in the Cathedral at Christmas-tide. On Easter morning the statue of Mary is taken to meet that of Christ in the market place, to the accompaniment of music. But in the afternoon of every



HERR RATH GOETHE. (From an illustration in "The Mother of Goethe.")

religious festival bulls are killed in the *laza de Toros*. These Mallorcans have also a revoltingly cruel habit of seagull fighting—a tame sport entirely without the excitement of the pugnacity of the rooster or the fury of the bull.

At Port Mahon, on Minorca, the traveller found the prevailing note of architecture to be not Roman, or Moorish, or Gothic, but English. The alien race succeeded in impressing its stamp upon the town during the seventy years of its occupation in the eighteenth century. The names of the streets are English, and the language has left some of its words in the common speech of the inhabitants. "Beneath the disfigurement and the dilapidation of almost every town that remembers the dominion of Rome," observes Mr. Fitch, "there is rarely absent a hint of grandeur and suggestion of imperial power. The English are the one imperial race who never learned to build imperially."

It was on Ibiza that he recognized at once the daughter of his host at the inn. A sad-eyed girl in black, for he says: "I had seen her many times in Bellini's pictures of the Madonna. She sat in the doorway knitting, her face glowing sard in the twilight deepened into dark. She radiated an almost holy calm, so that she was impossible to gladden in the absence of any preparations for supper. *Paciencia* and *mañana* like the watchwords.



"FRAU AJA." (From an illustration in "The Mother of Goethe.")

mirrors—the played the dancetous game of coquetry on a large scale—stabbed a rival in the face. The transition from the brooding mystery, privacy and silence of the Iberian Moorish population of the Balearic islands to the exuberance, the lack of reticence, the publicity of the Italianate inhabitants of Corsica is almost startling. At Cagliari, as elsewhere in Italy, the common people live in the street and invite the street to look in at their windows. Mr. Fitch is at his best when he philosophizes upon the ultimate impression left by this publicity, undisguised and unashamed, upon the onlooker of Northern race and breeding. A book of exceptional quality, this, in an age of unprofitable, meaningless chronicles of travel. Its author has the generosity of adding a chapter of practical information for the guidance of those whom his pages may tempt to follow in his footsteps.

THE FEUILLETON MEN.

From The Pall Mall Gazette. We are the Feuilleton-makers, we are the Feuilleton men. Prophets and priests and fakirs of the very high god Pen. Poison and Flax and Fassion, Lost Wills and the "Others' Den." We take and we turn and refashion over and over again.

Our is the fair Tynewriter, straitjacketed child of an Earl. Ours is the fifth Blighter married the Chorus Girl. Ours the Poor Relation, ours the kid-napped King. And the thousandth incarnation of the loving dumb Jap Ridd.

Born of our solar plexus are the Anarchists who will rev. The Millionaire from Texas and the Diplomatic Spy. The Cynic sentiment laden, the Villain genial and bluff. And the dark, mysterious Maiden in "some soft white clinging stuff."

With odds and ends of Fickens, Stevens, our mystery hobbies and thickens in a Style that's our own, indeed. For it's virile and crisp and snappy, it throbs, it thrills, it pants; it's happy and sappy and pappy—it's all that the Public wants.

STALE PHRASES

A Homily on Discretion in the Use of Metaphors.

From The London Times. Our dramatic critic, in his review of Stoddard's "Above Suspicion," said of one of the characters that "his lips were sealed," and remarked that such phrases necessarily accompany such plays. They do, indeed, and the use of them makes one understand the emotional quality of such plays better than the most elaborate analysis of them. There are hundreds of phrases like this, containing metaphors both violent and tame, which are used so seriously by writers who snatch at the easiest means of expressing an emotion which they do not feel. For a writer has a real emotion of his own to express, he will feel it first misinterpreted by them. That is one reason why, when powerfully moved, we are often so inarticulate. We feel that commonplaces will not serve our turn, but we have nothing to put in their place. The writer's task is to be neither inarticulate nor commonplace. He must not be artless, nor must he give us bad art for good. If he has a new idea, he expresses it in a phrase, and that phrase is his. For they are associated with emotions rather than with thoughts, since emotions are not discoveries, like new ideas, and when expressed in literature are valued, not for their novelty, but for the power with which they are expressed. Thus, a writer who expresses a new idea says what has never been said before, but a writer who wishes to express a powerful emotion has to say what has probably been said a thousand times, and by bad writers as well as good. These bad metaphors, some of them lifeless from the first, some killed by constant repetition or inappropriate use, and their metaphors stay in our minds because they have been so often repeated. The good writer's mind is often infested with a dozen that he does not want. This is the penalty that he has to pay for trying at a time when literature is old and language sophisticated.

THE MYSTERY OF GLASS.

From The Scotsman. A correspondent recently reported what he described as the "curious freak" which may have met with the same spot continuously. Such an incident is not uncommon. Birds have been known to fight for hours at a time, day after day, with their own image reflected in a pane of glass, pecking and fluttering against the pane and quite exhausting themselves in their fury to demolish the supposed rival. It is another instance of how the arts of our civilization corrupt and confuse the birds. It is the same with fishes. Darwin tells a story of a pike in an aquarium separated by plate glass from fish which were its proper food. In trying to get at the fish the pike would often dash with such violence against the glass as to be completely stunned. It did this for more than three months before it learned caution. Then when the glass was removed the pike would not attack those particular fish, but would devour others freshly introduced. It did not at all understand the situation, but associated the punishment it had received with the glass, but with a particular kind of fish. Darwin's American novices proved themselves more "knowing."

FICTION

A New Hindu Tale of Love by Mr. Bain.

A TALE OF INDIA. THE ASHES of A God. Translated from the original MS. by J. W. Bain. Frontispiece. 8vo. pp. 152. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

The ashes are those of the god of Love, which never die, but, like the Phoenix, may return to life. A great earthly passion—woman—is the supreme obstacle to the attainment of perfect detachment from all mundane clogs. It is the revival of such a passion that does the old Brahmin who has spent centuries in contemplation, heaping up a mountain of merit for himself so high that the gods in heaven fear the further growth of his saintly power and plot his downfall. The means they employ, be it observed by the way, place them on an ethical equality with the utterly unworldly gods of Greek mythology. And so, when the Brahmin has been tempted and cast down, he is transformed into a trifling god, and after that into an ape, and then a worm, and afterward a jackal, and a donkey, and a chandala, and a leather worker, and a woman, and many other such garments of a guilty soul, running through an interminable series of miserable births, never discerning any end. For in the days of his youth his love had not been a true love, but a spurious one that was vanity and egotism, and jealously mistrusted the beloved.

The delicate beauty of Mr. Bain's workmanship, his admirable creation of an atmosphere remote and exotic, need no praise at this late day, long after the publication of "A Dign of the Moon." And yet, often as are the imagery and the atmosphere of this Hindu tale, its wisdom, its knowledge of human nature bring it close to us. In a footnote to his informing introduction Mr. Bain says his compliments to Mr. Kipling as the man who "has done more to caricature and vulgarize India than any other writer and to whom Hindu India is a book with seven seals protected."

LIFE IN RHODESIA.

VIRGINIA OF THE RHODESIANS. By Virginia Stockley. 12mo. pp. 274. Boston: Dana Estes & Co.

Miss Stockley is the author of one of the season's successful novels, "The Claw." British South Africa is her chosen field, and as the title sufficiently indicates, she draws upon it once more for material in "Virginia of the Rhodesians," which is a collection of seven short stories characterized by all the qualities of her sustained fiction. The Rhodesia she describes is that of the past days of Rhodes and "Dr. Jim," before the first Matabele war. She has a happy knack of depicting the philosophic manner in which these well-bred Britons, army men, civil administrators and their womankind, rough it on the frontiers of the British Empire, and she has a good eye for the comedy as well as the tragedy of it all. The life she deals with is more primitive than that of Kipling's Simba, its dangers are nearer, but in times of peace the social atmosphere is very much the same. Frivolity, flirtation and worse, playing with forbidden fire and getting burnt, these appear to be the relaxations and often the serious business of the men who do the work and the women who bear their share of its hardships and deprivations. Most English writers of this kind of fiction agree on this point, which may be said to have already hardened into a literary tradition, not altogether unlike that of a certain class of French novels, which fortunately is on the wane. Miss Stockley writes well.

A SENTIMENTAL COMEDY.

THE CASEMENT. A Diversion. By Frank Swinnerton. 12mo. pp. 224. E. P. Dutton & Co.

The casement is a young girl's. Life beckons her, she steps through it, and sets her foot upon the path that to her inexperience is bewildering as a labyrinth. There are reasons, however, for her bewilderment, for she has a married sister, and the man who comes to woo her loved that sister years ago. Now, no woman can be loved by a man without forever after taking a sentimental interest in him. She may marry another and be happy, but no sooner does the lover of yore show symptoms of another attachment than there awakens in her a feeling of injury, of resentment at a sentimental infidelity; and so, while the young girl watches in wonder the man who was once her sister's property, that sister begins her machinations to prevent his second courtship. The husband is of but minor importance, of course, except in so far as he can be used as a pawn in the game, and that is the role assigned also to a neurotic

youth who vaguely believes himself to be an anarchist. A quiet bit of humor.

LOVE AND EXPLORATION.

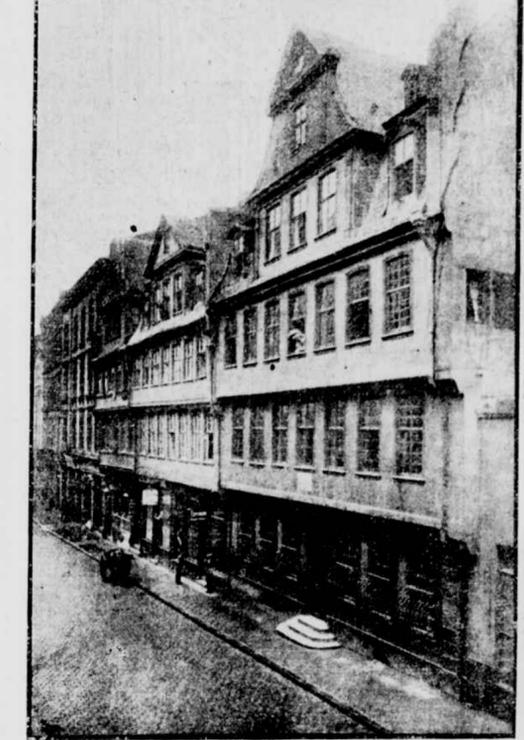
OTHER LAWS. By John Parkinson. 12mo. pp. 312. The John Lane Company.

An age-old plot serves the author of this book as the vehicle for the delineation of two strong characters. An African explorer falls in love on the eve of his departure with a woman who returns his affection and is in every way a worthy mate for a strong, serious man of forty-five, but, though a silent understanding is established between them, a formal engagement is prevented by circumstances. On his return the man finds her married to another, who has won her by questionable means and who neglects her while using her ample income in the furtherance of his career. The author has very ingeniously varied this part of his story with realistic accounts of his hero's ventures into the Dark Continent, and their hardships, ever bringing him back to the woman seeking to piece together the fragments of her broken life. The story has undoubtedly interest, but why has Mr. Parkinson chosen to seek his denouement in "Other Laws" than those of society? This sort of thing has lost its novelty. It has become the tritest of solutions of one of the tragic situations of life. In this case, moreover, it weakens fatally the impression of strength of character created.

NAPOLEON'S DOG.

From The Dundee Advertiser.

M. Augustin Filon tells an amusing story in the "Devoirs" about a stuffed dog that once belonged to Napoleon. This dog when alive accompanied the Emperor to St. Helena, and was brought back to France by Marshal Bertrand, who died at the chateau of Toot Vent, near Chateauroux. The chateau, with all its possessions, including some relics



THE GOETHE HOUSE, FRANKFORT. (From an illustration in "The Mother of Goethe.")

of Napoleon, was left by its pious owner, Mme. Amedee, to the Archbishop of Bourges and became the property of the government when the Church refused to accept the provisions of the separation act. The relics of Napoleon were moved to a museum at Bourges, but the people of Chateauroux were able to secure possession of these treasures and to house them in their own museum. The stuffed dog, however, was forgotten and remained behind at the chateau.

At this there was a great outcry at Chateauroux, for the people wanted the dog in their museum. Their grievances were laid before the government in prose and verse. However, nothing was done until a citizen of Chateauroux went to Paris and laid his claim to the dog before three Cabinet ministers. He did so at considerable peril to himself, for when he said that he had come to see the ministers apropos of a dog of Napoleon's that had been seized with the other possessions of the Archbishop of Bourges, he was nearly arrested as a lunatic. Who would have thought, as M. Filon says, that Napoleon's dog, who lived happily under the Concordat, could have got so entangled with the separation law of a hundred years later?

LITERARY NOTES.

Mr. Maurice Hewlett has written a new novel in which he has returned to the vein of his charming "Forest Lovers." It is to be published in the late autumn, under the title of "The Song of Renny."

De Morgan's New Book.

In October may be expected Mr. William De Morgan's new novel. Holt will publish it. Its title is "Blanca."

Garden Pictures.

Miss Hildogarde Hawthorne, granddaughter of the novelist, has written a book to which she has given the title of "The Lure of the Garden." It will have many full-page illustrations in color by Mr. Maxfield Parrish, Mr. Guerin, Mr. Ivanovsk and others. Reproductions of beautiful photographs are to be added. The Century Company will issue the volume in the autumn.

R. L. Stevenson Again.

A biography of Robert Louis Stevenson is in preparation, the author being Mr. William De Morgan's new novel. Holt will publish it. Its title is "Blanca."

An edition of some of Stevenson's books, illustrated in color, is to be brought out in England, and presumably here also. "Treasure Island" and "The Master of Ballantrae" are already in preparation. There will be an ordinary issue of this illustrated edition and a limited one on hand-made paper. The enterprise is that of Cassell.

M. France's Declination.

M. Anatole France has refused to accept the offered promotion to commander of the Legion of Honor. He has lately explained this declination to two grounds. The first, Victor Hugo was never made commander, and then he mentions the fact that some years ago, through somebody's indiscretion, he

Entertaining Records.

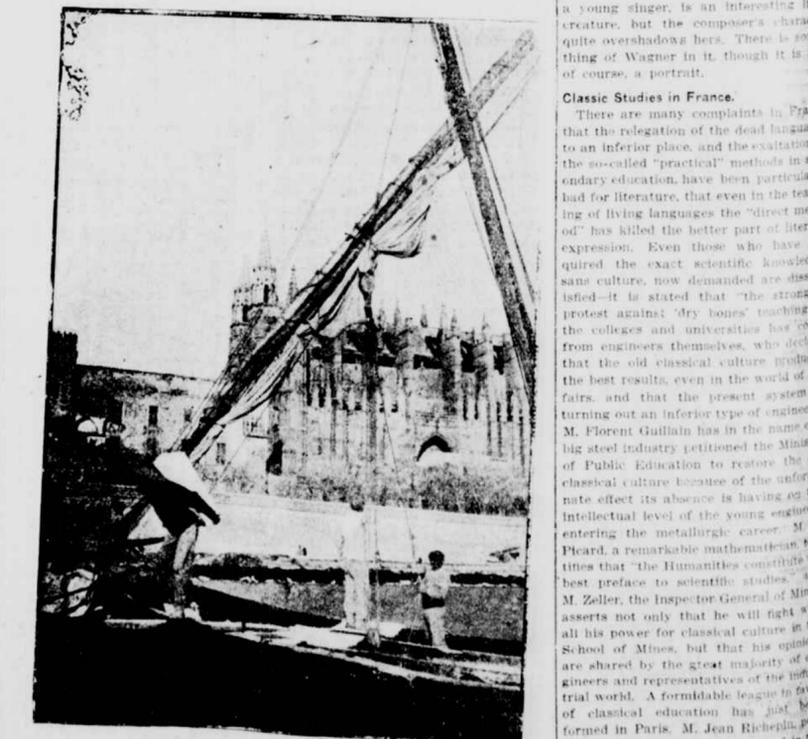
A book which should be full of fascinating details is to be brought out presently by the Century Company. This is Mr. S. E. Forman's "Stories of Useful Inventions," a work peculiarly susceptible of illustration. It will accordingly have many pictures.

A Musical Novel.

"The Lost Iphigenia," the forthcoming new novel by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Castle, contains a curious picture of the absorption of a great composer in himself and his art, and of his remorseless treatment of every one who can be useful to him and to his work. The heroine, a young singer, is an interesting little creature, but the composer's character quite overshadows hers. There is something of Wagner in it, though it is not, of course, a portrait.

Classic Studies in France.

There are many complaints in France that the relegation of the dead languages to an inferior place, and the exaltation of the so-called "practical" methods in secondary education, have been particularly bad for literature, that even in the teaching of living languages the "direct method" has killed the better part of literary expression. Even those who have acquired the exact scientific knowledge of classical culture, now demanded as distinguished, it is stated that "the strongest protest against 'dry bones' teaching in the colleges and universities has come from engineers themselves, who declare that the old classical culture produced the best results, even in the world of affairs, and that the present system is turning out an inferior type of engineer." M. Florent Guillaum is in the name of a big steel industry petitioned the Minister of Public Education to restore the old classical culture because of the unfortunate effect its absence is having on the intellectual level of the young engineers entering the metallurgical career. M. A. Picard, a remarkable mathematician, testifies that "the Humanities constitute the best preface to scientific studies," and M. Zeller, the Inspector-General of Mines, asserts not only that he will fight with all his power for classical culture in the School of Mines, but that his opinions are shared by the great majority of engineers and representatives of the industrial world. A formidable league is being formed in Paris. M. Jean Richepin, poet and Latinist, is its president, and in the list of adherents are the most eminent writers of France. It is to bear the title of "Ligue pour la Culture Française."



THE CATHEDRAL, PALMA. (From an illustration in "Mediterranean Moods.")