

## BOOKS and AUTHORS.

## A LITERARY CAUSERIE FOR COLONIAL BOOKBUYERS AND BORROWERS.

BOOKS marked thus (\*) have arrived in the colony, and could at the time of writing be purchased in the principal colonial bookshops, and borrowed at the libraries.

For the convenience of country cousins who find difficulty in procuring the latest books and new editions, the 'BOOKMAN' will send to any New Zealand address any book which can be obtained. No notice will, of course, be taken of requests unaccompanied by remittance to cover postage as well as published price of book.

It is requested that only those who find it impossible to procure books through the ordinary channels, should take advantage of this offer.

The labour involved will be heavy and entirely unremunerative, no fee or commission being taken.

Queries and Correspondence on Literary Matters invited.

All Communications and Commissions must be addressed

THE BOOKMAN, Graphic Office, Auckland.

**Apologia.** An appalling pile of periodicals, poems, and publications of all descriptions litters my table, and reminds me that holiday-making, like everything else in this life, has its drawbacks, and that there is a species of compound interest of the most usurious nature on neglected work. To the authors and publishers of the books and magazines before me some apology is due. A holiday was a necessity; it was taken, and work has accumulated. All I can say is it shall not happen again—at least not till next year. A list of the publications in hand is appended at the foot of this article, and the authors and publishers concerned are informed that their claims will be fully considered forthwith. I do not approve of the usual 'review' practice of dismissing a book unread with a brief vague paragraph when there happens to be an accumulation, but to do the work in conscientious fashion time is needed. I crave, therefore, the patience of authors of the books mentioned at the foot of this notice, and inform the publishers thereof that the volumes mentioned have duly reached me.

\* **'A Set of Rogues.'** Mr Frank Barrett's rogues are as agreeable a set of rascals as I have encountered in this age of fascinating fictitious villains. From Don Sanchez del Castillo de Castelaña, the imperturbable Spaniard who originates the villainy, down to Christopher Sutton, the chorus, as it were, of the play, the whole company is as blissfully free from moral scruples or disadvantages of conscience and as given to clinging to one another in adversity as the most hopeful tradition has ever alleged of the class to which they belong. Yet it may be doubted whether without the moderating influence which time exerts on the memory of even the most atrocious of crimes the reader could pardon the rascality of which Mr Barrett's *Set of Rogues* are guilty. Stripped of the antique garment in which the story moves, it reveals itself in a somewhat sordid and unscrupulous light.

But it would be ridiculous to quarrel seriously with the book on moral grounds, or indeed on any other. Its purpose is simply to amuse, and this it accomplishes. The style is very good archaic, something in the manner of Defoe, the character-drawing not unskillful, and the scenery and incidents well chosen and described.

\* **'Two on a Tower.'** I have always regarded this novel as one of the most perfect of Mr Hardy's pastoral tragedies. Whatever may be said of its motive, whether it be pronounced suggestive and risky, or regarded as a deliberate insult to the Established Church of England—and all these pronouncements have been made upon it—it is impossible to overlook the beauty of the workmanship, or to question the absolute humanness of the characters who beat their ineffectual wings amid the tragic spaces of the stellar universe, against whose stupendous background the tiny drama of their loves is enacted. In his brief preface Mr Hardy, while questioning the judgment of his original critics of thirteen years ago, remarks caustically that at this later date no demur on the ground of the morality of the book could be reasonably raised, and, indeed, in face of the recent production of the lady novelist, *Two on a Tower* has a mildness and restraint which render it scarcely sufficiently advanced for the modern nursery.

Clever, crisp, and faithful to life are the \* **'Minor Dialogues.'** *Minor Dialogues* by Mr Pelt Ridge, a young author whose name has come prominently before readers of the lighter magazines and the sixpenny weeklies during the past year. What Mr Anstey has done for the 'hupper succles' in his 'Voices Populi,' Mr Pelt Ridge has done for the lower middle class and the masses. The dialogues are exceedingly amusing, but to the student of human nature are pathetic in their truthfulness. Here are the people who have thoughts they cannot express, and the other and larger class who have no thoughts but any quantity of words.

One of the sketches I venture to quote in full, as a good example of the fun provided in Mr Pelt Ridge's lively little volume:—

## THE NIGHT CHARGES.

[*Police Court, 11 a.m. Clerk, seated at desk, is whistling softly on edge of quill pen. Inspector chats with Reporters; mixed crowd, half washed, shuffles impatiently at back. Vague scent of white-wash.*]

Inspector (to Reporter in pew): 'Well, there's nothing what I call big in the list; but there's plenty of drunks.'

Reporter (discontentedly): 'Drunks are no use to me, unless they throw their boots at the gov'nor. Haven't you got a good burglary or something?'

Inspector (apologetically): 'I'm afraid there isn't. But (hopefully) you never know what may happen. I remember once—here he is!'

(*Middle-aged Magistrate enters. Bows to standing Court, and takes seat in arm-chair.*)

Sergeant (to crowd at back): 'Order there, now, if you please.'

Magistrate (to Youthful Clerk): 'Any applications, Mr Barr?'

Youthful Clerk (rising): 'No, sir, none this morning.'

Magistrate: 'Good! Call No. 1.'

Youthful Clerk (briskly): 'Sarah Whittington!'

(*Dilapidated old lady is brought through door and conducted to dock.*)

D. O. Lady (ingratiatingly): 'Good morning, your Worship. I 'ope I see you well, sir. It's trying weather enough. 'Eaven knows, for us old people. We can't stand it like we used to in our young day, and the older we get the—'

Sergeant: 'You 'old your row till presently.'

Constable (in witness-box): 'Peter MacTavish, 624 Z. Last night, your Worship, about eleven-fifteen.'

Clerk (writing): 'About quarter past eleven.'

Constable (accepting alteration): 'Bout quarter past eleven. I was on duty in Blank-street. Saw prisoner worse for drink.'

D. O. Lady (shocked, to gaoler): 'Oh, 'ow can they say such things?'

Constable: 'Worse for drink, and offerin' to fight any woman her weight in the district. Took her into custody.'

Clerk: 'Was she violent?'

Constable: 'Well, she wasn't particular violent, sir.'

D. O. Lady (gratified): 'Ah, he's a gentleman, that copper is. Bless his 'eart! I dare say he knows what it is to 'ave a drop—'

Gaoler (appealingly): 'Now, do 'old your row.'

Clerk: 'Any question to ask, Sarah Whittington?'

D. O. Lady: 'Bed pardin', sir?'

Sergeant (loudly): 'Any questions to ask the constable?'



D. O. Lady: 'Alright, young man. Don't 'oller anybody's ear 'arf off. I ain't deaf, nor yet dumb either. (To Clerk.) Yes, sir, I 'ave a few questings to ask. I 'aven't touched the drink not for years and years, but yesterday my sister went and got married, and she gives herself away to a man who (bitterly)—well, he calls himself a jernyman carpenter, but if you ask me—'

Clerk: 'No, no. Any questions?'

D. O. Lady (firmly): 'Pardon me, sir, I'm a coming to that. As I say, the man she's married I wouldn't so much as look at with a pair of tongs, and we began to argue, and one word leads to another, and at last—this was after dark, mind you—she ups and turns me out of the 'ouse. (Indignantly) Turn me, her own living sister, out of the 'ouse. So, naturally enough—'

Clerk: 'The constable says you were drunk? Is that so?'

Magistrate (looking up from book): 'When was she here last, Sergeant?'

Sergeant: 'Last week, your Worship. Been here frequent.'

D. O. Lady (with injured air): 'Frequent, indeed! I ain't been 'ere more 'n a dozen times or so at the most—not at this Court, anyway.'

Magistrate: 'Five shillings or seven days.'

D. O. Lady (with sudden change to acerbity): 'Yus, and I on'y 'ope some of you'll live till I come out, and I'll jolly well—'

Gaoler: 'Now then, mother, out you go!'

(*She goes out L.U.E.*)

Clerk (reading from list): 'James Merham!'

Apologetic Lady (in witness-box): 'Your Worship, it's all a mistake. This brewse what I've got on me face was through an accident that might 'ave 'appened to the best of us. The door was as you might say on the jar, and me coming out sudden, I silly-like goes and—'

Clerk: 'But when your husband was locked up, you charged him with assaulting you.'

Apologetic Lady (with amazement): 'Did I, sir? Oh, I couldn't have known what I was a saying! I was so confused, you see, that—well, when I'm upset about anything, I don't 'alf know what I'm talking about. But as for my pore 'usbung doing anything of the kind (glances at surly occupant of dock), he'd be the last person in the world to lift 'is 'and. (Prisoner growls.) A better 'usbung no woman could wish for, not if she was the gritest lidy in the world.'

Clerk: 'But you said your husband was drunk and hit you and kicked you and—'

Forgiving wife (evasively): 'If you'll believe me, your Worship, he earns very good money when he's sober, and he thinks no more of giving me a shillin' now and then to keep 'ouse with than nothin' at all. And if he is a bit lively when he's had a glass—well, what I always says is, what's the good of taking a glass if it don't make some difference to you? I'm sure Mrs Misikin's 'usbung, next door but one in the second floor back—she's a woman I never speak to if I can possibly 'elp it—but the things she has to put up with from her man would be enough to make a duchess get cross, but my 'usbung—'

Magistrate: 'Oh, go away, both of you!'

(*They go away.*)

Gaoler: 'Ellen McBride!'

(*Mrs McBride enters. She is in faded black, and bears herself with an air of offended gentility.*)

Gaoler: 'Your name Ellen McBride?'

Genteel Lady: 'Miss Ellen McBride, my good man.'

Gaoler: 'Right! (To magistrate) 'No. 8, your Worship.'

(*Constable gives evidence.*)

Clerk: 'Anything to say?'

Genteel Lady (breathlessly): 'There's some dreadful blunder here on the part of the police, and I shall write to the Press about it the moment I get home, and I don't know as I shan't get Parliament to interfere, because I do think it's a great shame that a lady born and bred with an uncle in the Navy—'

Clerk: 'Do you deny that you were drunk?'

Genteel Lady (shivering with indignation): 'Most certainly I do, and I'll see that proceedings are taken against the constable for perjuring 'imself in the way he has, and I'm sure my uncle—'

Clerk (interrupting): 'Call the inspector who took the charge.'

(*Inspector called confirms Constable's evidence, and produces large brandy-flask found on Miss McBride.*)

Clerk: 'Was she violent, Inspector?'

Inspector: 'Oh, no, sir! Helpless.'

Clerk: 'What do you say now?'

Genteel Lady (with sudden penitence): 'Why, sir, it must have been the 'eat that overcame me.'

Magistrate (jocosely): 'Not the 'eat, but the drink.'

(*Court amused.*)

Sergeant (to crowd): 'Try to keep order there, for goodness' sake.'

Genteel Lady: 'And I'm sure I'm very sorry that I've give you so much trouble, and if only for the sake of my uncle—'

Magistrate: 'Don't come here again. Go away now.'

Genteel Lady (with gratitude): 'Ah, sir, you're a gentleman, I'm sure. You know how to treat a lady.'

Magistrate: 'Don't let anyone treat you, Miss McBride. Go away now.'

Genteel Lady (unwilling to go): 'Not before I've thanked you, sir, a thousand times, and (to youthful clerk) you, and you (to inspector), and may you never know what it is to—'

Gaoler: 'Ere come on. You'd keep us 'ere all day.'

(*Goes*)

Burly Prisoner: 'Yis, me lord, me name's Pathrick O'Sullivan, and Oi'm not the man to denoi it. (Bangs on rail of dock with huge fist.) Oi say Oi'm not the man to deny it, and Oi'll spoil the face of annybody who—'

Young Clerk (calmly): 'Call the constable.'

Constable: 'Joshua Jones, your Worship. J-o-n-e-s, or J-x. Last night I was on duty outside the Bell and 'Orns.'

Clerk: 'Bell and what?'

Constable: 'Orns, sir, 'Orns what grow on oxes.'

Clerk (writing): 'Go on.'

Constable: 'Saw prisoner lying on ground using dreadful language.'

Mr O'Sullivan: 'Ye're a blank liar. I never used no such language.'

Gaoler: 'Ere, not so much of it. You're only making it worse.'

Constable: 'Asked him to go away; wouldn't go. Called assistance and took him to the station. He said one Irishman could beat twenty Englishmen any day of the week.'

\* **'A Set of Rogues':** Macmillan. 3s 6d cloth; 2s 6d paper. Postage sd.

\* **'Minor Dialogues':** Macmillan's. 2s 6d.

\* **'Two on a Tower':** Macmillan. 2s 6d paper; 3s 6d cloth.