

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Notice to contributors.—Any letters or MSS. received by the Editor of the NEW ZEALAND GRAPHIC will be immediately acknowledged in this column.

'MISS WILLIAMS.'—Thanks; will do admirably. Kindly write for the future on one side of the paper only. Were your article not so good, I should have declined it because of its not complying with a usually well-understood press rule. I will do as you request, and publish it under your *nom de plume*, which, however, I have had some difficulty in deciphering.

'Pinto.'—Your heroine is not one who can command anyone's sympathy. She is asickly, sentimental idiot without one redeeming quality. The hero is almost a poorer character. Indeed, by reason of his being a man he is far worse. Not one of your *dramatis personae* is an agreeable, or pleasant companion. Their actions are contemptible, and if they are in the habit of conversing in the long and involved sentences in which you describe their most commonplace observations, I do not wonder that there are 'continual misunderstandings.' Could you not cultivate for your future pen-and-ink characters a plainer manner of speech? I do not mean that you should let them always say bluntly just what they think. That is amusing for perhaps one individual in a book; but when they all express themselves with what they call outspoken frankness, which in reality is simply ill-bred ignorance, it becomes monotonous, and jars on the reader's appreciation of what is *comme il faut* in polite society. If you can get hold of a volume of the sermons of the late Rev. James Vaughan, of Brighton, England, and study his very terse, pithy sentences, it would tend to correct your tergiversation and long-windedness. I will quote two of your sentences:—'Crossing that ill-ploughed piece of agricultural domain which you,' remarked Mr Bartley, turning with a sharp and somewhat accidulated glance to his unimpressonable wife, who was scolding Dolly for bestowing crumbs of bread on the domestic feline animal in the room usually employed by the family in which to partake of necessary refreshments, 'insisted with your ordinary stubbornness on being planted with spring wheat this season, which, of course, has been devoured by the omniverous hare, I observed that some portions of the soil had been conveyed by the heavy winter deluges from the heavens towards the creek, which you,' turning a portion of his irate visage on his scowling eldest offspring, 'would interfere with in pursuit of your summer piscatorial pleasures.' Here is the second, and I could quote many more, but fear to weary other correspondents: 'Yes, Plantagenet Richard, I have a remote feeling in the depths of my inner consciousness that may or may not be the dawning of an ardent or impulsive affection for the man whom I may one day choose from the large number of suppliant who daily kneel at my feet entreating for the honour of one word of encouragement or consolation from my hand, but who yet have, I sincerely and innocently believe, made no impression upon that part of my anatomy—wherever situated, usually called my heart, and who, therefore, though they may call themselves my lovers, can hardly expect that I should acknowledge such a title, even in the privacy of my inmost sanctuary to myself, and least of all, therefore, allowing for due maidenly modesty, can I explain to you whether or not I shall be able to consider your offer in a sympathetic and therefore hopeful spirit.'

'Ferne Glenne.'—I like your fairy story, and have handed it to 'Cousin Kate' for her Children's Page. She desires me to express her thanks for it, and says it will speedily appear. With regard to the criticising thereof, I must compliment you on your clear, neat writing (no small boon to a weary editor), also on the welcome margin and size of paper. There is little to find fault with in the story itself. I should be inclined to change your sentence, 'His house was a gorgeous palace of silver and glass, that stood on a hill from whence you could see,' etc., into 'His house was a gorgeous palace of silver and glass, which stood on a hill whence you could see,' etc. As for the plot of the story, of course it is just a fairy tale, and there is an orthodox sameness in that sort of literature, though I have not come across the idea of rats' tails anywhere else.

The author of 'Polly, the Red-haired,' I do not know if you wish your real name used, but I am sure you will recognise the title of your story. In reference to your letter, let me call your attention, and also that of all contributors to the NEW ZEALAND GRAPHIC, to this important request: When writing to the editor to draw attention to your MSS., kindly mention the title or name of the article forwarded. For instance, here is your letter:—'I am forwarding to you one of my short stories.' You do not give its title, nor do you give on the MSS. itself your own name or your *nom de plume*. The letter

arrived by one post and the MSS. by another. Both, with sundry fresh tales, were placed each on its own file. When I came to examine them there was no clue in the letter as to which of the several new MSS. you referred, and there was no guide on the first page, nor indeed, on any part of the M.S.S. as to its author and sender. This happens over and over again, and causes endless trouble in replying to letters and criticizing manuscripts. Will all contributors kindly read, mark and learn these few words? The story itself I regret to have to decline. It is very wisby-washy, and very decidedly uninteresting. Your women may be as beautiful as you say, but they have no minds; and your men may be handsome but they have no brains.

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 fees or commission being taken.

Queries and Correspondence on Literary Matters Invited.

All Communications and Commissions must be addressed

THE BOOKMAN, Graphic Office, Auckland.

* 'Where Highways Cross.' This novelette tells the story of how love came, for the first time, to a man well into middle age. This man, Thorndyke Hepworth, is of a strong, generous nature and a thoughtful, religious cast of mind, and the love that comes to him so tardily is the love of his life. The woman he loves is a pretty, refined young widow, who acts in the capacity of parlour-maid in his house. They are to be married, but on the eve of the marriage, when the good Hepworth's happiness seems to him almost greater than he can bear, there falls upon him a thunderbolt out of the blue sky. The nature of this thunderbolt, the fashion in which it affects Hepworth, and his subsequent conduct can all be ascertained by those interested in the matter from the book itself. *Where Highways Cross* is written in a direct perspicuous style, and except in one instance, without anything that savours of exaggeration.

* 'Maureen's Fairings.' This is a collection of short stories that takes its title from the first of them. It is a very good collection of its kind, and in several of the stories the authoress shows an affectionate and humorous understanding of Irish peasant nature which most readers will be quick to appreciate. In 'The Murphy's Supper' there are touches that suggest an Irish Barrie, and the pathos is certainly not lessened because of its sordid and undignified adjuncts.

* 'The Story of a Marriage.' The marriage in question is that of a rich country gentleman, young and ardent, cultured and intellectual, brimful of ideas—and crochets—for making the world better because of his sojourn in it. The other 'contracting party' in this marriage is a girl of the lower classes, coarse and ignorant, soulless, mindless, and pretty well heartless, but shining with physical beauty. Of course the marriage turns out a failure. Our sympathy with the ill-used husband is not over-powering, however, for he forfeited his claim on it by the stupid wilfulness of his pre-nuptial self-deception in regard to Bessie's character. Then again there was a decided suspicion of priggishness in his way of courting her. And still again, though Lawrence Temple was really in love with Bessie, he was almost as much in love with his pet theory that the upper and lower classes of society would be most effectually cemented together by such marriages as his and Bessie's. This marriage, which he had intended to be a stimulating example to society, drags along in its inevitably miserable course. Finally it gets dissolved—though not quite in the way we had anticipated from the trend of the story—and then the very charming and eligible young lady, sighing hopelessly for Lawrence in the background, has the place which ought to have been hers from the beginning. So we are able to take leave of Lawrence under happy domestic auspices, strenuously working away at his experiments—agricultural and so on—in the interests of mankind. There is much faithful character drawing in *The Story of a Marriage*, and, despite certain crudities and inconsistencies apparent in the conception and development of

the story, the book is well and carefully written. It is certainly through no lack of painstaking on the part of the author that we have not a real abiding interest in *The Story of a Marriage*.

* 'Soldiers Three.'—'Wee Willie Winkie.' Let another two volumes of Mr Keppling's inimitable stories have joined the goodly array of books in Macmillan's Colonial Library. *Soldiers Three* comprises, in addition to the collection which gives its title to the volume, the other collection entitled, 'In Black and White'; also 'The Story of the Gadsbys.'

The *Wee Willie Winkie* volume has the two clusters of tales, 'Under the Deodars,' and 'The Phantom Rickshaw,' besides the other three stories, with child or boy heroes. It would be a work of supererogation to say anything in detailed praise of all those numerous stories, of which each, almost without exception, is distinctive and of first-class merit in its own way. But we would advise those who have not yet read them not to deprive themselves any longer of the pleasure of doing so.

* 'A Ringby Lass.' This volume of stories, of which the longest is *A Ringby Lass*, is by no means without merit, and will certainly meet with the appreciation of the numerous readers who find refreshing and sustaining mental pabulum in the popular works of Edna Lyall and Annie Swan. The last story in the volume should have a special interest for this class of readers in New Zealand, as the heroine is a Maori.

* 'The Return of the Native.' This is, in the opinion of many critics, the best of Mr Hardy's Wessex novels, and its appearance now in Macmillan's Colonial Library is sure to make it still more widely known and appreciated in this quarter of the world. All Mr Hardy's novels are permeated with an intimate knowledge of, and intense sympathy with nature, and in *The Return of the Native* nature, as represented by Egdon Heath, might be said to become almost a personality—even one of the *dramatis personae*, mysteriously related to all the others. The dwellers on and about Egdon Heath, as elsewhere throughout the author's Wessex, speak, move, and act by instinct rather than by convention. This statement is itself a guarantee that they are interesting people, and that they will, moreover, keep the reader in an interesting state of uncertainty as to how they will conduct themselves in any given situation. The keynote of the tale is the tragic contrariety of things and of human nature. Destiny plays a sad game of cross-purposes throughout, and as it so often happens in life, heavy issues are the result of trifling causes. The end is tragic for several of the chief characters, but in the case of one—Eustacia Vye—the reader perceives that such an end was inevitable and perhaps fitting. There is one bright prospect in the gloom of the masterly picture of spent or fruitless desire and endeavour, and of poignant regret, and that is the reward of Diggory Venn's staunch, unselfish devotion. We are also encouraged to hope that Clym Yeobright has found his vocation, and will regain his content, and perhaps win some measure of righteous self-applause.

'Where Highways Cross,' by J. S. Fletcher: Macmillan and Co.

'Maureen's Fairings,' by Jane Barlow: Macmillan and Co.

'The Story of a Marriage,' by Mrs. Alfred Baldwin: Macmillan and Co.

'Soldiers Three,' by Rudyard Kipling: Macmillan and Co.

'Wee Willie Winkie,' by Rudyard Kipling: Macmillan and Co.

'A Ringby Lass,' by Mary Beaumont: Macmillan and Co.

'The Return of the Native,' by Thomas Hardy: Macmillan and Co.

A clever and enterprising woman has recently started an establishment for giving delicate girls and women—girls who have 'outgrown their strength' or have anaemia, etc.—just the physical culture that they need to make of them strong and healthy women and useful members of society. Every woman can number amongst her circle of acquaintances victims of anaemia, debility, curvature of the spine, bad circulation, low vitality, nervous debility, etc., and it is for such as these, who are not by any means 'well,' though not exactly ill, that Miss Rhoda Anstey has started her Hygienic Home in Somersetshire. Girls are received there for a three or six months' course of training in physical culture, which includes, in addition to the Swedish exercises adapted to each special case, a course of practical study in hygiene, lectures on food, clothing, exercise, health and cookery; games, plenty of fresh air and healthy exercise, and in special cases, where necessary, massage is also employed, and for all this the charge is only two guineas a week for the course of three or six months.

After passing his State examination Bismarck was sworn in as an official law reporter, at one of the Berlin tribunals. 'Take care, sir,' he once explained to an unwilling witness, 'take care, or I'll have you kicked out.' 'Herr Auscultator,' interposed the Judge, 'the kicking out is my business.' 'Sir,' answered Bismarck, 'take care then, or I'll get the Judge to kick you out.'