

Books and Bookmen

"THE DRAGON PAINTER": By Mary McNeil Kennell. (Sidney McCall, Little, Brown and Co., Boston.)

An idyllic Japanese love story, of more than ordinary interest and strength, the trend of which goes to show the travail that goes to the making of a great painter, or, as the Japanese term it, a "Dragon Painter," out of a too ardent lover. There is more than a passing glimpse given of the domestic life of Japan, and a striking example is also furnished of the lengths to which filial love will go in that country. Interspersed with the love story are details of Japanese art and its methods. The book is beautifully illustrated, and forms an exceedingly fascinating narrative illustrative of Japan, as seen through the eyes of one who really knows and loves it. The book cannot but enhance the already high reputation its writer enjoys.

"I WILL REPAY": A Romance. By the Baroness Orczy. (Greening and Co., London.)

The wish to get even with the individual who has wronged us is more deeply engrained in man than perhaps any other primitive sentiment. That vengeance belongs to God, and that human beings cannot repay with impunity, is being constantly demonstrated, but in vain. How futile vengeance can be rendered by love may be read in the new story, "I Will Repay," by the author of "The Scarlet Pimpernel." The scenes are laid in Paris ten years before and during the Revolution when Monsieur Paul Deroulette, the son of a rich but plebeian financier, and the Vicomte de Mariny, son of the Duc de Mariny, fight a duel, which ends fatally for de Mariny. Deroulette, a man of generous and honourable instincts, and adverse to duelling, would have spared de Mariny, but the Vicomte insisted on a duel to the death. The duel over, de Mariny was taken home by his second, the Marquis de Villefranche, who explains to the old Duc, now almost in his dotage, that the fault lay with the Vicomte alone. But the Duc, remembering only that his son, the last hope of the de Mariny's, lay dead, called for his daughter Juliette, aged fourteen, and insisted on her taking a solemn oath to avenge her brother's death. Juliette is very averse to this, but the Duc makes her repeat the following vow after him, and swear to it: "I swear to seek out Paul Deroulette and encompass his death in any way God may direct, and may my brother's soul remain in torment until the Judgment should I break my oath." To fully appreciate the effect of this oath upon Juliette, it must be remembered that she was young, impressionable, and a Roman Catholic. Ten years elapsed before Juliette meets with any opportunity of keeping her oath. In the meantime the old Duc has died, and she is living in a small apartment in Paris with her old nurse, Petronelle, and, indeed, living upon Petronelle's savings, the de Mariny estate and revenues having been wholly confiscated by the Republic. Walking through the street in which Deroulette lives, she is grossly insulted by one of the Amazons, whose existence was one of the greatest horrors of the Revolution, and is dragged into safety by Deroulette, in whose doorway she had fled for shelter. Paul loves her at first sight, and insists that she and Petronelle should remain, for some time, at least, under the shelter of his roof. Deroulette's mother gives her the loving care she would receive as a daughter of the house, and Juliette could have been very happy but for her oath. Soon she discovers that she loves Paul, but the

discovery only makes her more determined to keep her oath. Overhearing one day the details of a plot that was being arranged by Paul and the gallant Scarlet Pimpernel, to effect the release of Marie Antoinette from the Conciergerie, she informs the representatives of the National Convention of the plot, bidding them search Deroulette's house for documentary proof. Next day Deroulette is arrested. No sooner had Juliette posted the letter containing her accusation of Paul, than she was stricken with remorse for her Julius-like act, and she cleverly contrives to throw the suspicion on herself, by saying that she had accused Deroulette out of revenge, and she, too, is arrested and thrown into prison. Next day she appears before the Tribunal, and Paul defends her, incriminating himself, with the result that both are condemned. In the meantime the Scarlet Pimpernel has not been idle. He has arranged a rescue, and actually carries it into effect, while the mob are crying "A la lanterne! les traitres!" in the Scarlet Pimpernel's inimitable manner, and brings them to England and safety, and eventually, faults and vengeance forgotten, to love and wedded happiness. The book is eminently readable, and the delineation of the two passions, love and revenge, working in Juliette, are very fine. But it lacks the force, the depth, and the high romanticism of the ever delightful "Scarlet Pimpernel," and the tendency of its writer is to become too prolific.

"THE QUEEN'S TRAGEDY": By Robert Hugh Benson. (Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, No. 1 Amen Corner, London, E.C.)

An intensely pathetic story of the life and times of Mary Tudor, told, as only a scholar, a gentleman, and a Roman priest could tell it. The picture of Mary Tudor, as drawn by Mr Benson, will come as a revelation to the majority of readers, whose sole idea of her as a queen and a woman might be summed up in that opprobrious appellation by which she has always been known, to posterity. But Mr Benson's defence of her is so able, and his palliation of her many dark deeds so plausible that like Agrippa, his readers will be "Almost persuaded" that Mary Tudor was more sinned against than sinning. Mr Benson also attempts to show that Phillip of Spain was principally responsible for the burnings, and the gross cruelties that were perpetrated upon Mary's Protestant subjects, and in showing this he only proves Mary Tudor's unfitness to wear the Crown of England. There are several fine descriptions of important events during Mary's reign. Notably her first meeting, and her marriage with Phillip of Spain. The Queen's reception of the Pope's Legate (Cardinal Pole), when the act of reconciliation was signed, and the interview between Mary and Elizabeth, after the discovery of a plot against Mary's life, in which it was said that Elizabeth was implicated. The contrast between Mary and Elizabeth is very powerfully shown by Mr Benson, in this interview. Mary is described as weak, peevish, sombre, repellant—utterly unlovable; Elizabeth as love-compelling, virile, beautiful, dominant. But Mr Benson's delineation of Elizabeth as revengeful, is contrary to historical fact. Whatever Elizabeth's faults were, lack of generosity was not one of them. That plot and counter-plot were characteristic of those troubled times, cannot be gainsaid, and that Elizabeth plotted and counter-plotted is feasible enough. But to charge Elizabeth with threatening when she came into her kingdom, to repay the ill service, or the non service visited upon her while a prisoner and a dependant, is a distinct libel, and totally undeserved

by her; and the large measure of liberty of faith and conscience that is enjoyed in these days by Protestant, Romanist, and Non-conformist alike, is directly due to the "lion-nature that could not descend to the destruction of small things." But, if in the perusal of Mr Benson's book the reader can find some slight palliation of Mary Tudor's faults as a Queen—in contemplation of her great sufferings as a woman—"The Queen's Tragedy" will not have been written in vain.

"A SPINNER IN THE SUN": By Myrtle Reed. (G. P. Putnam, New York and London—The Knickerbocker Press.)

A sickly sentimental story of the everlasting punishment order, the theme of which is the foolish grief, lasting twenty-five years, to the utter exclusion of every other sentiment of one of the principal characters, Evelina Grey, over Anthony Dexter, one of the most worthless conceivable specimens of manhood. The author, not content with branding her villain with cowardice of the deepest dye towards the woman he professes to love, must needs make him a viscount, which last accusation seems to have proved too much for him, though he seems to have got along comfortably enough until her discovery of him; and he accordingly removes his exceedingly malapropos personality in the nick of time—just when the happiness of the hero and heroine are trembling in the balance—to that bourne prepared for those whose death is self-inflicted. What's in a name? has been asked by the poet, and that there is a great deal of signification in a name is evidenced by the one borne by another of the characters of the book, Mchitable Smith, commonly called Miss Hitty, who is quite as eccentric as her name. Under cover of a life-long outwardly expressed antipathy to men and marriage, she is discovered at the villain's death to have cherished from girlhood a secret passion for him, "counting the day lost that brought her no sight of him." So thoroughly has she carried out the deception that she has brought up her orphan niece, Araminta, in entire ignorance of the claims that nature has upon her creatures, and has taught her to pray every night "To be saved from the contamination of marriage." It is some small satisfaction to find that the first distinctly eligible man that Araminta meets, namely, Ralph Dexter, the villain's son, causes her in an incredibly short time to throw overboard the teachings of a lifetime, and alter her petition to the more vigorous plea of "Not to be saved from the contamination of marriage." The book is utterly absurd, and there is not a single character in it that can lay claim to the slightest air of reality. It is also mischievous in tendency and unfit for perusal by the unformed mind. That this writer can pen graceful sentiment has been shown by her "Lavender and Old Lace." And the sooner she returns to a more healthy style the better.

DELTA.

America has long been famous as the land of tall stories. Here is the latest "veracious" and startling item of news taken from a paper published in Fairfield, Illinois:—

"A small green twig, swallowed more than a year ago by Timothy Wisecare, a farmer near here, was coughed up, and as a result Wisecare is recovering from what his physician at first pronounced bronchitis.

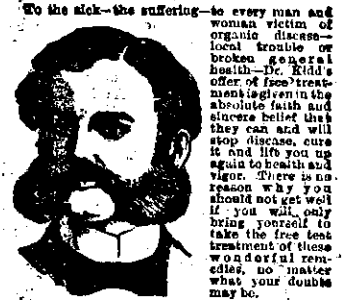
"Wisecare had been working in some timber, and held a twig of cedar about an inch and a half in length between his teeth. Being suddenly frightened he swallowed the twig, without at first noticing any inconvenience.

"Later he developed symptoms of bronchitis, and was advised by his physicians to go to Colorado." After a stay there of some eight months and not improving, he concluded to return home to die, as he said, upon his arrival. While in bed recently he was seized with a violent coughing spell and soon dislodged the twig. Upon examination by Dr. J. P. Walters it was found to be as green as on the day it was swallowed, and also gave indications of growing."

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