

## Books and Bookmen

**HER MAJESTY'S REBELS:** Sydney Ruyse Lysaght. (Macmillan and Co., London.)

Mr. Lysaght's new novel, "His Majesty's Rebels," may be likened to a game of skittles, such an adept is he in the art of setting things up in order to knock them down again. Regarded, either from its sentimental, social, or political point of view, it is, though highly illuminative of the tactics of the propagandists of Home Rule, decidedly unpleasant reading in parts. On the one hand we are given a sordid intrigue—to call it a love intrigue would be to libel love—between what we presume the author desires to be regarded as the hero ("Michael Desmond") and the most dominant feminine character of the book ("Corinna Temple-Cloud"). On the other hand, we are given the details of the propaganda of those Irish politicians known as Home Rulers, Land Leaguers, and Nationalists. Now, it has always been claimed that however unreasonable the demands of these several agitators were, the same pure motive (patriotism) animated them individually. But, after reading "Her Majesty's Rebels," the reader will exclaim, "God save Ireland" from her political agitators, and we might add from her Lysaghts, as delineators of her offends Rule propagandists, so discreditable a type has he shown us, in the persons of "Michael Desmond" and "Regan," the Irish-American House Ruler. In a prefatory note the author "hopes it will be clear that no attempt has been made in the character of Desmond to suggest a portrait of that great National leader, Charles Stewart Parnell, though there are many points of resemblance; but admits that there is a historical basis for the structure of the story." The history on the structural basis is so like and so fresh in men's minds that the question as to arise as to whether the author, in choosing such realistic, modern "structural basis," has not been guilty of a social solecism of the gravest order. Calculated to wound the feelings of the living, and to prejudice the cause of Home Rule. But one thing Mr. Lysaght has made abundantly clear, granting that his pictures of Ireland and its people are faithful (which may be safely assumed, so natural are they), and that is, that the common people of Ireland do not want Home Rule. He says:—

The majority of the people took far less interest in the political question which they were called together to hear discuss than might be supposed. They had no personal enmity to the landlords, no private conviction on the subject of rent; but politics in no other country in the world could a crowd have been collected which was so united by the bond of national sentiment. The political questions of the hour were unimportant details; they were agreed on these because their leaders were agreed; but the true bond of their union was the love of their country—the in-born national spirit which had been nursed in the memory of old wrongs and old honors, and had been aroused to new vitality under the leadership of Michael Desmond. If the landlords were unpopular it was not because they were unjust in their dealings, but because they stood aloof and looked coldly on national aspirations; and if the Crown was little loved, it was not because it represented the oppression of England, but because it was an absentee power, unaffiliated with the hopes of Ireland. This is the feeling of the Irish people, and only in exceptional cases or in times of excitement does it surge into the violence and impatience of ill authority, which in England is regarded as its normal condition.

The character of Desmond is not the only character of the book that the author has constructed out of the personnel of Parnell's contemporaries. "Conor Desmond" still lives and serves Ireland, but eschews Parliamentary strife. The Prime Minister, too, whom Desmond perverted, has gone to his last rest. There are several other portraits that can be recognised by anyone who remembers

the political representation of those days. A striking example of agrarian outrage is furnished by the author. Under the no-rent system, any man renting a house or land from which a non-paying tenant had been evicted, was first warned to quit, and if he were non-compliant he was killed. Desmond, who was lawyer as well as politician, actually defended—knowing him to be guilty of this murder, and a great villain to boot—a man who had murdered a small tenant farmer, whose only crime was paying his just rent. To make matters worse the murdered man's wife ("Mary O'Reilly"), had been seduced by Desmond when a youth. Later in the story Mary O'Reilly indirectly causes the murder of Desmond, by "Costello," the murderer of James O'Reilly, and the end of the sordid story is reached. What Mrs. Lysaght says "Ireland wants may be found in the following extract:—

Let our people see their King or Queen, and no sign of disloyalty shall mar the greeting. Establish a Royal Residence at Dublin Castle, and there shall be little for the timorous to fear from a Parliament on College Green. Give us a Prince or Princess of Ireland instead of an English official, and we may forget much contempt and neglect. Her Majesty's Opposition fights against the Government of the day; her Majesty's rebels fight for the rights of governing themselves under her.

A precedent for a reigning prince is not wanting in the annals of English history. That Edward, designated Longshanks, gave Wales as ruler a Prince of the blood royal, and in so doing conciliated the Welsh people, with the result that the principality became an integral part of England. But what Ireland wants is self-control, religious freedom, internal thrift, freedom from political agitators, and these she will never have while her politicians are men who have (like Desmond) a private grudge to satisfy a thirst for notoriety, an empty purse to replenish—in the name of patriotism. Apart from the invidious portraiture, and the abominable intrigue between Desmond and Corinna Temple-Cloud, for which intrigue there is not the slightest reason except to intensify the "structural basis," the book is both instructively and entertainingly written. But the reader's hero will not be the authors.

DELTA.

**THE BELOVED VAGABOND:** William J. Locke. (John Lane, The Bodley Head, London.)

"The Beloved Vagabond" is one of those books that are at once a delight and an education to read. No more fascinating narrative has ever been given to the reading public. The reader will find himself travelling in delightful company from London to Paris, where he will revel in turn in the Vie de Boheme as lived in the Quartier Latin, and the life of the aristocratic Boulevard Malesherbes. From Paris he will tramp, vagabond fashion, first to Chartres, then by devious byways to Longwy, then south to Italy, wintering in the Eternal City, where he may become acquainted with everything of interest that lies on its seven hills, and breathe the exhilarating air of the broad Campagna. Leaving Rome, he will journey northward to Savoy, making a short stay at Chamborg for the purpose of witnessing its quaint wedding customs. Then to Aix-les-Bains, that Mecca of gouty invalids, and thence to Buda-Pesth, where, if he have the inclination, he may join in the National Guard. Back to Paris to the Salon and the Conservatoire des Arts, then to rural England and les convenances, and finally to La Haye, in Savoy. The story opens where Gaston de Morac, beloved vagabond, genius, and philosopher is acting as president of the "Lotos Club," a club much affected by those spirits who, while unconventional by na-

ture, are forced by circumstances to live in highly conventional surroundings. The proprietary of the club changing hands, Paragot, after a highly sensational and unusual valedictory meeting with its new proprietor, leaves London to make the grand tour that is to complete the education of his protege, Augustus Smith, a waif he had purchased from his gin-sodden mother for half-a-crown. Singularly enough, Paragot finds in Augustus, or "Asticot," as he has now renamed him, exceedingly promising material, and expresses his intention of converting him into a scholar and gentleman. After many days and sundry adventures, they reach La Haye, in Savoy, where an incident occurred which altered the tenour of their lives and introduces a feminine element into their entourage. Resting at a roadside inn, a strolling fiddler, accompanied by a girl carrying a zither, came in sight. The girl was greatly concerned at the loss of some money that had been entrusted to her to pay the railway charges to Chamborg, where next day they were to play at a village wedding. Suddenly the old fiddler is seen to fall, and Paragot, rushing to his assistance, finds that he is dead. Discovering that the girl (Blanquette) is both penniless and friendless, Paragot constitutes himself her guardian, proposing to take the old fiddler's place at the wedding next day. Blanquette accepts with gratitude, and after the wedding expresses her intention of becoming a fille de brasserie, which mode of life Paragot declares to be social and moral extinction and entirely unpermissible. So Asticot is provided with a tambourine, and the trio set out for Aix, where they are lucky enough to get an engagement to play in the public gardens there. To these gardens one day came Joanna, Comtesse de Verneuil, "the lady of the adorable feet," and for whom Paragot has become a social outcast. Explanations follow, and Joanna discovers that the ten thousand pounds paid to Gaston de Merac by the Comte de Verneuil was not the price of his withdrawal as Joanna's accepted lover, but the price of the salvation of Mr. Rusliworth (Joanna's father) from social and financial ruin. The Comte dies, and Paragot announces to Asticot and Blanquette his intention to marry Joanna and return to respectability. But the old shackles are too firmly riveted, and Paragot, to Joanna's secret relief, though she would never have confessed it, gives Joanna her freedom, and returns to Paris and the Vie de Boheme. Shortly after Paragot marries Blanquette, and, returning to La Haye, becomes a peasant farmer, and, to quote the author, "brings up the only child of the marriage in the fear of God and the practice of hard surveying, thus proving the late Mr. Matthew Arnold was hopelessly wrong when he declared 'that miracles do not happen.'" The authors delineation of the character of Paragot is magnificent. Paragot as vagabond, poet, fiddler, philosopher, painter, and lover in turn is an inimitable creation and eminently lovable. Nor is a moral lacking. The story of the wandering is told by Asticot, who becomes painter, scholar, and gentleman. He says of Paragot: "Men have spoken evil of him. I burned to defend him, and I burn now, and that is why I propose to write his apologia, his justification." An apologia was not necessary. Paragot's existence is justified a hundred times in the course of the narrative, which sparkles with wit and epigram from cover to cover.

It may seem strange to us, though the fact nevertheless remains, that the veterans of the grand army of Napoleon, weighed down by age and glory, were men of whom few had passed their thirty-fifth year! It was a time of rash and short living, with an early age and no overtures of real youth—a time when we find Thackeray ridiculing De Florac for holding claims on being still a young man at the age of thirty-five! The average man of to-day carries the spirit and power of youth into an age which a century ago was regarded as bordering on the shady side of existence, says Dr. A. E. Gibson in the "Medical Brief." The buoyancy and vigor characteristic of our present middle-aged man make it, in most cases, extremely difficult to approach any fair degree of accuracy in determining the age of a person passing along the ascension scale between forty and fifty-five. And what is said of man refers, of course, in equal, if not in still more accentuated degree, to woman. One of the causes of this remarkable arrest of old age lies undoubtedly in the increasing indulgence of our time in healthy outdoor sports, with their care-free and worry-free abandon.

## Personal Paragraphs

### AUCKLAND PROVINCE.

Mr W. R. Holmes returned from the South by the Barawa last week.

Dr. Quick arrived from the South by the Takapna on Sunday.

Captain Easton arrived from New Plymouth by the Takapna on Sunday.

Dr. Palmer was a passenger from New Plymouth by the Takapna on Sunday.

Miss W. Adair, of Gisborne, has gone on a visit to England.

Miss Ella Burke (Waipukurau) is at present on a visit to Gisborne. She is staying with Mrs Richard Sherratt.

Miss H. Sherratt, who has been spending some time in Hawke's Bay and Featherston, has returned to Gisborne.

Mr Philip Kenway has left Gisborne for England, where he intends to stay for an indefinite time.

Miss Madge Rice returned to Auckland last week, after a visit of three months to Christchurch.

Mrs Mouketch, who has been spending a few weeks with her son in Gisborne, has returned to her home in Featherston.

Miss Winter, who has been visiting Colonel and Mrs Winter (Gisborne), has left for Christchurch, en route for Tasmania.

Dr. and Mrs. A. Osborne Knight and family left Auckland last Tuesday for Wellington, to join the Athletic at that port for England.

Mr R. Hobbs, of Ponsbury, Auckland, left on Monday for Australia. He intends to visit Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide before his return.

Miss Ethel Atkinson, who has been seriously ill in Johannesburg, has now quite recovered, and is returning to Auckland by the s.s. Corinthia, which left Capetown on March 29.

Miss Sylvia Thorpe, Fairfax-road, Epsom, left Auckland last Monday en route to Germany, where she is going to pay an extended visit to her sister, Mrs. Pensler.

Mr. G. H. Barnes, manager for the "Midnight Wedding" Company, which opens at His Majesty's Theatre on Monday next, arrived by the Takapna on Sunday to make the preliminary arrangements.

Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Ellerby, of Walton (late of Canterbury), left for England and the Continent of Europe on Monday. They expect to be away about six or eight months.

Mrs. Phillips, wife of Dr. Phillips, left with her two children for Sydney on Monday last on her return to Uppington (Cape Colony), after a few months' visit to her parents, Mr. and Mrs. V. E. Rice, in Auckland.

Miss Nora Walker, Epsom, left last Sunday for Waunganui, where she has gone to stay with Mrs. Alf. Bayly and other friends. She will most probably visit Wellington before returning to Auckland.

Mr. J. J. Taine, son, of Auckland, has taken Mr. Saxby's residence at Bluff Hill, Napier, for the winter months. He is accompanied by his granddaughter, Miss Muriel Darling, of Wellington. Mr. and Mrs. Saxby intend to spend the winter in Sydney.

Visitors staying at the Royal Hotel include Captain and Mrs. Petterson (Auckland), Messrs. John Henry (Kaipara), J. H. Rogers (Wellington), T. Fleming (Adelaide), Mortimer New (Perth, W.A.), B. S. Chisholm (Wellington), Mr. and Mrs. Palmer (Christchurch).

Miss Ewen, who has been elected a member of the South Hauraki Drainage Board, is probably the first lady that has been elected to such a position in New Zealand. Miss Ewen has considerable interest in the land affected by the Board, and, it is stated, possesses qualifications which should make her an excellent member of the Board.

At the warehouse of Messrs. Sharland and Co., Limited, on April 10, Mr Alan Grey, who has represented the firm as suburban traveller, was the recipient of a presentation in the form of a bag and a set of razors. Mr. Ronshaw, manager, in making the presenta-