The Bookshelf.

By DELTA.

BOOKSHELF FEUILLETON.

MR. EDWIN ARNOLD is publishing shortly "Recollections of South Africa," by Lady Sarah Wilson. As every one will remember, Lady Sarah Wilson was a war correspondent in South Africa, and was taken prisoner by the Boers outside Mafeking.

Mr. Joseph Keating, whose daring novel has created such a sensation in "Home" political circles, is the brother of Mr. Matthew Keating, M.P. for South Kilkenny. Hitherto Mr. Keating has been best known as a writer of vivid, dramatic stories of mining life. It remains to be seen whether his incursion into the realms of political fiction will be successful enough to justify further inroads. We confess we like Mr. Keating's physiognomy as revealed by the admirable portrait of him which appears in the current number of the Bookman.

A novel which bears the sensational title of "A Mission to Hell," is announced by a Boston publisher. Its author is a Congregational minister named Eells who hails from Massachusetts.

Scribner's are said to have paid Colonel Roosevelt, as he is now called, a dollar a word for his South African articles. A New York newspaper man speaking to Galbraith, of the Bookman, says: "I've not heard that Scribner's is having a phenomenal sale to correspond with the phenomenal price they paid." Sometimes I wonder if the price was really a dollar a word, or if the announcement was intended to be taken with a pinch of salt, as we take the announcements which the impresario makes as to the five-figure salary he is going to pay to his prima donna." It is only fair to say, adds Galbraith, that this is the first time I have heard of this spiteful suspicion, though many people appear to doubt whether Colonel Roosevelt's articles are now so valuable as they promised to be when he was still President. All of which goes to show the ephemeral nature of fame and prestige.

That fine scholar and litterateur, Dr. William Barry, has an article in a prominent literary review on Mr. H. G. Wells, "Ann Veronica." Ann Veronica he compares to a kind of hesitating George Sand, and with Grant Allen's "Woman Who Did." Like Dr. Barry we were thoroughly interested and enjoyed Mr. Wells' book until we came to the Ramage scene. Then our respect and our belief in Mr. Wells' bona fides declined, and we waded in a slough of increasing despondency until the end of his book was reached. That it may be an absolutely true presentment of the attitude and the procedure of many of the ultra-modern young women of today we have no reason to doubt. But all the same it is, to put it as mildly as possible, a nasty presentment, and utterly unworthy of Mr. Wells. And if he, with his great gifts of progressive thought and marvellous prophetic insight, can offer us nothing more comforting or ideal for the future of the feminine disciple of modernity than a vision of an "Ann Veronica whitewashed by a complaisant society because of a tardy marriage, and an increased prosperity, we, like Dr. Barry, conceive ourselves justified in wishing that Mr. Wells had not conceived, much less written "Ann Veronica."

Most prominent amongst the attractions of "Life" for January is Dr. Fitchett's account of how he first became acquainted with the "Cornhill Magazine," forty years ago. The article reproduced in "Life" first appeared in the "Cornhill," which has just been celebrating its jubilee. Admirable photographs are given of its first editor and founder, the late George Murray Smith, and its present editor, Mr Reginald J. Smith, K.C.

Grant Richards have lately published at the low price of 3/6, a book which contains three prose plays written by that powerful writer, Mr. John Masefield. The "longest and the finest," is named "The Tragedy of Nan." The other two, and especially "Mrs. Harrison" (which has never been acted), a sequel to "The Campden Wonder," are both exceptionally good in their terse presentation of character through an artistic arangement of natural speech. The first mentioned is really all that matters just now. It is said by Mr. Edward Thomas to resemble a ballad, if there were one, that had all the mournfulness and beauty of its music wrought into its very words. For Mr. Masefield's play combines the effect of music and words. It has the rusticity, the breath of Nature, and the passion "more precious than Sheba's gold," which the best of the ballads have at those best moments where their words are all but mad with the inexpressible extremity of love and misery. And yet there is no place where it can be said that Mr. Masefield turns lyric poet and ceases to be dramatic. He is as strict in the final scene as in the chat over the dough. The influence of the ballads has been great in poetry. But this poet has been able to preserve the simplicity of the ballad while enriching it with the beauty of a grave and sensitive modern spirit that has long brooded upon it. He has drawn from the rustic fiddle music that might have graced an exquisite violin."

Shaw F. Bullock writes whimsically and sympathetically and critically in the November Bookman on Mr. Robert Lynd's new book "Home Life in Ireland" (Mills and Boon). Everything affecting Irish home and social and educational life is discoursed upon and thoroughly ventilated. Mr. Lynd is no Hardy, says Mr. Bullock in effect. But he knows—he knows. And all he says is worth knowing."

Space forbids a mention of "Billicks," Mr. St. John Adcock's inimitably written book, but we hope to give a resume of it next week.

The Mark Lemon Centenary.

More than ordinarily interesting is the current number of the "Bookman," which contributes a long article to mark the centenary of that famous editor of "Punch," Mark Lemon. This centenary article, which has been written by Mr. W. H. Spielman, can scarcely be called a flattering one. Mark Lemon's place in literature is not, we are told, difficult to determine. He was not, in the true sense, a man of letters, and it may readily be believed that were it not for his extraordinary success as an editor, endowed with a natural instinct, with an unfailing flair and good discretion, the centenary of his birth, which took place on November 30, 1809, might have been allowed to pass by the "Bookman" without the celebration and without the consecration of a special illustrated article to his memory. He was, declares Mr. Spielman, a worker at the edge of the literary field, and took on any job that fell in with his love of writing and of humour, and demanded little scholarship and less learning. His chief love was for humour and the stage; class journalism became his profession, and good judgment controlled his pen. Nevertheless, his style was good enough for his purpose, and his dramatic sense was sufficiently keen enough to carry to a successful issue any staged play of his, as the public of his day were not as critical of what has been called "their middle-class entertainment" as now. None of Mark Lemon's plays, Mr. Spielman thinks, are ever played now, nor are his novels read; few of his children's books are republished, and those that are, are republished more for the sake of their illustrations than their text. The volume by which he is best remembered is "Mark Lemon's Jest-book," containing the wit of all ages, including jokes of his own staff—Thackeray, Douglas Jerrold, and others. By 1864, it had run into its seventh edition, and if it is still purchased, it is partly because it is treasured by collectors of the works of Charles Keene, who drew the design on the title-page that was engraved on steel by Jeans. At this juncture readers will naturally wonder how Mark Lemon came to be "Punch's" most popular editor. The story of Mark Lemon's rise to the editorial chair, as told by Mr. Spielman, is a splendid illustration of the saying, that, "It is better to be born lucky than rich." Mark Lemon was the son of a hop grower or hop merchant, of Cheam, near Epsom. At his father's death his mother married a brewer named Very. Being without means, he was glad to accept a clerical position in the brewery, and eked out his salary by writing for the magazines, which pursuit, however, yielded very little grist. The brewery failing, a jovial tavern-keeper named Romer, who had had business relations with the Very brewery, placed him as manager of "The Shakespeare Head," in Wych-street. The result was unfortunate for both. Romer had to shut up the tavern, and Lemon found that the fumes of the beer stuck to him more or less through life, and were audibly sniffed at by his enemies at certain critical points of his career. He married on a loan of five pounds, an adventurous step, which was justified by results, as Mrs. Lemon counselled him not to lose sight of his literary companions, many of whom would meet, like the literary clubman of a previous age, in the mis-called "coffee-room" of the little hostelry. Lemon had been writing plays from the age of sixteen. In 1835 his "P.L., or No. 30 Strand," was produced at the Strand Theatre, and thenceforward for twenty years and more he flooded the stage with his productions, not a few of which, no doubt, were based upon French or German originals. In 1841 Lemon became editor of "Punch." His salary, we are told by Spielman, was at first only thirty shillings a week; but it was destined to rise to £1,500 a year before the end—the largest editorial salary, it is believed, which up to that time had ever been paid." Notwithstanding the duties and anxieties of his new position, Lemon still continued to write for the stage. A good story of him is told by Mr. Spielman in connection with his career as a dramatist. A play of his, entitled "Punch," necessitated the introduction of a parrot into its opening scene, and when the curtain rose on the first night, the profane bird belched forth such a torrent of appalling blasphemy that the success of the play would have been jeopardised had it not been for the sense of humour of a shocked yet tolerant audience. In 1856 "Medea" was produced, and then the stage knew him no more. Sixty plays in all, we are told, and not one among them showed an attempt at genuine comedy or tragedy. His more vigorous writing seems to have been kept for publications, such as "Household Words," "Once a Week," the "Illuminated Magazine," and the "Illustrated London News," but his most serious role of all was his editorship. For "Punch," as has been hinted, did not monopolise his attention; he was the first editor of the "London Journal," which, it is said, he nearly ruined by trying to keep up a fair standard in its literature; of the "Family Herald," and for a time, of "Once a Week," besides the "Field," which he took a major part in establishing. Possessed of an indomitable energy, Mark Lemon must undoubtedly have been, for we hear that he used to fill in his spare time with lectures upon London and public "readings" from the still cited, but not acted, "Hearts are Trumps." These were his labours; his relaxations included acting. He played with Charles Dickens, and his amateur company in "The Lighthouse" and in Wilkie Collins' "Frozen Deep," and acted Falstaff with his own natural "padding" at the Gallery of Illustration—a performance that is mainly memorable as bringing about a reconciliation between Lemon and Dickens, who had long been estranged in friendship. But as an actor Lemon did not shine. "In a word with 'Punch'—that special number in which "Punch's" long-suffering victim, Alfred Bunn, at last turned on his tormentors and rent them—the appearance on the stage of Lemon and the other members of the "Punch" staff is savagely attacked. "Did you ever see them act 'Punch'?" he asks. Did you ever see Douglas Jerrold. . . and Mark Lemon act at Mrs. Kelly's Theatre? And if so, did you ever see such an awful exhibition? . . . and if, as they say, they did 'hold the mirror up to Nature,' then I say, it was only to cast 'reflections' on her." Then Bunn, smiting Lemon on other grounds, proceeds to show that his satirical critics were no better poets than himself. But as editor of "Punch," Mark Lemon was, without doubt, the right man in the right place. "'Punch' and I," he would say, "were made for each other"—modestly omitting to claim that the making of the paper was in considerable measure his own. When Ebenezer Landells, the wood engraver, determined on issuing in London a comic and satirical journal, corresponding to the Paris "Charivari," and obtained the adhesion of the printer Joseph Last, the latter recommended him to seek out the support of Henry Mayhew, a genius of journalistic imagination, and a brilliant humorist who might be depended upon to form a thoroughly capable staff from among his own friends and acquaintances. Mark Lemon was one of the first enlisted, and when the paper was launched Mayhew, Lemon and Sterling Coyne

Mrs. Tubbs: "But you can't expect us to believe that Methuselah could have lived to the age of 960 years?"

The Curate (cornered, and taking refuge in mild humour): "Oh, I don't know! There were no motor-cars in those days?"