

# The Bookshelf.

By DELTA.

## BOOKSHELF FEUILLETON.

**M**R TOM GALLON'S latest book "The Great Gay Road" (Long), though, on the whole, entertaining, suffers from excessive sentimentalism. It is the story of a humorous adventurer, who poses as the long-lost son of an extremely short-tempered old gentleman, with whose niece he eventually falls in love. It somewhat resembles Mr Locke's "Beloved Vagabond." But Mr Locke's vagabond was an artist and a courtier, and Mr Gallon's is only a vagabond. Nevertheless, Mr. Gallon's book is, as usual, eminently readable.

Awaiting review are: "Charles Dickens," by Mr G. K. Chesterton (Methuen), and "In the Canaries with a Camera," by Margaret d'Este (Methuen), both of which may be obtained at Wildman and Arey's. An extended peep into Mr Chesterton's book has delighted us beyond measure, and has convinced us that not only is Mr Chesterton's heart in the right place, but that it is a very big heart, and that its owner possesses that fine tact and delicate discrimination that is born of a keen and superlative sympathetic understanding. No appreciation that has ever been penned of Charles Dickens has moved and satisfied us as this appreciation of Mr Chesterton's, who has caught and imprisoned the spirit of Dickens between the covers of a work that, while steering clear of personalities unconnected with Dickens' literary career, grips with an interest almost painful. Miss d'Este will be remembered as the writer of those charming records of explorations in Corsica and Majorca, and profusely illustrated, as this book is.

The February "Bookman" contains, besides its usual features, a splendid sketch of Mr T. P. O'Connor, best known as the founder of "M.A.P." and "T.P.'s Weekly," by Mr Ashley Gibson. Space this week forbids our giving a synopsis of this article, which is written with an enthusiasm worthy of its subject. Mr St. John Adeock discourses discursively and eloquently on Mr Thomas Hardy's "Tine," "Laughing-stocks," "Mammillan," &c. While not denying that Mr Hardy has poetic faculty, Mr Adeock deprecates its pessimistic, and therefore unedifying, quality.

Here is a verse which is said to be a condensation of Mr. Hardy's philosophy, and which has been taken from the poem entitled, "The Adjures Love":—

"I speak of one who plums  
Life's dim profund;  
One who at length can sound  
Clear views and certain  
But—after love what comes?  
A scene that lours,  
A few sad, vacant hours,  
And then, the curtain."

Imperishable stuff, but pessimistic, and of the earthy order, is the sum total of Mr. Adeock's opinion.

Mr. Thomas Seecombe contributes a scholarly notice of the memorial edition of Meredith, and Mr. Maurice Buxton Forman a review of the Meredith primer, which has been written by Dr. James Moffatt, and published by Hodder and Stoughton, at 6s. net.

Miss Lillian Quiller Couch writes pleasantly and feelingly on Susan Warner, author of that ideal book for girls, "The Wide Wide World," to which she has been inspired by a perusal of the biography of this author, written by her sister, Anna B. Warner, (G. P. Putnam and Sons.) It is not surprising to hear that "The Wide Wide World" was written under financial strain, superinduced by her father's, evident penchant for law suits. In any case, it is pleasing to know how great a success the "Wide Wide World" must have been from every point of view.

## REVIEWS.

**Happy Hawkins:** By Robert Alexander Watson. (Boston: Small, Maynard and Co. Auckland: Wildman and Arey. Price, 3/6.)

This is a really capital story of the Far West, and the hero (Happy Hawkins)

is its chronicler. "Happy" is a cowboy, employed on the cattle ranch of Cast Steel Judson, who, as the nomenclature given to him throughout his district will indicate, was not very easy to get along with. Cast Steel has a daughter, who is about six years old when "Happy" first comes to the Judson ranch, and the story turns on the fortunes of this child, in which "Happy" takes first hand. Not that Happy marries Judson's daughter, but she is nearly driven to it by the cast steel behaviour of her father. Who she did marry must be discovered by the reader himself. As is fitting in a Far West story, there is plenty of shooting, in which Happy especially distinguishes himself. A chapter that is devoted to the account of how Judson's ranch was attacked by a gang of desperadoes is very exciting reading, while the

Sovereign had set his seal of approval upon the latter. This is a story that shows how, temporarily, Henry Tudor's will was overriden by an abbot of Blossholme, later to be punished by a dispossession of that religious house, in favour of the Lady of Blossholme, who had been cruelly used by the aforementioned abbot. Mr. Haggard has introduced a scene in which the generosity, which was so marked a feature in the Tudor character is markedly displayed. We regret that space forbids a further mention of this book, but we can assure our readers that nothing that Mr. Haggard has ever written will add more to his reputation than this "Lady of Blossholme," which contains an example of feminine characterisation unequalled in feminine characterisation unequalled by any of Mr. Haggard's former creations.

**The Concentrations of Bee:** Lillian Bell. (Boston: L. C. Page and Co. Auckland: Wildman and Arey. Price, 3/6.)

Lovers of Lillian Bell's fascinatingly cute stories, whose scenes are mostly

**The Woman in Question:** By John Reed Scott. (London: J. B. Lippincott and Co. Melbourne: George Robertson and Co., 107 to 113, Elizabethstreet. Price, 3/6.)

Readers who love a blend in which romance vies with the commonplace, mystery with the too apparent, and comedy with tragedy, cannot do better than invest in this book, which abounds in all these things. But Mr Scott's characters are invertebrate, which is a condition we wholly abhor. We love a virtuous heroine, we are not sure that we wholly detest a wicked heroine, if she is only wicked enough. And we have, on occasion, found ourselves admiring a villain of the deepest dye. But we have never been inveigled into admiring a heroine who could hit a man when he was down, or a villain who did not go the whole hog. Mr Scott's plot is all right, its action is natural, his situations are dramatic, his denouement in keeping with the book's general scheme. But his characters are puppets, and the wires that work them are over-slack. Nevertheless, we believe that as a picture of the American social life depicted, that it is a faithful, if an unideal, representation for which the social life of America, which differs essentially from the social life of older countries, is to blame. We are indebted to George Robertson and Co. for our copy of "The Woman in Question."

**Songs of the Happy Isles:** By Maud Peacocke. (Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs. Auckland: All booksellers. Price 3/6.)

Mention has from time to time been made in the columns of the New Zealand Press of Miss Maud Peacocke, of Auckland, as a poetess of no mean order. We have just received a copy of a collection of her poems, entitled "Songs of the Happy Isles," which is being issued by Messrs. Whitcombe and Tombs, Wellington. In a brief and modest preface, the authoress hopes that her verses may find appreciation even among true lovers of poetry, and prove an earnest of better work to follow. The first poem is something of a keynote to the mind in respect to her work. It commences, "I seek the perfect thing," and concludes—

"Though I nor win nor wear  
The peerless gem I sing,  
In that I fare I seek  
Nearer the Perfect Thing."

It is recognised that there is a wide diversity in poets and poetry, as also in the estimation of what constitutes good poetry, some readers even thinking that the best which requires a charge of dynamite to discover the contents. We incline to a definition of poetry as beautiful or heroic conceptions musically and felicitously expressed, which definition fits Miss Peacocke's present effort, and if she realises the modest ambition of her preface—of doing better in future—she will have few competitors in the colonies. The book is bound to find its way into every home of refinement, and possesses in a particular measure the qualities sought for in a gift book. The book is neatly and tastefully bound in a stout binding, and the quality of the paper and print leave nothing to be desired. We heartily congratulate Miss Peacocke on her premier essay, in book form, and cordially wish her "more power to her elbow."

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Artist's Wife: "What on earth's the matter with you, George?"  
George: "Good heavens, it's awful! You know the Mayor is coming this morning to be painted in his robes?"  
Artist's Wife: "Well?"  
George: "Well, I've just remembered I lent them to Finks for his Covent Garden fancy dress costume!"

chapter that tells of Happy going out in the world to make a fortune is diverting to the last degree. We like Happy, and we like Barbara Judson, and we are not sure we do not like Cast Steel Judson, despite his cantankerous ways. Indeed, we like Mr. Watson's book altogether, and confidently recommend it as shrewdly humorous, breezy, whole-some, exciting, and wholly absorbing.

**The Lady of Blossholme:** H. Rider Haggard. (London: Hodder and Stoughton. Auckland: Wildman and Arey. Price, 3/6.)

Whatever subject or period Mr. Haggard chooses, or wherever he sets his scenes, he is always eminently readable, and to us a delightful companion in our hours of relaxation. Nevertheless, we are pleased that this time he has set his scene in England, and the more so since he has chosen the period of Henry Tudor, from which to draw the strands of this particularly fine romance. Those who sigh for the "good old days" would do well to read "The Lady of Blossholme," and learn the state of the rural England of that day. In those days of rapid and safe transit, it is difficult to realise the difficulties and the dangers of a journey lasting days in those times, that would be accomplished in an hour in these. It is also difficult, in these days of intemperance and liberty of action, to conceive how ecclesiastical law in those days overrode the civil, even though the

laid in or on the borders of Upper Bohemia, will find this book better if anything than its predecessors, and, indeed, will renew their acquaintance with some former Bell characters. The heroine of this exceedingly smart series of coups is a former acquaintance, one Bee Lathrop, now an adorable young widow, whose immensely wealthy, but miserly husband has left her dependent upon an equally miserly sister, to whom he has left the bulk of his fortune, and, indeed, all of it that is readily revenue-producing. How Bee plots with the subtlety of a Machiavelli, enlisting everyone's assistance without their being aware of the fact, and how she eventually cozens her crabbed sister in law, by getting her a husband, into giving her a handsome income, makes up a story of overwhelming and highly-diverting interest, which we can heartily recommend to admirers of light literature.

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