

LITERARY CHAT.

BY DANVERS HAMBER.

FREDERIC VILLIERS, whose first despatches from the Transvaal appear in this number of THE NEW ZEALAND ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE, is a charming fellow when you know him thoroughly. Meeting him for the first time one would not be favourably impressed by his air of hauteur. Really this is a veneer caused by a nervous shyness. Below that thin and rather icy surface are all the qualities that make the man. Good humour, courage, sympathy, wit, steadfastness, and a love of nature he has in plenty. As a *raconteur* he excels, for his travels on land and over seas have provided him with a wealth of anecdote, and he has the natural ability to tell a story well. Frederic Villiers was born in London in 1852. I think his first experience as a war artist was in 1876, when he went to Servia for the *Graphic*. From then till now he has had a busy life in foreign countries. He was with the Russians in Turkey in 1877, and watched the battles of Saitzchar, Alexinatx and Mount Yavor, and was present at the Passage of the Danube, the fighting at Biela, was with that idol of the Russian soldier, General Skobeloff, at Plevna, and shared in the horrors and the perils of the Shipka Pass. Next year he was in Afghanistan, and depicted the fighting at Gadamuck and the Bazaar Valley. In 1882 he saw the Bombardment of Alexandria. He was on board the tiny gunboat *Condor*, whose commander, Lord Charles Beresford, spiritedly cannonaded Fort Marabout, and caused the Admiral, Sir Beauchamp Seymour, to hoist that memorable signal—"Well done, *Condor*!" He was present at the fighting at El Magfar, witnessed that magnificent cavalry charge in the moonlight at Kassassin, and took part in that silent night march, and subsequent crowning victory over Arabi Pasha at Tel-el-Kebir. In the following

year he was specially invited by the Tsar, Alexander III., to be present at his Coronation in Moscow. In 1884 he went to the Eastern Soudan, and, with General Graham's staff, saw the battles of El Teb and Tamai. In the same year he went with Admiral Sir William Hewitt on the special mission to King John of Abyssinia, and afterwards went up the Nile. In 1885 Frederic Villiers was with General Sir Herbert Stewart's Desert Column, saw "Fuzzy Wuzzy" break the British square at Abu Klea, and gazed upon the fanatical valour of the Soudanese at Gubat. In 1886, attached to the Servian Army invading Bulgaria, he was present at the battle of Pirost, and saw all the severe fighting in the Nishava Valley. His next trip was to Burma; this was followed by a journey across Canada, a long lecturing tour, and a visit to the Chicago Exhibition. In 1894 he was with the Japanese Army, and took part in the battle of Ping Yang, the capture of Port Arthur and other victories. In 1895 he was lecturing, and in 1896 again in Moscow a witness of the Coronation of Nicholas II. This led to another lecturing tour, brought to a conclusion when Kitchener's Khartoum Expedition set out upon its journey. And now Frederic Villiers is in South Africa, and our readers will have the benefit of his letters, graphically describing the stirring events which have occurred, and have still to happen before Lord Roberts puts his hand upon Pretoria.

MR. F. MARION CRAWFORD'S latest work, *Via Crucis*, published by Macmillan and Co., is a romance of the period of the Second Crusade. Some historical personages are portrayed with the author's usual skilful and fanciful touch. The descriptions of the pageantry of