

LITERARY CHAT.

BY DANVERS HAMBER.

MESSRS. WILDMAN AND LYELL, of Auckland, have sent me Mr. Henry Lawson's latest collection of short stories. The volume is entitled *On the Track*, and forms one of the Commonwealth Series published by Messrs. Angus and Robertson, of Sydney. The author of *While the Billy Boils* has gathered together in this unpretentious-looking booklet some stories which have previously appeared in colonial journals, and has added some fresh yarns. The mixture of old and new forms a delightful whole, for Mr. Lawson writes so naturally and so simply, yet always with such telling effect, that one experiences a sort of exhilaration after reading one or two of his stories. Humour and pathos Mr. Lawson uses with a master hand, and now and then he writes with such a breezy, out-of-door tone that one feels transported hundreds of miles away from the confines of a city. "Mitchell," who discourses on Women and on Matrimony, is a very amusing fellow, with a heap of good sound common sense running through his conversation, and in "A Vision of Sandy Blight" there is a blend of the pathetic and the humorous which is truly artistic. There are two or three tales of New Zealand, and these are quite as attractive as the others. Mr. Lawson, who is evidently as much a student of mankind as he is a lover of Nature, must be congratulated heartily, for *On the Track* is a bright and welcome addition to colonial literature. I heard some little time back that Mr. Lawson intended travelling to England, in order to offer his wares in the Mecca of all writers. With the growing demand for short stories

descriptive of colonial life, he should have little difficulty in attaining that success to which his merit justly entitles him. Those who enjoyed the terseness, the vigour and the truthfulness of the stories in *While the Billy Boils*, will find the same delight in reading *On the Track*.

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OUIDA's latest story, *The Waters of Edera*, differs essentially from most of her works. It is very slight in plot, and has virtually nothing of that human passion which has marked so many of the talented writer's novels. Italian customs and manners, local government and politics, and a peasantry ruled over by a tyrannical authority, are written of with the author's well-known power of description. The life and the country are admirably depicted, and the characters are drawn with the artistic skill which has ever been a prominent feature of Ouida's work. *The Waters of Edera* is not so brilliant or so striking as *The Massarenes*—the author's 1897 triumph—but it possesses a great charm, for it is thoughtfully written and it is full of observation. Considering that Ouida's first work, *Held in Bondage*, was published in 1863, and that since then she has written thirty-nine books, her vigour and imagination must be considered wonderful. Her latest novel is published by T. Fisher Unwin, of Paternoster Square.

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SOME friends of the late Mrs. Lynn Linton are desirous that her memory should be kept