

THE WORLD OF BOOKS.

The Story of an African Farm.

The masculine pseudonym of "Ralph Iron" is a disguise under which Miss Olive Schreiner has sought to conceal her identity. It is not surprising that an identity so vigorous and brilliant was speedily dragged out of covert. The Story of an African Farm* is no thrilling romance of adventure. There is no mark of an assagai from cover to cover; and its pages reveal no trace of elephant or lion, save for a carved lion's head in an old Dutch bedroom. The book is filled, nevertheless, with tremendous movement, with spiritual terror and anguish, conflict, victory and defeat, beside which the struggles of Zulus and the trumpeting of mad elephants show with a certain pallor and remoteness. I say this with all due respect and admiration for the enthralling tales which Mr. Haggard has given us—tales which, I think, should be forever acceptable to the palate of the healthy man or boy. But in such a story as Miss Schreiner's there are mightier issues at stake; the suspense becomes more breathless. This book has won a marked degree of popularity, but it has been quite overshadowed by the fame of Robert Elsmere, a novel which—with all its excellent literary quality, all its sympathetic voicing of the questionings of the day—seems amateurish in its philosophy and almost artificial in its attitude, beside the strenuous sincerity of Miss Schreiner's pages. In her depiction of the strange, barren life of a Boer household, this writer reveals life at the core. She probes inexorably to the roots of human desires and human motives. In her pages a remorseless logic, an inescapable keenness of vision, are combined with passionate humanity, tenderness, pathos and a certain religious exaltation. The landscape, the atmosphere, the accidents or material phenomena of this human tragedy are all unfamiliar to us, and strangely provocative. They are rendered with few and broad strokes, but with an intensity which makes them well high ineffaceable.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

The publication of Mr. Carman's Trilogy in commemoration of Matthew Arnold has been delayed till April, to allow of the appearance of Part I, entitled "Death in April," in the pages of the Atlantic Monthly. This section of the poem contains between two and three hundred lines, and never before has a Canadian poet been given such prominence in that most exclusive of magazines.

It is announced that Mr. Blackett Robinson, the well known Toronto publisher who, as proprietor of The Week, has done so much for Canadian Letters, will publish next month a volume of poems by Mr. H. K. Cockin. Mr. Cockin is editor of Toronto Saturday Night. His poems are of a popular character, easy in diction, full of swing and spirit, and concerned almost exclusively with human emotion and incident. From a knowledge of Mr. Cockin's work in the periodicals we are able to predict that his volume will appeal to a wide circle. Many of the poems are peculiarly adapted for public recitation.

The Trinity University Review, of Toronto, is making rapid growth in literary excellence and in breadth of interest. This is doubtless to no small extent due to the management of Mr. Carter Troop, of this city, whose promise we mark with great pleasure.

The Dominion Illustrated asks whether Mr. Craven Langstroth Betts, the translator of Beranger, is a New Brunswick man or not. Mr. Betts, though living in Brooklyn, still prides himself on being "a St. John boy." While speaking of the Dominion Illustrated it may not be out of place to reiterate that this periodical is one which has a most just claim on the support of all true Canadians. Never before have Canadians possessed a purely literary illustrated magazine that could be called in all respects first-class. At last this reproach is effectually removed, and Canadians should evince practically their appreciation of this fact.

Notes and Announcements.

A German paper has this witticism. It is an enthusiastic professor who is speaking to his students: "Yes, gentlemen, yes, that was a great time. Herder had written his Walden; Lessing was in full activity; Goethe had begun his brilliant career, and Schiller was about to be born."

There are three fellowships vacant in the English literature section of the Royal Society, and to fill these vacancies Messrs. Horatio Hale, of Clinton, Ont.; Geo. Paterson, of New Glasgow, N.S., and Charles Mair, of Prince Albert, have been nominated, and will, without doubt, be elected.

Letters on Literature is the title of Andrew Lang's new volume, which is to be published by Longmans, Green & Co. The book is made up chiefly of papers contributed to the Independent.

Mr. Charles Dudley Warner's Canadian paper, which is to appear in the Harper of March, prefaced by a portrait of Sir John Macdonald, is a complete review of the social, political and industrial condition of the dominion. It fills 30 pages of the magazine, space enough to make of itself a suggestive and piquant little book.

*The Story of an African Farm. By Ralph Iron. Boston: Roberts Bros.

Mr. Howells' new novel, which will appear in Harper's Weekly in March, is to have the advantage of illustration. This is the first time Mr. Howells has been illustrated.

Dr. Birbeck Hill, the editor of one of the best editions of Boswell's Johnson, is making arrangements to bring out complete collections of the letters of both Boswell and Johnson, and a call is made on collectors of autographs or other persons owning unpublished letters, to send to Dr. Hill exact copies.

The new Century Dictionary is to be issued in sections containing about 6,500 words each. It is intended to furnish a complete equipment for literature, science, and the arts. Quotations are made from the works of about 2,000 authors. It is said that the new edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica has alone furnished 10,000 new words. There are about 6,000 cuts, and as many as possible of these were made from the articles to be illustrated. Prof. William D. Whitney is editor-in-chief, and each department is under the charge of an expert. The printers have now been at work two years.

Mr. George William Curtis is editing Motley's Letters, which the Harper Brothers are to publish in two volumes, and which promise to be a literary event. The letters are for the most part to his family and written from abroad, although an interesting part will be the correspondence of young Motley. His views of Bismarck, with whom he was on especial terms of intimacy, but of whom he seems able to have formed an unprejudiced estimate, are described as having a timely importance. Mr. Curtis has prepared a paper on the letters which will appear in the body of the magazine next month.

Mr. J. A. Symonds in his Comparison of Elizabethan and Victorian Poetry, quotes Jenny Lind as saying apropos of Shelley's poetry that it would not sing. Its verbal melody was too self-satisfying; its complicated thoughts, changeable images are packed full of consonants; and, moreover the tone of emotion alters so rapidly that no melodic phrase is brief enough. She contrasted it with the largo of Milton and the simplicity of Heine, so well adapted to musical phrases. "I can sing Dryden," she said, "but not Shelley, Wordsworth or Keats. Tennyson, but not much. He chooses solid, sharp words, and puts them all together; music cannot compass them."

Boston will soon enjoy an authors' reading. At least, at the meeting of the International Copyright association, Wednesday week, a committee was appointed to arrange for such a reading to be given for the benefit of the association. The committee is: W. W. Goodwin, chairman; Alexander P. Browne, secretary; Thomas B. Aldrich, A. S. Hardy, Robert Grant, T. W. Higginson, Miss Sara Orne Jewett, Edwin L. Bynner, Mrs. James T. Fields, J. Boyle O'Reilly, Arthur Gilman, H. E. Scudder, Miss Lucretia P. Hale, F. J. Stimson and Miss Susan Hale.

MUSIC, AT HOME AND ABROAD.

Few of the general public have a good idea of the large amount of time and sacrifice of other engagements the average amateur devotes in pursuit of music. I am not now speaking of the soloists, but rather of the chorus—the one, of many, who goes to make up the necessary complement for the proper production of any musical work. Take, for instance, the male singers of this city who are members of the Oratorio society. In nearly every case they are also members of a church choir. To begin with, this necessitates the keeping of two evenings of the week for rehearsal, one for church and one for oratorio. Just now, too, there are the Amateur Minstrels actively rehearsing two and sometimes three times a week, which company is largely composed of members of the Oratorio society. There are as well the recitals in the Mission church, which engages another evening at least for performance, and also some odd time for rehearsal, not to say anything about small church concerts, which entail a certain amount of preparation. I heard a friend remark, the other night, that his wife was bewailing that she had a musical man for a husband, and he added that he thought she had some cause for complaint, as he had only been at home two nights that week, and the next week he had rehearsals as follows: Monday, oratorio; Tuesday, minstrels; Wednesday, rehearsal for recital; Thursday, minstrels; Friday, recital, and Saturday, minstrels! Of course, this is rather an exceptionally busy time, but the public should lay carefully to heart the fact that these amateurs expend a large amount of time, trouble and patience in giving recreation and amusement to this city, and should liberally support entertainments which have the object of giving high class music in the best manner possible, and especially all that are in any way connected with the Oratorio society.

As I announced last week, Mendelssohn's "Hear my Prayer," will be performed by the Oratorio society, at Mr. Morley's organ recital, in St. Stephen's church, which will take place next Tuesday evening, the 5th inst., at 8 o'clock.

Wanted—A good concluding afterpiece. Apply to the managing committee of the Amateur Minstrels. A good price will be given for a suitable piece. This is a free ad., though it ought to cost a dollar a line. Decision is a very happy trait in a managing committee, so, gentlemen, when the first replies come in from the above ad., decide at once and stick to it. The Bankers' minstrels, of Boston, give their performance on the 8th of next month, and we ought to follow the Hubbites very quickly, to be in fashion—the Hub being the musical centre of the universe, or, at all events, alleged to be. FELIX.

She Wanted to be Calm. Fair Passenger (to her travelling companion)—Do you know, Mr. Sampson, that I feel very nervous? Mr. Sampson—What makes you feel that way? Do you anticipate danger? Fair Passenger (shyly)—No, I don't anticipate any danger, but we are approaching a tunnel.—The Epoch.

HE CAME BACK.

At the end of the lane by the big white gate (Oh, the heat of youth is fickle!) He left his love for a year to wait. Sing fickle, oh, so fickle! 'I'll return when the blushing roses bloom, And be true to thee till the day of doom.' With a good-by kiss in the deepening gloom. Oh, sing of a youth so fickle!

—New York World.

whether too short or too long, etc., etc. I don't think any one would go to hear one of Shakespeare's plays with a text book and watch every line on the book during the actor's most telling speeches, and so I think it would be better if the scores were closed during the solos and recitatives and I guarantee more enjoyment to the listener than if the book were open. Of course if one is going to a performance for the purpose of criticising, then to a great extent a score is necessary, but otherwise closed books are certainly in the best taste.

Messrs. Hill & Son, of London, Eng., are now constructing for the Town Hall, Sydney, N. S. W., what will be the largest organ yet built. It will contain 140 registers, 126 of which will be speaking stops, distributed among five manual and one pedal claviers. Beneath the respective manuals there will be 33 pneumatic combination pistons, ten combination pedals to great and pedal organs and four other mechanical pedals. The compass of this gigantic instrument is: Manual compass C C to c, 61 notes; pedal compass C C C to F, 30 notes. The unique feature of a 64 feet reed is an element of novelty, and can only be regarded as a curious experiment. The largest organ in the world hitherto is that at Riga, containing 124 speaking stops.

In the London correspondence of the Boston Musical Herald, the writer draws attention to the two musical high churches at the West end, viz., All Saints, Margaret street, and St. Andrew's, Wells street. The dedication festivals of both occur during the month of November, and by a curious coincidence the choir masters of both churches chose the same mass for the choral celebration, Beethoven's in C, without the slightest intention of clashing. Old St. Paul choristers will be delighted when I say that the note closes with the remark that both performances were good, and could not be excelled anywhere but at St. Paul's cathedral.

At one of Rubinstem's recitals at St. James' Hall, he was accosted by an old lady in the entrance-hall, just before 3 o'clock, and thus addressed: "Oh, Mr. Rubinstem, I am so glad to see you! I have tried in vain to purchase a ticket. Have you a seat you could let me have?" "Madame," said the great pianist, "there is but one seat at my disposal, and that you are welcome to, if you think fit to take it." "Oh, yes; and a thousand thanks! Where is it?" was the excited reply. "At the piano," smilingly retorted Rubinstem.—Ex.

"Dear me," ejaculated Mrs. Tonhunter, after hearing her daughter execute a brilliant aria several sizes too big for her, "hasn't Almira got a magnificent timbre to her high tone." "Timber!" snarled the crusty old uncle who always desired his niece to learn cooking: "Timber! lots of it! Why its the most woodey voice I have ever heard." —Musical Herald.

Sir Arthur Sullivan was once asked where he was able to compose best, and under what circumstances his ideas flowed most freely. His answer surprised everyone. "There is no place," he said, "where I have so many inspirations as in a railway carriage. There is something in the rapidity of the motion, in the clanging of the iron, and in the whirr of the wheels, which seems to excite the imagination, and supplies material for a host of strange harmonies."—Ex.

It is singular that among all the commercial music publishers now-a-days nobody has ever written a set of Fairbanks' Scale Exercises! Don't give this idea a-weigh. —Ex.

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"Will he ever return?" the maiden cried, (Alas, that heart are fickle!) And she sat her down and loud she sighed. Sing fickle, oh, so fickle! But he came as he said, all safe from harm, And strolled down the lane in the June-time warm, But another girl hung on his arm! Oh, fickle, fickle, fickle!

—New York World.

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