

him, but most men who hold certain central dogmas firmly hold along with these many subsidiary dogmas. If they lose faith in the latter, they commonly find the main part of their faith greatly weakened. It was not so with Church; he was one of the men, very few in any age, who with unerring precision selected certain articles of faith by which he was content to live and die, leaving the debatable to be debated. His master through life was Newman, but there is much in his writings that Newman did not teach him.

W. R. N.

ESSAYS AND STUDIES.*

There are more points than one in Mr. Churton Collins which make him an interesting critic. In the first place, he knows his classics; and though it is not customary nowadays to endorse Dr. Folliott's iteration of "Greek, Greek, Greek," as the *unum necessarium*, if it is necessary anywhere it certainly is in criticism. He knows at least some parts of English literature very well, and is something of a specialist in Italian, an acquirement not so common as it used to be, and for that very reason specially useful to a critic of English in past days. Also Mr. Collins writes well and carefully, though rather hardly and with something of lack in ease, springiness, unction. But what makes him particularly interesting is his maintenance in full reality of a critical attitude which is now mostly a tradition. It is not exactly that Mr. Collins is more opinionated than other people; other critics would probably not have to go far from their own doors to find his equal, at least, in that respect. But his opinionatedness is of a kind which is not just now fashionable. Nowadays we are most of us rather apt to say, with more or less politeness, according to nature and education, "I give this as my opinion; it is only my opinion, of course, and has no other value; but, privately, I think any one but a fool will take that value as a gilt-edged security." The older fashion was not ostensibly to give the critic's personal warranty, but to assume that his opinion was that of the *orbis terrarum*, that there was no possibility of salvation outside of it, and that

anybody who did not choose to accept it ought to be delivered over to the secular arm. Of these two attitudes (which of course the foregoing sentences designedly exaggerate and caricature) the latter, beyond all question, is that to which Mr. Churton Collins is most inclined. Thus, for instance, he speaks of "the wretched cant now so much in vogue about 'art for art's sake.'" Now, of course, you *may* cant about anything. But the doctrine of "art for art's sake" is neither more nor less cant, or liable to cant, than any other doctrine or position which admits of argument for and against, which is capable of being overstrained and misapplied, but which, rightly held and intelligently limited, contains, like most doctrines, its portion of truth. But it would not suit Mr. Collins to allow this. Indeed, in his way of criticism, there are very few allowances, provisos, or guards. He is entirely free from that malady of "thinking what the other fellow will say" which we have heard charged against critics of a stamp different from his, even when they had the repute of being tolerably sure of themselves. And, indeed, if you have made up your mind that "the other fellow" is a wretched canter, why bother yourself about him?

Of this method or attitude the essays given in the present volume (with the exception of the very agreeable paper on "Menander" with which it concludes, and which is rather a *compte rendu* than a controversial or dogmatic discourse) give excellent examples, sometimes charged less, sometimes more, with the main peculiarity. The opening paper, that on "Dryden," is one of the best. When it appeared, now a good many years ago, everybody who knew anything about the subject recognised it as an admirable piece of work of its kind. It has indeed both the merits and the defects of Mr. Collins's special model, Macaulay, who, though he has been sometimes more closely imitated in mere tricks of style, has never had so faithful a follower in spirit and in the whole scheme of essay-procedure. There are the carefully arranged lists of names and dates, the little excursions or episodes of reading or allusion, the set-pieces at intervals. There is, too—and this seems to us, as far as purely literary criticism is concerned, one of Mr. Collins's least admirable parts or points—the trick of

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depreciation in order to enhance, of stepping back in order to make a spring. But, on the whole, the article seems to us not merely one of the best things Mr. Collins has done, but one of the best on the subject; one certainly not to be missed by anybody who is studying that subject. For which reason its extraction, with some corrections, from the limbo of an old Review is much to be welcomed.

The next paper, on Mr. Symonds's *Predecessors of Shakespeare*, exhibits Mr. Collins's method, and his scholarship to Macaulay, at much greater disadvantage. The book criticised, though an interesting one, was of course vulnerable enough, exhibiting as it did its author's disorderliness of arrangement and his floridness of style at nearly their worst. But why bolt out of the course to make a desperate charge of six pages on the critical style, not of Mr. Symonds, but of Mr. Swinburne? And why, except in corrupt following of quarterly (not merely *Quarterly*) reviewers in general, and of Macaulay in particular, attack so violently a book and author which and who, after the first diatribe, are quietly put aside altogether in order that Mr. Collins may give his own sketch—and a very well-informed, if not always well-opinioned, sketch too—of the subject? There is to be observed, also, in this essay, as perhaps in some others, a fault to which this type of critic is specially liable—the fault of violently denouncing or magnificently pooh-poohing opinions which a little later, and with a very little change, the critic restates himself as the only true and catholic faith on the subject. Thus, here on p. 109, Mr. Collins speaks with scorn apparently too deep for words of some unnamed writer who “gravely compares Marlowe with Æschylus.” It will occur to most people who know both their Æschylus and their Marlowe well that the poor wretch, whoever he was, might have done worse. But they will certainly rub their eyes when they come to Mr. Collins's own account of Marlowe, and find urged with much energy and eloquence his claim to most of those things which we recognise as Æschylean—“passages approaching as nearly to the style of the Greek masterpieces as anything to be found in English” (was this said “gravely”?) “delineations of the superhuman,” and so forth. Mr.

Symonds himself is chidden for laying too much stress on Marlowe's “*Amour de l'Impossible*.” Mr. Collins is permitted to say practically the same thing in six sentences on p. 157 and in nine sentences on p. 158.

In the two other long essays—“*Lord Chesterfield's Letters*” and “*The Porson of Shakespearian Criticism*”—there being no intrusive entity to whom the critic has to say, “*Ote-toi, que je m'y mette*,” Mr. Collins's method is again seen to better advantage. We do not, indeed, think that either the unfavourable view of Chesterfield or the unfavourable view of Theobald which he combats has been quite so universal as he seems to think. Pope's very Popian spite against Theobald has always been understood by people of any instruction; and we cannot believe that anybody who counts has ever been prejudiced against Chesterfield by Dickens's absurd and wooden caricature in Sir John Chester. But both essays are good examples of vigorous championship not undeserved, and the latter is a well-informed and well-arranged exposition of fact. Of the “*Menander*” we have already spoken.

It would perhaps be unfaithful to close this review of a very interesting and very typical, as well as learned and energetic, book of criticism without noting one or two slips into which the critic's method, as much as anything else, has led him. That method, as is well known, almost requires, and at least certainly induces, long, confident sweeps of generalisation, assertion, illustration, and parallel. But these are extremely dangerous things. Even Macaulay, with his wonderful reading and matchless memory, fell sometimes into the net that he spread; and Mr. Collins has not been more fortunate. For instance, he says, in an *obiter dictum* on Ronsard, “between 1630 and 1858 he was so completely ignored that, if we are not mistaken, during the whole of this period no edition of his poems was called for.” Now, if we are not mistaken, there was an edition of *Œuvres Choiesies* in 1840. But this does not matter much. For at least thirty years before 1858 Ronsard had been studied and ransacked for metrical models by the whole Romantic school of French poetry, which was then at its prime; and this is a very odd way of being “completely ignored.” As for

another slip, it is one which we should think it illiberal to mention in a man who might possibly have committed it through ignorance of Greek. Mr. Collins writes of some error that "it may now be said to hold a conspicuous place among *pseudodoxia epidemica*." It is, of course, not possible that he can take *pseudodoxia* for a neuter plural instead of a feminine singular, or think that the

common English short title "Vulgar Errors" is a translation of the Greek one. It is possible that he wrote *pseudodoxa* (though even this would be odd) and that the printer played him a trick; or the thing may be merely "one of the innumerable proofs of the temporary supremacy of the devil," of which all who write have had experience.

George Saintsbury.

NOVEL NOTES.

HIPPOLYTE AND GOLDEN BEAK. Two Stories. By George Bassett. New York: Harper and Bros. \$1.25.

If any experienced taster of contemporaneous fiction, before seeing the title-page, were to read these two stories and were then to guess at their author's name, it would be impossible for him not to cry out "Norris!" The first tale is absolutely Norrisian; the second relatively so. And this is high praise; for the Norris suggested by them is the earlier and better Norris; the Norris of *Thirlby Hall* and *Matrimony*, and not the Norris of *The Countess Radna*; the delineator of character, and not the producer of pot-boilers. A contemplative Englishman of middle age, with a good deal of *insouciance* and the gift of saying things epigrammatically; a second Englishman of excessive insularity; various foreigners, male and female; and the Riviera for a background—these are the ingredients of some of the most characteristic novels of Mr. Norris. The style and manner are Norris himself. The likeness is perhaps less noticeable in the very curious story *Golden Beak*, in reading which we can forgive the improbability of the incidents in our delight at the verisimilitude of the characters who figure in them. It is, for example, too much to ask that we should accept as possible a Japanese cook, who follows an American girl all over the world, and finally strangles her on the bank of a quiet English river, within call of her friends, and by means of a bronze helmet whose construction the author does not make altogether clear. But this apart, Mr. Bassett draws his figures to the life. The nineteen-year old *divorcée* from San

Francisco and her naïve chatter on the deck of a Pacific steamer are delicious. Her description of her friends in San Francisco is a masterpiece in its way. Listen to this of Charley Hart, the "society leader," who is in the insurance business, and leads the german everywhere:

"When a young lady first goes into society in San Francisco, if he isn't on her side she can't do anything at all. He is asked out to dine every night, and of course it all helps his business, because he is agent for both life and fire companies, and lots of people who are trying to get into society do their insuring through him. Well, everybody thinks he has such a lovely time, but he isn't so very happy after all. He is nearly forty now; and last fall he began to get so fat that it was awful for him to have to dance; so he had to go without eating lots of things he likes. . . . After the theatre we would go up on the car together to my flat and eat pickled limes and lady-fingers; that's about the only thing he can eat for supper."

Temehichi, the Japanese "boy," who was Mrs. Potwin's servant (Mrs. Potwin is the *divorcée*), and who was of noble family, took umbrage at Charley and his by no means sybaritic banquets. He loved Mrs. Potwin, and broke forth as follows:

"You see, Golden Beak, I sweep your floor, I clean the mat when dog-Charley wipes his feet—and you laugh. You laugh, all of you. You say, 'Oh, very clean; oh, very good boy.' When Charley-dog have dinner here, I spit in his soup. You think I am a broom; you think I am an iron to stir the fire with; but all the while I am a man, Golden Beak, and all the while you are a woman. And I love you, bad woman!"

Mr. Bassett is a most admirable storyteller, as strong in his way as Mr. Richard Harding Davis, and with a very keen eye to detail. Probably the one thing that he could not succeed in would be the pathetic, and this he wisely does