

It is not, of course, necessary to accept the valuation set on Wells's work by the Rossetti group. It belongs to that succession of ambitious epic-dramas including Bailey's "Festus" and Alexander Smith's "Life Drama," which by their Elizabethan echoes aroused extravagant but short-lived enthusiasms. The Elizabethan notes are clear enough in "Joseph," but, in our judgment, both of its present sponsors have missed the point in emphasizing its Shakespearean quality. "This passage," says Swinburne, "at least has the absolute ring of Shakespeare; 'pure fire indeed':

Attendant. Then, madam, you would say That there is nothing in the world but love.

Phraxanor. Not quite; but I would say the fiery sun
Doth not o'ershine the galaxy so far;
Nor doth a torch within a jewell'd mine
Amaze the eye beyond this diamond here
More than the ruddy offices of love
Do glow before the common steps of life.

And again, quoting the dismissal of Joseph by Potiphar's wife after her futile attempt at seduction, he thinks "the quiet, heavy malice of this is as worthy of Shakespeare as the elaborate and faultless music of the passage on love which precedes it:

Phraxanor. I have a mind
You shall at once walk with those honest limbs
Into your grave."

Not Shakespeare, but the later Elizabethans, or Jacobeans, inspired that note. One feels here something close and sultry in the atmosphere; that second passage particularly has the very gait and mark of Ford; and, indeed, the passion throughout is Ford's, although it may lack the illicit sting that the author of "Tis Pity" so willingly employed. If it should be rejoined that Ford is essentially a dramatist of the chamber and closed doors, whereas Wells, as Mr. Watts-Dunton asserts, is one of the true Vagabonds, we can only submit that this critic's predilection for the gypsy world has led him to find far more of this spirit in Wells than is visible to us, and that still Wells's country is not that of Shakespeare, but, let us say, of Beaumont and Fletcher. Swinburne finds another instance of Shakespearean reserve in Phraxanor's first intimation to her husband of Joseph's imputed crime:

Phraxanor. Will you praise him, my honor'd lord?

Potiphar. Why so?

Phraxanor. Because he never must be prais'd again.

He comes nearer the mark when he adds that "touches like these occur in Webster." There is in Phraxanor's words something oppressive, something that hints of cruelty and gloating over pain, with an indirection suggestive of brooding madness; they might be found in Webster, but again they are rather

the speech of Ford. A hundred epithets and brief passages remind us continually that we are in the same world from which Keats drew so much of his inspiration, not because he, and Wells, chose deliberately the successors of Shakespeare for their model, but because the attempt to imitate Shakespeare almost invariably strikes thus to one side of the mark. One feels this in Wells's

And fearful soundings in this dragon world,
To find them easy footings to their graves;
or,

And the great city like a vision sails
From out the closing doors of the hush'd mind;

or,

In this immensity
Upon the drouthy sands doth silence dwell—
And wandering winds are lost in loneliness.

The whole scene between Joseph and Phraxanor and then between Phraxanor and Potiphar is a marvellous replica of late Elizabethan work, and the earlier and later events of Joseph's life, developed legitimately from the Bible story, are curiously successful in avoiding the tedium that might be expected in such work. At times the visionary poet and the dramatist come together, producing a passage at once splendid and human, as in this speech of Joseph to his father on the envy of his brothers, which may stand as a fair specimen of Wells at his best:

They act as if the world,
And all the nations' wide, and cities wall'd,
Were no such things: as if this spot of ours,
Our fields, our cattle, were the all in being.—
Would they be envious, let them then be great,
Envy old cities, ancient neighborhoods,
Great men of trust, and iron-crown'd kings:
For household envy is a household rat;
Envy of state a devil of some fear.
For me—this Bethel limits not my sight;
For in imagination I can see
Countries beyond, nurs'd by the wit of man,
Wiser in harvest, greater in defence,
With state and pomp and majesty serene:
E'en in my sleep my mind doth eat strange food,
Enough to strengthen one against this hate.
With you, my brethren, I was binding sheaves.

When mine arose and stood in front of yours,

And yours bent grievous low unto the ground:

Nay, more (yet think me not irreverent),
The sun, and moon, and the eleven stars
Sank, and obey'd me; which is sure a sign
That I am greater than my sire and ye,
However passive in humility;
Be it in love, or act, I leave to time.
Or Heaven of purpose put this in my view,
Or else my mind being troubled of the grief
Of your displeasures, vain of some great power,

Might fancy this in sleep. I do not know;

But feel resolv'd no more to plague my heart,
While you, my brothers, treat me with such scorn.

CURRENT FICTION.

The Fashionable Adventures of Joshua Craig. By David Graham Phillips. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

Mr. Phillips's excursions into polite society are always edifying. He has so obviously and complacently the air of the bull in the china shop that there is no gainsaying him his fun. Joshua Craig is a hero after his own heart. Joshua has a loudly and incessantly voiced contempt for fashion, and an instinctive appetite for it. Otherwise, he is an altogether impossible person in most senses. It is one thing to be a bold, rough man from the West, and another to have no sense of decency. Joshua is a boor as well as a bear. He literally, as well as metaphorically, puts his feet on the table of civilization. He is a composite of all the brutal young Lochinvars who have recently come out of the West to reform society as it effete exists on the Atlantic seaboard. The gilded halls into which he is introduced resound with his braggart insolence. In real life, such a person would be expelled without ceremony; but Joshua bears a charmed social life, and his outrageousness seems to strike the good-natured, open-hearted "society people" of Washington as rather quaint and engaging than otherwise. He is also fortunate in love, for, having selected for his mate a girl of the most exquisite beauty and breeding, he proceeds to give her the handling of a Sal or a Sue, with perfect impunity. Joshua is as free of manner in my lady's chamber as in the marble palaces of the great, as relentlessly absorbed in his own affairs, as indifferent to the comfort of others. But the lady (who has, to be sure, reached a certain age and is anxious to marry) seems attracted rather than repelled by the hideous spectacle. He is not only ungentlemanly—he is grossly insulting, wantonly insulting, on every possible occasion before their marriage. Finally, she does half-heartedly run away from him, whereupon he follows her and sees to it that they are married offhand. We are given to understand that this serves her right, and in a sense it does, for she has little real refinement or sensitiveness of nature. She has the superficial and chiefly physical fastidiousness of the fine lady who is bathed by her maid in three waters every morning, and spends some two hours over the rest of her toilet. But she is inherently common, naturally built to be the Maggie of whatever insistent Josh might come along. Mr. Phillips evidently does not mean to give this impression of her; he tries to rep-

resent her as a person of unusual sensibility and of very strong will. Above all, perhaps, he is anxious to show that an aristocrat is human for all that. And certainly if we are willing to accept the other allegations with regard to Joshua, there is no reason for sticking at his amazing marriage.

We find him assistant to the Attorney-General, with that functionary (as well as the President) under his thumb. Both of these powers wish to get rid of him, because he is obstructing their comfortable relations with certain great corporate interests which, for political reasons, they are pretending to oppose. But Joshua will not be got rid of, and by way of compromise the Postmaster-General presently resigns, and Joshua becomes his successor—or rather, is given the appointment; for, in the eleventh hour, he decides not to take it, but to go back to Minnesota and run for Governor. He has also an offer outstanding to become a corporation lawyer at a huge salary. Indeed, the closing chapters of the story do much to atone for what has gone before. Craig displays a genuine magnanimity in really important matters, and his wife shows herself unexpectedly capable of responding in kind. Their feeling for each other is seen to deserve the name of love, and they set out for Wayne, Minnesota, with a reasonable hope of happiness in ways that count. It is a pretty problem, and if Mr. Phillips had put it less crudely and splashily, his audience would, no doubt, be more likely to dismiss it as a very old one.

Miss Fallowfield's Fortune. By Ellen Thorpecroft Fowler. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.

Those who found this author's stories of Isabel Carnaby oppressively brilliant will have no cause for complaint on that score concerning her latest work. In these pages the moralizing spirit is almost as obvious as in the good old days of the "Wide, Wide World" and "Sandford and Merton," when no subtle coating was thought necessary for the pill of precept. The long arm of coincidence is as visible here as the hand of an operator of marionettes. Charlotte Fallowfield, beautiful, ambitious, and poor, prays for wealth. Her lover immediately inherits a fortune of a million pounds, and survives only long enough to leave the entire sum to her. She lives on alone with her orphaned niece Dagmar, against a village background of irrelevant, garrulous, and intensely wearisome supernumeraries, until the arrival of a new rector with his son Claude. After a brief courtship, enlivened by the author's pregnant asides on the evils of jealousy, Miss Fallowfield and the rector are married, and set sail on their wedding-trip. Without revealing

the rest of the plot, with its elaborately arranged suspense, we may say that the story, as a whole, lacks impressiveness and challenges unfavorable comparison with Besant's handling of a somewhat similar theme in "Beyond the Dreams of Avarice."

Three Girls and a Hermit. By Dorothea Conyers. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

The trio of unsophisticated maidens who sally forth from wild seclusion to seek their fortune in the world, seems much the mode at present in the United Kingdom. Miss Macnaughtan has shown us in "The Three Miss Graemes" Scotland's meeting of the exigent situation, and we are now given a chance to compare their conduct with that of their Irish sisters. The three Miss Considines are by no means such patterns of propriety as blossom among the heather. One would compare them rather to the gorse—brilliant, thorny, and hard to train. But after much indiscretion and a bitterness of condemnation that exceeds their deserts, they all find the fulfilment of their hopes and of their needs—kindly and competent protectors. The book owes its charm to the pungent portrayal of Irish character, and its unexpected idioms are a source of keen delight to the reader.

The Eternal Boy. By Owen Johnson. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.

To any one who has heard a group of old schoolmasters revivifying one another in vacation by recalling the rascal days of their boyhood, it will not be difficult to suggest the note of these Lawrenceville stories, celebrating the ubiquitous and inextinguishable Hickey Hicks and his friends. Though most of the escapades are of a mellow antiquity—stealing the clapper of the bell, hanging the skeleton in the chapel, arranging a secret prize fight—they are vitalized by fresh touches of nature, and recited with unmistakable gusto. Two or three of them are more broadly conceived, especially "The Political Education of Mr. Baldwin," in which a local campaign suggested by a member of the faculty to instil in the boys ideas of political purity and disinterested usefulness develops with surprising rapidity every form of bribery and corrupt bargaining. This imitation of mature citizenship the author appears to relish as much as the minor deviltries. It is an indication of the hearty strenuousness which is the only moral virtue much emphasized by the book. From a pedagogical point of view the disdainful treatment of the teachers is deplorable; if the "Eternal Boy" falls into the hands of juvenile readers it will amuse without edification. To teachers, however, and other discreet adults it may be commended as an entertaining and per-

haps even instructive interpretation of the schoolboy spirit.

Letters of Mrs. James G. Blaine. Edited by Harriet S. Blaine Beale. 2 vols., pp. 316; 326. New York: Duffield & Co. \$4 net.

Blaine has had rather too much than too little championship from his family and connections. Gail Hamilton (Miss Dodge), his wife's cousin, and for years a member of his household, wrote one indiscriminating eulogy; Edward Stanwood, also closely related to his wife, has written a "Life" which is more discriminating, but still mainly apologetic. If one merely dips into these letters of Mrs. Blaine, and goes no further, one is likely to say at once that they might better have been left unpublished. As it happens, those which come first particularly abound in domestic detail, which looks out of place, and even a trifle ludicrous, in print. Severe editing would have spared us much of the information we get concerning the children's wardrobes. But it might also have robbed us of this, which we should regret to have lost:

Mrs. Warren Fisher has another daughter—a great disappointment to her, as they are anxious to have a son and this is the fourth daughter. I am sorry to say that Mr. Fisher seems to be fast losing in the esteem of all good men.

But as one goes on, one likes the letters better and better—and Mrs. Blaine also. True, the letters do not rise above the level of the talk and correspondence of many bright American women. The atmosphere is that of many American homes. But it is a decidedly pleasant atmosphere, and Mrs. Blaine talks out of it—usually to her children—without the least affectation or studied cleverness, and with a pleasing heartiness and common sense.

Of course, one reads chiefly for allusions to her husband and his more famous contemporaries; and these, happily, are not made as if with the slightest expectation of the public's ever seeing them. They are utterly free, and sometimes very intimate. Garfield, for instance, is frequently "Gaffy." But he does not suffer from this affectionate familiarity. The day of his assassination, Mrs. Blaine was quickly at the White House:

I stood with Mrs. McVeagh in the hall when a dozen men bore him above their heads, stretched on a mattress, and as he saw us, and held us with his eye, he kissed his hand to us. I thought I should die.

Grant does not fare so well—as witness this:

Friday (February 16, 1872), we had our Presidential dinner. Oh, how glad I am to have it over! . . . The President is so heavy in everything but feeding—there he is very light. He talked incessantly about himself.