

of God Himself to the foul condition of the heart.

After all, however he may look to us nowadays, Sheridan represents what is always a disturbing phenomenon—the irruption of genius into a province usually reserved for other occupants. With posterity Burke has come off lightly, thanks to his caution in editing his own memorials—and besides, Burke was much more of the expert. But outside of his comedy poor Sheridan has always lain at the mercy of the diarists and chroniclers, who have tried him by the measure of an officialism to which he did not belong, and finding him fall short, have cried out upon him for lack of a consistency which is not in his proper character at all.

PROSSER HALL FRYE.

Lincoln, Neb.

NEWS FOR BIBLIOPHILES.

A work which will take its place at the head of books in the English language on the subject is Theodore L. De Vinne's "Notable Printers of Italy during the Fifteenth Century," just issued by the Grolier Club of New York.

Almost thirty-five years ago Mr. De Vinne published his "Invention of Printing" (first edition 1876, second edition 1878), a work which still holds its position as the best comprehensive account of the beginnings of typography. In that earlier work Mr. De Vinne held closely to his subject, and, except for a chapter on the spread of printing, dealt only with the very beginnings, playing-cards, block books, etc., and the work of the first printers of Germany, Gutenberg, Fust, and Schoeffer. In this new work on Italian printing, a subject which he has studied for many years, he tells of the work of those Germans who first carried the "art preservative" into Italy, and their immediate successors.

To Italian printers we owe the use of the Roman alphabet in printed books. For more than a century after the invention of printing the Gothic, or "black-letter," was preferred in Holland, England, France, and Spain, and it is within our own day that the German printers are making a general use of the more distinct and more legible Roman characters. The letters cut by Conrad Sweinheim, Nicolas Jenson, and printers of their age, are, with modifications, the characters with which the books of the world are printed to-day. One font of Roman type was used by the unknown and so-called "R" printer of Strasburg as early as 1464, but that it did not meet with the approval of the book buyers of the day is shown by its subsequent abandonment. For the book buyers of Italy, accustomed to the lighter-faced Roman letters in their manuscripts, the Germans were ready to prepare letters of similar form for their printed books.

The first book printed in Italy was a Donatus, or Latin Grammar, printed in Roman characters, at the monastery of Subiaco, near Rome, in the year 1464, by two Germans, Conrad Sweinheim and Arnold Pennartz, who had been invited thither by its ecclesiastics. Of this first book a single copy only is known to exist. The second

book, for which a Roman type of a different face was cut, was the Lactantius, printed in 1465, and of this Mr. De Vinne gives the reproduction of a page from the copy in the library of the late Robert Hoe.

After three years at Subiaco the first press was moved to Rome. In 1472, in a petition to the Pope praying for pecuniary assistance, they said that they had printed more than fifty works, amounting to 11,475 volumes. During this time also other presses had been established, mostly by Germans, in Venice and other Italian cities, and the total number of books printed in Italy during the first decade after the setting up of the first press must have run far into the thousands. Nicolas Jenson, who began printing in Venice in 1470, was the most notable of the early Italian printers, and the Roman types first cast by him are the models upon which our modern types are in large part based.

A preliminary chapter on the Roman alphabet and chapters on type-founding, printing ink, paper, composition, and the hand press will be found especially attractive to readers not interested in incunabula as such. There are forty-one full-page plates, reproductions of specimen pages of the work of various printers, besides a few illustrations printed in the text.

The work throughout shows that it was not written by a mere bibliographer describing the books, but by a master printer who, familiar with all the processes of printing, can explain them to the lay reader. And, as the most famous printer in America for nearly half a century, and as a man who did not follow William Morris with his Kellogg "revival" of twenty years ago, and its many imitators, Mr. De Vinne may well stand up for modern printing as most suited for modern readers. Upon this head we quote the following:

Praise fairly due to some early books has been conceded unwisely to too many. Eulogies of the general superiority of fifteenth century typography, written by critics a long time afterward, when the printing of the seventeenth century was in its lowest estate, were justifiable then, but are not warrantable now. An old book may be highly esteemed for its age and rarity, for its quaint mannerisms or its association with a famous editor, printer, binder, or owner; but these peculiarities may not invest it with a sacredness that puts it beyond examination and comparison. The reading world of this century has its own standard of fair workmanship in printing, by which it judges the old as well as the new. The new too often suffers by comparison, but the old is not always faultless.

And again:

Few of the written and printed books of small size, cheaply made for the needs of young scholars and poor buyers, are in existence now, for they were generally thumb-ed to rags by persistent handling, and for that shabbiness have been kept out of neat collections, but enough have survived to indicate the existence of the larger number destroyed. The old books that are now made to serve for comparison with new books are of the better class.

On June 1 and 2, C. F. Libbie & Co. will sell in Boston the library of the late Charles Edwin Hurd, literary editor of the Boston Transcript for nearly thirty years. Mr. Hurd was vice-president and one of the founders of the Bibliophile Society, and a complete set of that society's publications are included in the sale.

On May 31 and June 1, the Anderson Auction Co. will sell the books and autographs of the late Joseph M. Hart of Troy, N. Y. First editions of Shelley's "Adonais" (1821)

and "Queen Mab" (1813); early New England and New York imprints; books with colored plates, etc., are included.

On June 2 and 3 the Merwin-Clayton Sales Co. offers a miscellaneous collection of books, including nearly fifty pamphlets on early American railways and a quantity of portraits for extra-illustrating.

Correspondence.

BORDEN PARKER BOWNE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: The deep, quiet devotion of the "great teacher" to one of the less prominent institutions, which younger men are so often pitifully but honestly unable to comprehend, was strikingly characteristic of the group of men who served Boston University almost from its inception. Their academic creed was the transcendent belief that "it is beautiful simply to know things."

And it is no vain and gratuitous lauding *temporis acti* that insists on remembering the splendid enthusiasms, the unflinching stimulus to the eternal questioning, the almost apostolic fervor for teaching as an art which they incited.

Of the three who have but recently ceased to teach, Prof. Augustus Buck, now in voluntary retirement in the Germany of his youthful university days, was for more than half a century, most of that time at Boston University, a teacher of truly inspiring type. So careful for the nice balances of the letter that he never let the smallest "particle" of his loved Greek go untranslated, he could, too, by his own impassioned interpretation, rouse the most stolid freshman to grasp something of the spirit of Socrates's sublime Apology; and even with hurdy-gurdies and florists' windows to create the illusion, he made Theocritus and the lyric fragments the joy of a senior springtime and a memory forever to be loved and forever fair.

The late Prof. Thomas Bond Lindsay was a master of the art of coördination, and whatever the Latin text studied under him, all literature was its commentary. So Lucretius brought to many the first real grappling with Whence? and Whither? Such a teacher could show the agonized vision of doubt behind the insidious melody of the "Rubáiyát" and in the laborious embroidering, in sombre richness of color, of the theme of "In Memoriam." William Watson, in that first outpouring of real achievement and ringing verse, served to give present significance to Juvenal's scorn and Persius's ire by means of "The Things that are More Excellent."

The recent death of Prof. Borden Parker Bowne, whom the academic world knows best by his philosophical writings and public addresses, brings to his pupils an intensified realization of the compelling personality of the teacher. They recall gratefully his encouragement to those who would enter the vastnesses of Thought and who learned from him that happiness is surely in travelling hopefully.

Compelled for many years to furnish lectures on the Philosophy of Theism as a prescribed course for students of varying training and receptivity, he inevitably re-

mained unknown to many younger, awe-inspired students; but he was greatly loved and sought as adviser by others. He could not, however, without sacrilege, be called popular with the ordinary connotations of that word. That he could so persistently take his philosophic view from the angle of theism was cause for wonder to some who follow the changing fashions in philosophical nomenclature and find an apologetic appearance in a previous decade's styles. His was a mind to prove all things, but his very conservatism helped his gift for emphasizing the few things that are really good and to be held fast.

On the margins of class-books, especially the "Ethics," I find pencilled epigrammatic sayings of the author-lecturer, elaborating and illustrating his text. They bring back the invariably gentle voice and the inscrutable smile that, could rebuke the hollow sophistries of the unthinking and clamorously insistent youth with Xavier de Maistre's "On voit bien, excellent jeune homme, que vous avez dix-huit ans; à quarante je vous attendrai." There was infinite patience with ignorance, but a certain bitterness in the protests against the limitations of rigid, unreasoning theological bias, against the foolishness and mental vanity of halfway knowledge, and the inanity of the "well-intentioned." He could condemn without vehement denunciation. "It's the easiest thing in the world to denounce somebody," he said long before muck-raking became pleasant and profitable. In the marginal notes are found the following:

The ease with which persons are injured varies inversely as their intellectual development.

Pretty much everything in this world is an edge-tool, and fools among others exist at their own peril.

It is becoming less and less a world in which fools can live in safety.

The chief mark of the fool is that he is clamorously delighted over nothings.

Referring to a certain kind of self-imposed mental misery over remote ills, he said, "We could not distress ourselves if we would over some indignity in South Africa." Much of our seeming hypocrisy, however, he deemed merely "handy remarks to make under the circumstances"; and the note adds, "I'm glad to see you, as glad as the occasion demands." Many of the apparently hard sayings of Professor Bowne were directed against the elusive disguises of a perennially recurring Phariseism, and the subtle settling with conscience that leads to various schemes of so-called altruism (really a "wise selfishness at best," as he called it). Thus:

It is selfishness that most makes for righteousness, and justice is the second choice of the many.

We have no revelation as to the bearing of to-day's activity upon the twentieth generation to come.

Many of the workers in the slums and settlements, where he occasionally lectured, he declared to be self-deceived as to motive and results; and time has shown that the self-development of the worker is the most tangible result in many cases, although the neighborhood settlement remains the best of a poor array of social palliatives. Much of our current generosity he termed "pathologic," and with the much-organized report-writing charities in the early days, at least, he lost patience.

"I abominate," he said, "all general philanthropies. The natural selfishness of the race is safer on the whole than our philanthropy." Again, "the great bulk of humanitarian effort is lost objectively." A very "successful" East Side minister recently made the same admission, despairing of the great waste of individual endeavor. From certain kinds of inflammatory preaching which advocated useless sacrifice of the individual, Professor Bowne found safety in the apathy of congregations. "Much of the preaching would be calamitous if it were not for the dulness of those who listen." No one was more of a temper to quote, as he used to do:

Tho' love repine and reason chafe,
There comes this voice without reply,
'Tis man's perdition to be safe
When for the truth he ought to die.

But against offering this gospel as "an equation of happiness" no one could protest more vigorously.

In answer to the objection that woman suffrage, "like popular suffrage has fear-some possibilities," there is found the note: "Logic leads to the abysses." No saner, more temperate consideration of that burning issue could be found, by the way, than the brief page or more in his "Principles of Ethics."

He was fond of emphasizing the "Function of Illusion in Life," and his little allegory, noted merely as pleasing, takes on rich meaning after years: "If it were not for the rainbow, we should not get on. We follow the gleam; at first we misinterpret it; we live by it, eventually." His life and temperament ever exemplified belief in his own words, "This world is full of possible beauty," and "the joy of living cannot be separated from the joy of knowing." Those who knew him will recall how often those words, "the joy of knowing," were on his lips, and that other phrase, "a common faithfulness," for which he pleaded with the intense conviction that it was the sum of life, learning, and all endeavor.

In the undergraduate days, when life needed not philosophy to make it tolerable, his hearers admired his brilliancy, serenity, and conviction; when the problem became real for them, inextricably bound up with the value of life, they remembered his teachings. Greater monument could no teacher have.

MARY COWELL HAM.

Brunswick, Me., May 16.

CURIOSITY AND THE COMET.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Nothing pleases some people so much as facts. They will spend whole hours in persistent yet apparently aimless questioning of their acquaintances, or in concentrated application to newspaper articles and technical reviews. Details of mechanical processes, circumstantial accounts of the most unimportant happenings, are all enchantingly attractive to them, because, and only because, they are series of facts. Obviously the motive for such truth-seeking is intellectual curiosity, pure and simple, with no basis of a desire to use the knowledge gained, or of pleasure in the gaining.

Just at present, the existence of the fact-hunting point of view is even more easily discerned than usual among people in gen-

eral. All you have to do is to mention the comet, and your friend's mind classifies itself immediately. He may begin to talk in a mildly historical vein of the curious superstitions it has inspired in the past; he may discourse of its wonder and natural beauty; he may take a soberly philosophic view of the littleness of man and his world. But if he begins to tell at once how many times he has seen the comet already, at what hour it will appear to-morrow morning, and how much good his little pocket telescope really does him, he is a fact-hunter, and you may know exactly where to put him.

A hundred and fifty years ago, however, nearly everybody was a fact-hunter. That remark is not a wild generalization from histories of eighteenth century literature, but a deduction from a relic of the "age of prose and reason" itself. Nothing but the general acceptance of that point of view as natural and right would ever have led to the publication of a poem that was found not long ago in a pile of old letters, dated all of them about the time of the appearance of the comet in 1759. The name of the paper in which it appeared is not given on the clipping, but it was doubtless a New York weekly of that time. One only wishes that the modern prosaically-minded fact-hunter were unsophisticated enough to unbosom himself as frankly as did the provincial bard. A lament in a current metre, one patterned after Alfred Austin, for instance, and inspired by the poet's lack of sufficiently accurate astronomical instruments, would be a relief from the flood of verse, which, I quite clearly perceive, will richly supply the magazines for the next few months. The eighteenth century model has, at any rate, "one native charm":

Hah! There it flames, 'the long expected star,
And darts it's awful glories from afar!
Punctual at length the traveller appears.
From it's long journey of nigh four-score years.
Lo! the reputed messenger of fate,
Array'd in glorious, but tremendous state,
Moves on majestick o'er the heav'nly plain
And shakes dire sparkles in it's fiery train.
Ah! my misfortune that I live retir'd,
And nought avail me arts I once acquir'd!
Here, like an hermit, in my lonely cell,
Far from the mansions where the Muses dwell,
I'm forc'd to act the common gazer's part,
Alas! unfurnish'd with the aids of art!
O for the tube, with philosophic eye
To trace the shining wand'rer thro' the sky!
O for the ampler arch, in nicer mode,
To mark it's stages in it's azure road!
But vain the wish, oh! ye that can survey
The glorious orb, and track it's wondrous way,
And find it's shortest distance from the source of day,

While vulgar crowds with dull attention gaze,
And gaping wonder at the silver blaze;
Ye sons of science, from your high abodes,
Discrey it's oblique path, and mark it's nodes,
Explore with what velocity it's hurled,
And what exact its period round the world.
Now, now in this delightful work engage,
Pursue the steps of the sagacious sage,
And be this wiser than the former age.

ELIZABETH CRANE PORTER.

Andover, Mass., May 18.

LIBERIA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Any one appreciating the importance of the audience addressed by the *Nation* and at all well-informed as to Liberian affairs, internal or international, must regret the endorsement given in your is-

sue of April 21 to the report of the Liberian Commission.

Readers of this report or of your review of it will receive an impression of Liberia as a native republic whose difficulties are due solely to foreign interference with its independence; of Great Britain as the *instans tyrannus*; who, for a century, has been fomenting these difficulties in order to encroach on or intrigue against that independence; of the United States as an earthly providence which at the right moment will send, as a *deus ex machina*, a cruiser or a minister with a treaty in his pocket. Such an impression is as false as the information on which it is based is fallacious. The difficulties in Liberia are due solely to the incompetence and corruption of the small governing class. The country is bankrupt, and has no credit and nothing in its treasury; but the total debt charge is only 15 per cent. of the revenue, and were the collected revenue paid into the treasury, it would be amply sufficient for all requirements. Again, the disorders in the interior are caused neither by the intrigues of Great Britain nor by the turbulence of savage races raiding or revolting against civilized rule; but by the extortions and outrages of the armed expeditions sent out by the Liberian government against peaceable villages. That is the origin of the present trouble with the Grebas and the reason why the Kroo coast refuses to acknowledge Liberian rule. Indeed, not long ago a raiding force of Liberians, after ravaging several villages was disarmed by the natives and sent back to Monrovia unharmed.

Liberian rule is corrupt, cruel, and, fortunately, confined to a small coast strip; which facts should be as well known in the United States as are the same disappointing developments in colored communities of the Western Hemisphere. Until they are well known Liberia will remain exposed to the cruel kindness of good people who—

have just got a notion
for making a motion
that black shall in future be white.

Now, sir, to turn to the international aspects of the report. The whole course of Liberian history goes to show that the dramatic tableau staged in the report as an American Perseus rescuing a Liberian Andromeda from the British sea monster is, to say the least, fanciful. If American philanthropists made Liberia, British cruisers made the Liberians. It was Great Britain that first recognized Liberian independence, fifteen years before the United States did so; and for the last twenty years the maintenance of that independence has been due to British support. But it is unnecessary to go further for a recognition of the true relations between Great Britain and Liberia than the recent correspondence published last year when Mr. Roosevelt recommended to Congress the appropriations for this commission. This correspondence shows that in 1897 Great Britain made the following proposal to the United States:

It might prove of service to the Liberian Republic and encourage it to resist absorption by a foreign Power were the governments of Great Britain and the United States to make a joint declaration of the special interest taken by them in the independence of the republic.

A suitable reply was made by the State Department, and the understanding was notified to the Liberian government by the American minister in the following terms:

It is my privilege to present these *promemoria*. . . . The one from the United States which I have the honor to represent at this court, gives me profound pleasure to present to the home of my ancestors—the one from Great Britain increases my admiration for his Majesty's government as a power of justice and equity.

Ten years later, in 1908, Sir E. Grey, foreign secretary, made another proposal that the United States government should take over judicial reform in Liberia, and added:

While calling attention to this branch of administration which has been a frequent scene of trouble, I need hardly add that his Majesty's government would welcome the cooperation of the government of the United States with them in Liberia in any other manner which may appear most suitable or more observable on a consideration of all the circumstances.

It appears to his Majesty's government that the main risk to the future of Liberia arises from the inefficiency of Liberia's administration of their own affairs, especially in matters of finance, and any suggestions which the United States might see fit to give them to follow the advice of such foreigners as they have themselves engaged to help in their administration would have a beneficial effect.

VERITAS.

Washington, D. C., May 15.

LORD CROMER AND THE EGYPTIAN PEASANTRY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Before the echoes of Mr. Roosevelt's Cairo address have quite blown away, the following unconscious tribute to Lord Cromer's exertions on behalf of the Egyptian peasantry may prove of interest.

One of the most voluminous, varied, and picturesque of the mediæval Arabic romances of chivalry has recently (1908-1909) been printed at Cairo for the first time. It is the story of the Sultan az-Zahir Baybars, and the publisher, who was, apparently, as frequently in such cases occurs, also a redactor, announced at the beginning that it would consist of fifty parts. But for this number he was unable to find material, and was therefore obliged to fill in, from page 20 of Part 48, with a strongly nationalist outline history of Egypt, Syria, and Turkey, down to the present time. The latest date I can find is April 9, 1909; but there is no hint of a Turkish revolution, and his Majesty Abdul Hamid is still reigning gloriously.

This whole appendix is of the highest interest as an example of how popular history can be written. But the point to which I now write to draw attention is in the section on Lord Cromer (Part 49, p. 47). There the writer, evidently a townsman and of the "learned" class, complains that Lord Cromer brought young men from his own country, and put them into government posts which should have been held by natives, and that he "succeeded, by his guile and astuteness, in drawing to his side the hearts of the peasantry, and of the simple-minded among the country governors and shaikhs, who used to write to him reports and complaints and lying desires."

Of course, until the time of the English control, no Egyptian ruler or ruling class ever thought of the peasantry, except as a source of labor and revenue. That the

Egyptian upper and middle classes still view it in the same way is, unfortunately, too certain. Lord Cromer's consideration of them could, therefore, be only the guile of the politician. Yet one hardly expected to find so complete and naïve an admission of the success of his policy. Perhaps, with time and patience, the peasantry may at last be persuaded to exercise the voting power which it already possesses. When it does so, by far the most important step will have been taken towards full parliamentary government. For before that comes, the peasantry, the most weighty if the most silent element in the Egyptian population, must be equipped and ready to protect itself against the exactions and the contempt of the other classes.

DUNCAN B. MACDONALD.

Hartford, Conn., May 17.

THE PHILIPPINE LANDS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: In reply to Mr. Bingham's letter in the *Nation* of the 12th, may I suggest some considerations, in regard to the sale of Philippine lands in large quantities?

In the first place it is a matter of common knowledge that Mr. Taft has expressed repeatedly his hope that the Philippine Islands, at a time when their independence may be properly considered, will not aspire to it, but will be satisfied with a colonial attachment to the United States, which he believes to be a desirable permanent condition. The Filipinos, whenever and wherever their voice has been able to make itself heard, protest against the colonial position and demand independence at the earliest possible date, secured through neutralization by the great Powers. This voice has spoken loudly and clearly to deplore these large sales, because it is apprehended that the establishment of interests such as those of great sugar or tobacco cultivators will create powerful influences against the independence of the islands. The true welfare of the people of the islands was sought in the establishment, under the authority of Congress, of an agricultural bank which has not been successfully developed. The admirable "Raiffeisen" system of agricultural credit was adopted by the Philippine Assembly in a bill which was done to death in the upper House (the Philippine Commission, composed of Mr. Taft's appointees). It is quite obvious why the attitude taken towards exploitation by Senator Hoar, who earnestly hoped for the early independence of the Philippine Islands, was antagonized by Mr. Taft, who has never even reckoned with it.

Mr. Taft may be a friend of the *land* of the Philippine Islands, but he cannot in any proper sense be said to be a friend of the Philippine *people*.

Ireland and even Scotland to a large extent have been depopulated by those who love the land and not the people.

ERVING WINSLOW.

Boston, May 16.

A CORRECTION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: As a reader of the *Nation* and an English Liberal, permit me to say that you are mistaken in believing that the budget

has passed as the result of "one of its most contentious provisions being struck out" (the *Nation*, May 5, p. 449). No concession at all was made. Agricultural land was from the first exempt from the increment tax.

RICHARD CAPELL.

London, May 5.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Allow me to call your attention to an error in your article on page 449 of the last issue of the *Nation*. No actual change was made in the British budget upon its final passage except in the matter of dates to fit the new conditions.

The original budget did not assess the new 20 per cent. increment duty to land used for agricultural purposes, and the declaration on that subject in the bill as finally passed was inserted merely for the purpose of clearing up a possible ambiguity in the original wording.

One would infer from the remainder of your article that as a fiscal scheme the historic budget had been something of a failure; an idea which is hardly borne out by a careful reading of the debates in the House of Commons, as reported in the most recent London newspapers. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, at any rate, seemed disposed to congratulate the chancellor of the exchequer upon his favorable statement. Of course, a surplus of "only \$14,500,000" is nothing to boast of, but it is better than a deficit.

GEO. Q. THORNTON.

St. Louis, Mo., May 6.

THE THESIS OF A PLAY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: In your issue for April 7 there appeared an interesting notice of the revised edition of William Vaughn Moody's "The Faith Healer." I should like to raise a question about one remark in this notice:

The great weakness of the play in its first estate, as has been pointed out in this journal more than once, was the vagueness of its intent and meaning, as if the author were himself in doubt as to the true nature of the phenomena with which he had undertaken to deal. . . . This defect is as conspicuous in the revised version as in the end.

This struck me as a very unjust bit of criticism. What attitude other than doubt as to the nature of such phenomena is possible at present to an intelligent man? And are we to exclude from the legitimate field of drama every phenomenon which we do not fully understand? If we do, how much will be left?

To make sure that I did not misunderstand your critic, I referred to his review of the earlier version of the play (*Nation*, February 18, 1909). He there remarks:

The play would be stronger if it were clearer in meaning and purpose, more definite in argument and declaration. It is difficult in reading it to determine whether it is a profession of faith, a spiritual romance, or a mere dramatic study of existing conditions. (The italics are mine.)

I am reminded of a remark made by a student in our engineering department, apropos of a presentation of Ben Jonson's "Silent Woman": "I don't think it's really a good play; there isn't any moral which you can take away with you and think about."

Against the assumption which underlies the sentences quoted from the *Nation*, I wish to enter a vigorous protest. The doctrine of your critic seems to be that a play cannot deserve the highest praise unless it

presents some definite thesis, some clear-cut solution of a problem. This critical attitude, I suppose, is due chiefly to the influence of Ibsen. A great master of dramatic technique has seen fit to confuse the functions of the stage with those of the pulpit or the platform; many lesser men have followed him, and, as usually happens, a criticism has arisen which sees in their practice a fundamental principle of drama.

Of course, this principle is beautifully exemplified in the plays of such men as Ibsen and Shaw, from which it is derived. Almost all their plays are what Mr. Chesterton calls "propaganda" plays. But how will the principle apply to the great dramas of the past? Can we be quite sure that Sophocles, in describing the death of Oedipus and the voice which called him "many times and in many quarters," was not "in doubt concerning the true nature of the phenomena with which he had undertaken to deal?" Is "Oedipus" or "Hamlet" "clear in meaning and purpose, definite in argument and declaration?" If they were, should we be fascinated by them still?

I am not yet ready to believe that a play is a better play because it is also a sermon or an essay. I cannot escape from the conviction that what your critic regards as the chief fault of "The Faith Healer" is really one of its greatest merits. Mr. Moody has set forth in splendid dramatic form a situation which would have tempted a lesser man to promulgate a psychological theory, thinly disguised as a play.

HOMER E. WOODBRIDGE.

Colorado Springs, April 23.

[We print this letter because it raises an interesting question of art. Our reviewer did not mean, and did not imply, that a play is better for being a sermon or an essay; he did mean that a play, or any other work of literature, is better if the writer has a clear perception of the theme he has in hand, and a clear notion of his own mental and emotional attitude toward that theme. Crude didacticism may injure a work of art, "vagueness of intent and meaning" may also be injurious, the greatest work of art will always convey a definite moral impression.—ED. NATION.]

Literature.

THE ARTHURIAN ROMANCES.

The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances. Edited from manuscripts in the British Museum, by H. Oskar Sommer. Vol. I: *L'Estoire del Saint Graal*; Vol II: *L'Estoire de Merlin*. Washington: The Carnegie Institution.

The publication of a work of such magnitude as the present would in Europe be the function of some academy of sciences; it is fortunate that we have at last on this side of the ocean in the Carnegie Institution a foundation which possesses the material resources to carry through an enterprise of this nature. To be sure, the aid of the Institution

has been hitherto mainly extended to investigators in the physical sciences, but we hope that with so liberal a recognition of the claims of literary research as is implied in the present publication we may look forward in future to a more abundant flow of favors in this direction. In any event, the Institution is earning the gratitude of all serious students of literature by the issue of these splendid volumes—the product of the Riverside Press—which in beauty of typography are not inferior to the publications of any learned body in the world. We only regret that it should have chosen to date them respectively 1909 (Vol. I) and 1908 (Vol. II), although they were really published in 1910. This is sure to lead to confusion in future researches in this field.

The first two volumes which lie before us comprise the branches of the Vulgate cycle generally known, respectively, as the "Grand Saint Graal" and the "Merlin." The whole work, as Dr. Sommer announces, is to consist of six volumes, of which the third, fourth, and fifth are to contain the "Lancelot," and the last the "Queste del Saint Graal" and "Mort Artus." With the very important exception of the "Lancelot," all the branches of the cycle have already appeared in print. For instance, the "Grand Saint Graal" has been edited by both Furnivall and Hucher; and the "Merlin" by Dr. Sommer himself. Nevertheless, the present publication has its value even for these works, since it rests on a much more extensive examination of the manuscript material, and in the case of the former offers the text (a somewhat abbreviated one, to be sure) of a manuscript which has not been printed before in its entirety. As in his previous publications, Dr. Sommer merely prints exact transcripts of the manuscripts, without editing them. Headlines and ample side-notes, however, make it easy to glance rapidly over the narrative, and he has also adopted a system of cross-references to previous editions of these romances, which renders it easy to compare any passage. Furthermore, collations are given at the bottom of the page from some other manuscripts, although it is to be regretted that no statement is made as to how systematic these collations are.

The manuscript which Dr. Sommer has chosen as the basis of his edition of the whole cycle is Additional 10292-4 of the British Museum. One may well question whether it is advisable to print all the branches of the cycle from this one manuscript, simply because it happens to contain them all, regardless of the fact that a less abbreviated text of each branch of the cycle—that is, accordingly, a text which represents more nearly the original form of each of these branches—may be obtained from separate manuscripts. For, although Dr. Sommer does not state it, Additional