

Books and Authors

Miss King's "Balcony Stories"¹

Among the younger writers of short stories no one has a fresher field or a more individual style than Miss King. "Monsieur Motte," which appeared several years ago in the "Princeton Review," struck a note of distinct originality and power, and marked the beginning of a literary career resolutely held to fine ideals and to a very exacting standard of workmanship. The bound volume of "Tales of a Time and Place" confirmed on a broader basis of accomplishment the impression made by detached sketches, and "Balcony Stories" will establish the reputation and define the place of a writer of singular freshness of touch and depth of feeling.

It is clear that Miss King's heart is in her work, and that she penetrates the secrets of character and experience by a genuinely sympathetic insight. Her work betrays culture of many kinds, but its distinctive quality is the clearness and certainty of the instinct for that which is most intensely human in a person or a situation, and, therefore, for that which holds the secret of temperament or destiny. Miss King is on intimate terms with the people about whom she writes; but she has not learned their habits and discovered their secrets by close observation, primarily; she has found her way to their hearts, and so she reveals to us what is most sacred, deepest, and masterful in them. There is a beautiful quality in her dealings with the creatures of her imagination which protects them from the apparent profanation of publicity even while it uncovers their very hearts to us. The fourteen stories included in this volume are notable by reason of their intense vitality; they seem like transcriptions from life; they are studies of character so vividly realized in definiteness and clearness of outline that they are in some cases, by a fine artistic instinct, presented as studies rather than elaborately finished as pictures.

In the country "where the nights have to come with a double endowment of vastness and splendor to compensate for the tedious, sun-parched days," women love to sit and talk together on summer evenings in balconies; and "experiences, reminiscences, episodes, picked up as only women know how to pick them up from other women's lives," furnish the dramatic material of these long moonlit confidences. In this half-light, with its softening of pain and its deepening of pathos, Miss King has gathered these brief and touching stories of women's destiny. There is something, perhaps, in the atmosphere out of which these tales come, something also in the nature which puts them into written words, which gives them a genuine quality of womanliness; something difficult to define, but quickly felt, and of great attractive power; a refinement of feeling, a delicacy of perception, a sureness of instinct, which betray social culture of a fine order. Miss King has the charm of the old order of social ideals at her command; she understands not only what is rare and beautiful in a woman by virtue of her own nature, but she feels deeply and sees clearly those rare and beautiful qualities which come from gentle breeding, from inherited aptitude, from pre-natal contact with the best that life offers in refined homes, and from high-minded loyalty to an ideal of honor which is not only a matter of character but also of manners. There is in Miss King's work the touch not only of the artist but of the gentlewoman.

With this fine strain there runs a singularly pure and unobtrusive moral instinct and insight; a sure touch upon what is wholesome and sound and good, without a particle of didacticism or moralization. We are continually aware, in reading these stories, of the native sweetness and charm of simple purity and goodness; we are made to feel the truth, so constantly missed by many writers of fiction, that rectitude, in its fine, natural forms, is the artistic expression of character; that when character becomes so true and sound that it holds these great moral acquirements

with the ease of unconsciousness, it becomes a thing of beauty in itself.

It is but pushing the analysis a step further to discover that Miss King is an artist of a genuine and original type; one who discloses not only the fine results of training, but that native capacity for feeling, seeing, and embodying in form, which is the birth-gift of those who enrich the world with the products of art. Her style has none of that fatal smoothness and precision which betray a culture imposed upon, rather than developed out of, the gift of nature; it is vivid, picturesque; at times abrupt, and occasionally defective in clearness, not by reason of loose thinking, but of too rigid concentration and exclusion. There is an intensity, a fullness and courage of emotion, a simplicity of passion and of faith, which disclose the sincerity and frankness of a deep and noble human feeling, and a trust in the resources of art which is not misplaced. Such work as that contained in this volume is not only important in itself, but has the still greater value of rich promise for the future.



Chapters in Modern Botany. By Patrick Geddes. University Extension Manuals. (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.) To arouse to direct study of nature; to make Darwinian students, but not Darwinists; to show botany as a living, growing, evolving science—such seem to be the chief designs of the course of lectures gathered together in this little book. Professor Geddes states that one may teach elementary botany in two ways: first, by taking the simplest and commonest plants for our first study; second, by beginning with something rare or strange, or at any rate unfamiliar. He himself combines the two, and, beginning with Pitcher-Plants, he ends with Leaves. Besides these two subjects, his chapters deal with Insectivorous Plants, Movements and Nervous Action in Plants, The Web of Life, Relations between Plants and Animals, Spring and its Studies. Constantly looking at the vegetable world from the point of view which Darwin gave us, our author presents Darwin's studies and experiments, but does not always reach Darwin's conclusions. One side of a truth is not the whole of it, and a great danger in science is premature generalization. Many workers must contribute even to establish a relatively simple matter, and the accepted dogma of the science of to-day may need modification to-morrow. Professor Geddes emphasizes this lesson repeatedly. The list of topics given above suggests the interest and importance of the matter treated. Study in morphology, histology, and physiology is mapped out. Bionomics, the "economics" of species, the relationships of any life-form to the great world of life about it, is a favorite subject with Professor Geddes, and he leads us on many a little excursion into that field. The suggestiveness of the book is one of its great values; it points out lines of study, gives enthusiasm for outdoor work, hints at a curious but surely interesting and profitable botanical picture gallery, and opens up to the novice the great literature which before had been closed to him. It is certain to do much good.

An autobiography is necessarily the most interesting sort of literary composition, for, no matter what may be the intent of the author to conceal, he nevertheless always must reveal himself even in his concealments. The autobiography of a writer, and a noted writer, is especially noteworthy, and immediately appeals to a large class of readers—and how large is that class when the autobiographer happens to be the writer of novels of world-wide celebrity, novels that have been translated into many languages! In the same attractive manner in which he related the career of Uarda, the Egyptian Princess, and Jehoshua, Herr Georg Ebers tells *The Story of My Life from Childhood to Manhood*. The writer is not analytical nor subjective in his method; he does not worry about motives and over epochs of intellectual life. He dwells more upon the objective side of his life. The beautiful thing about this book is its pictures of very precious relations of family life. It is, in a word, the life-story of a happy, prosperous man, whom neither great trouble nor deep and searing experiences have ever stirred to the bottom of his nature. "Life," says some proverb-maker, "is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel;" to Herr Ebers it seems to be in the main a mild melodrama. (D. Appleton & Co., New York.)

There is a continual fascination about the buccaneer, though we must confess that the fascination is much stronger when we meet him in the pages of Mr. Stevenson's romance than in the pages of history. Mr. Howard Pyle's recent book on the buccaneer brought out the sordid and brutal aspects of the subject,

¹*Balcony Stories.* By Grace King. The Century Company, New York. \$1.50.

as well as the fact that some of the buccaneers were rather armed adventurers resisting Spanish usurpation than pirates. These facts are made still more clear by the translation of John Esquemeling's *Buccaneers of America*. The author was a Dutchman, and his book was first printed in 1678. He served under the French West Indian Company, in the Island of Tortuga, was sold into slavery and driven by bad treatment to join the freebooters. His story contains, among many other histories of assaults, that of Sir Henry Morgan upon Porto Bello, and that of the same "hero" upon Panama. The translator vouches very positively for Esquemeling's truthfulness, and it is certain that he wrote in a direct, candid sort of way, without any grace of style, but, so far as can now be judged, with honest accuracy. A reprint of Basil Ringrose's journal (now very rare in its pamphlet form) ekes out the tale of Esquemeling. Of course there are abundance of incidents of cruelty, rapacity, and hardship in the book. For twenty years after this book first appeared buccaneering continued in the Indies, and Dutch, French, and English colonists and merchants more than winked at it. The word "buccaneer," by the way, is supposed to have come from an Indian method of drying and smoking meat by the "boucan" or "boucon" process. The publishers have given this new edition of a rare and remarkable book every advantage of type, illustration (the reproduction of many quaint woodcuts), and binding. (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.)

The American Girl at College is the title of a very entertaining and vivacious account of different aspects of life in American colleges for women. Under such chapters as "Higher Education," "Physical Development," "Social Life," "Scholarships and Fellowships," "Co-education," "Relative Cost," "Self-Help," etc., Miss McCabe presents a popular and sufficiently full survey of a subject which is of great practical interest both to girls and to their parents. The little volume was evidently written for the purpose of conveying information with regard to the different colleges, as well as presenting the aspects of student life and academic training in these several institutions. The chapter on "Relative Cost," for instance, answers questions which a great many fathers and mothers are asking in determining the question of a higher education for their daughters; while the chapter on "Self-Help" suggests some of the ways in which an ambitious girl may secure an education without appealing wholly to her friends for support. The chapter on "Scholarships and Fellowships" contains important facts in the same direction. That on "Physical Development" has something to say regarding the effect of college training and work on the health of girls, which parents will be anxious to read, while the pen-and-ink portraits of the different college presidents satisfy a rational curiosity with regard to the heads of these different institutions. Miss McCabe is a popular rather than an academic writer, and her little volume is characterized by a kind of off-hand freshness and vivacity which make it extremely entertaining. (Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.)

Among the books of the season there is none more delightful than that which contains Mr. Janvier's account of *An Embassy to Provence*, for it is the good fortune of Mr. Janvier not only to see the things that are most interesting, and to feel keenly the sentiment of the place and atmosphere which he describes, but also to convey his impressions and his feelings in singularly taking fashion. There is no American writer of the day whom it is easier to read than Mr. Janvier. His vitality, his good humor, the easy flow of his spirits, the charming Bohemianism of his taste—which has the wholesomeness of freedom without its license—the breadth of his sympathies, and the picturesqueness of his style, make him at all times a charming companion; and never more so than in this book, which takes him into one of the most attractive parts of Europe—a bit of provincial France, full of local color, and with a population whose native characteristics have not yet been rubbed off. It is hardly necessary to say that in Provence Mr. Janvier found himself thoroughly at home, and his account of Mistral has all those touches of intellectual sympathy and comprehension which convey the living image of the man. The book is very attractively printed, and contains a portrait of Mistral. (The Century Company, New York.)

It would be unjust to dismiss with a single sentence of praise, or of blame, Mr. Nathan Haskell Dole's novel, *Not Angels Quite*. If Mr. Dole aimed at producing an impressionist novel, it does not seem clear to us in what way he has succeeded. The story itself is not fresh in any conception of life or of the problems which exercise us all our threescore and ten years. This criticism would be uncalled for did not Mr. Dole evidently take himself quite seriously as regards his view of life and its work. There are pages that are decidedly good, and there are dialogues which Mr. Dole, veteran translator of other persons' novels as he is, ought to know better than to inflict upon a suffering

public. To give a sample of what we do not like in this book: "He wrenched his mind away from the picture of Alma as she sat opposite him at table; as she turned round and looked at him over her shoulder from the Etruscan piano-stool, her profile outlined against a piece of dark ancient tapestry that concealed a door; as she more evanescently appeared to him for the first time at that fleeting moment, which he would have forced to last for an infinity, if he had known, if he had realized!" (Lee & Shepard, Boston.)

Ideala, by Sarah Grand, is not a novel or a romance, but it is, nevertheless, a book that will claim attention from many serious people. The alternative title, "A Study from Life," intimates something of its character. "Ideala" is not precisely a normal type of woman, but the problem which the book discusses is perhaps as well discussed with such a character as with another and more average soul. The main problem which the story is concerned in working out is the pressing matter of marriage and divorce, and, as the author leaves her perplexed and unhappily married woman still in the bonds with a vile husband, it seems that the problem is left just where it is taken up. Generally speaking, religion is not invoked to solve the difficulty in this story, yet students of social science are growing more firmly convinced that the more serious of our moral diseases can be cured only by religion. (D. Appleton & Co., New York.)

The Brooklyn Ethical Association has set itself to work upon the problems of modern sociology; and with useful results when published to the world at large, certainly when read by those seriously engaged in the solution of these problems. *Factors in American Civilization: Studies in Applied Sociology*, is the title of the volume, which contains fourteen lectures, by such men as President De Garmo, the Hon. W. J. Coombs, J. W. Sullivan, Dr. T. D. Crothers, the Rev. J. W. Chadwick, E. P. Powell, N. P. Gilman, and others. These speakers, each in his own fashion, apply the principles of Herbert Spencer's Synthetic Philosophy to the treatment of the topic discussed. The result is a book that, whatever its faults, contains a large mass of interesting and useful matter in the department of sociology. (D. Appleton & Co., New York.)

The second book in Imbert de Saint-Amand's series of "Women of the Valois and Versailles Courts" is on the *Court of Louis XIV.*, and it has been translated from the French by Elizabeth Gilbert Martin, and furnished with portraits. (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.) The greater part of this volume is given to an account of the character and doings of Madame de Maintenon, the wife of the old age of the "Grand Monarque." The style of De Saint-Amand, as we have already intimated in these columns, leaves nothing to be desired in the way of brilliancy and interestingness. The author unerringly seizes upon strong and characteristic points, and produces his effects, which are true and not exaggerated, by the methods of the literary impressionist.



Literary Notes

—Messrs. Harper & Brothers have added to their Black and White Series Mr. Howells's charming bit of autobiography, "My Year in a Log Cabin."

—Mr. J. H. Seeton, formerly of the "Cosmopolitan," has become the editor of "Harper's Young People," in place of Mr. Starey, whose early and lamented death we reported last summer.

—Labor on the "New English Dictionary" has at last been carried through the letter C, and work upon D has been begun. It is probable that many years will pass before the work is completed.

—Besides her volume of short stories soon to appear, Miss Olive Schreiner has written a longer work, the title of which probably will be "From Man to Man." It is described as a study in the comparative ethics of men's treatment of men and their treatment of women. The work may not be published until spring, however.

—Mr. S. R. Crockett, whose book of short stories, "The Stickit Minister," is now in the third edition, is engaged on an adventure story in which he is to put in form the traditions of Galloway in the early part of the eighteenth century. Mr. Crockett is a minister of the Free Church, and preached not long ago in Free St. George's, Edinburgh, on "The Gospel in Richard Jefferies."

—Messrs. Macmillan & Co. announce the publication of the "Psychological Review" early in 1894, devoted to the advancement of psychology by printing the results of original research, constructive and critical articles, and reviews. The "Review" will be edited by Professors Baldwin, of Princeton, and Cattell, of Columbia, with the co-operation of a number of other well-known men in this department.

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