

THE POET OF THE DAY

Estimate of Richard Hovey Warranted by Launcelot and Guenevere. A WORK OF RARE BEAUTY, In Which One of the Arthurian Legends Forms the Nucleus. EXCERPTS FROM ADVANCE SHEETS.

The Author, Although of the West, is a Product of Washington.

A VERY INTERESTING PERSONALITY

(FROM A STAFF CORRESPONDENT.)

WASHINGTON, Oct. 31.—This gay little political caper, somewhat too much devoted to brummagem politics and social cosmology, has not been lavished, per se, in its production and dissemination of genius. It has bestowed name and fame on men and women of the "provinces," who have blazed the comets of a petty season, and then retired to feast their minds on faded honors in the obscurity of their own homes; but the Washington creation, pure and simple, of that sort, is a rare article.

It is therefore a peculiar pleasure to note the advent in the field of literary art of a young man who can be truly claimed as a production of the capital, though by birth and childhood he is of the West—not of the West, Western, however, but happily embodying the grand imaginations, the gorgeous coloring and sensuous atmosphere of the blessed Orient, from which all things worthy have sprung. Cosmopolitan, admirably Bohemian, a true son of the World, in touch with the Universe of Things to be fancied but not explained, Richard Hovey is yet a child of Washington, his first impulses—so far as outward influence goes—received from that society peculiar to the capital, and his education, his habit of mind, his approach to ideal association, is yet the closest approach to ideal association to be found in this conglomerate Western land.

Hovey's First Production. Hovey is not yet his entire self in "Launcelot and Guenevere." It is the first book of the young author. Not only that, but it is the early effort, which, ambitious as it is, and successful, as the several criticisms testify, is to be, is yet but the beautiful result of the genius and toil of the young years of one conscious of power, and surely destined to leave his impress on the literature of his country and of the world.

Hovey is a wonderfully magnetic young man, who impresses himself on his acquaintances as Poe must have done when he, like Hovey, wrote merely to write, and all unconscious of the immensity of his audience. But analysis of the personality of the man must come with mature judgment of his work, and for the present suggestion must be confined to the volume which will appear within a few days, and from the advance sheets of which this notice is hastily transcribed.

Did Not Choose a New Field. On first impression it might be regretted that the author should have chosen the most widely known and most exploited theme of the Arthurian legends to introduce himself to the literary world and to the public. But upon even a cursory examination of his "Launcelot and Guenevere" it will be found that it bears no resemblance to any of the works of the great Victorian poets save in name, the treatment of the subject being entirely original and revealing a high order of poetic inspiration and dramatic power. He has drawn forth with clearness the leading personalities of these early medieval legends of Britain from the mystic haze in which time had masked them, and without detracting from their poetic character or being guilty of psychic anachronism, places them in touch and sympathy with modern thought and feeling.

The play, which is a tragedy, is preceded by an introduction or prelude bearing the title of "The Quest of Merlin," a finely wrought poetic fantasia, replete with mysterious ecstasies, allegory and metaphysical reasoning, which are fittingly introduced into a sure and high deistic philosophy. The tragedy itself, which is foreshadowed in the prelude, appears to be the first of a trilogy of plays intended to cover the legend histories of King Arthur and Launcelot du Lac, heroes throughout the impress of a superior mind stored with rich lore and learning.

Technical Knowledge of the Stage. It is in five acts and its construction shows a technical knowledge of the stage and strong dramatic instinct. Gifted with power of analysis to a marked degree, he has undertaken to delineate, as the paramount object of the work, three types of love, which, in whatever age we may seek and find them, have been all-potent factors of human action. In *Perdure*, the poet and brother of *Guenevere*, he has portrayed the ideal form of love, which in its ruthless destruction must end tragically. In *Morgause*, the Queen of Orkney, the sister of King Arthur, he has created the type of love, which, departing from tradition—a character of perjury and passion beneath a fair exterior. Between these two extremes, yet immeasurably removed from the one by strength and purity from the other, is the love of *Launcelot* and *Guenevere*, characters so fine and yet so human that their very divergence from a moral standard seems to claim an ethical indulgence.

They never called me girl, those mighty peaks! They knew no sex, they took me to their hearts. As if I were a boy, Oh, the wild thrill! Their hands in the veins, when the strong winds came howling like a pack of hungry wolves. Then the wintry forests terrible beneath the Norway moon! "Surik on," I cried, "Have, ho, roar, bellow, till you spit your throats! You cannot mar the pinnacled repose of these huge mountain tops. They are not women!"

Why, what an idle rage is this! Am I the Guenevere those still grand mountains know? This is a bridal garment that I wear. I am another Guenevere, a thing— I know not what. I go to a new life. I have ordered a new pair of manacles. Arthur! As well Arthur as another—I care not. If I must, I must. To live the old life is no longer tolerable. The new may at least be joyously endured.

And lost already in the murmurous past. I feel as if I were just born to-day. With life before me like this summer air, Hushed, as it waits for a bird to sing, The joy delirious, and all is fire and air, And hope stands flushing like a rosy bird Upon a threshold which he fears to cross.

The rapid development of their love is partly due to the fact that some few years back *Launcelot* had been saved from death by *Guenevere*, who, wandering through the hills and seeing a strange knight in distress, had sent *Perdure*, the jester, and her attendant to minister his help. To his reference to having seen her before without knowing who she was, she says: "Have you seen me, then, before? And you remember it, and I forget? *Launcelot*—I should have died of faintness in the hills if you had not stood by."

The death of *Perdure* by his own hands when his eyes become opened to the moral obliquity of the Queen of Orkney, is a deeply pathetic scene, and fitsly closes the fourth act. He has killed *Lothius* and finding the ideal which all the purity of his lofty imagination had created was crumbled into dust, he has no strength to outlive the shock.

The fifth act contains the most powerful scene between *Launcelot* and *Guenevere*. The latter has awakened from the intoxication of her love; the golden clouds of passion have rolled away and revealed to her the gloomy and perilous path she and her lover are treading. Her love, like all genuine, is altruistic; she thinks more of *Launcelot*, more of the danger she may have called down upon her innocent friends and the welfare of the state, than of herself. The climax of the scene is centered in the passage where she resorts to the most subtle dialectic, belief and honor can inspire her with to break the spell she and *Launcelot* are under. Not every argument, however adroitly presented, can convince a rebel as able to overcome. At last she draws a talisman to her aid, and with an almost superhuman effort denies that she ever loved him; but at the crucial moment when her wish may be reached, at the very instant when her object is in her grasp, the sustaining power falls her.

I must make turning back impossible. I-God! I do not love you. Got T was all

mockery—wanton cruelty—what you will—lethargy! (Launcelot looks at her dumbly, then slowly turns to go. As he draws aside the curtains of the doorway—)

Launcelot! Launcelot!—What does the Queen desire? Take me away with you! Let me not die to you, of all! My whole life is in the To me, at least, let it be truth. I—I—Oh, Launcelot, do you not understand I love you—Oh, I cannot let you go.

By heaven, 'tis false! As soon the rosy labor of the dawn Might bring forth darkness!

Then turning to the casement of *Morgause's* chamber he addresses her: "Lamp of my soul, behind you latten lies Move mystery, more beauty, more delight Than grizzled Merlin with his lapse of years. Has ever dreamed of. There's more credit writ In thy dear smile than all his subtleties. Ah, opal-heard! now she doth unclose The solemn sweep of her majestic limbs. The mystery of her awful loveliness. And draws the curtains of her couch about her.

As some earth-goddess of old northern tales Might give the heavy drapery of the night. A fine scene is also where *Perdure* visits *Morgause*, and we see a masterly blending into a harmonious picture of an almost divine devotion on the one hand, and an almost scintillating deception on the other. *Perdure's* beautiful song in this scene reminds one in its exquisite delicacy of Browning's "She's a Woman Like a Dewdrop," in the "Blot on the Soutcheon." He sings:

You remind me, sweeting, Of the glow, Warm and pure and glowing, When the clouds bosoms— On the sun is low.

Like a golden apple, Mid the far, The leaves that dapple Stretch of summer blue— Are you, Sky-set like a star.

Fearful lest I bring you, How should I Dare to reach you, choose you, And with my soul!

Why should I be dithering, Or you will split my heart—not with remorse. No, no remorse, only eternal pain! Why, as the diamond are! *Guenevere* (half apart)— To the souls in hell It is at least permitted to cry out.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon this work in greater detail. The public must judge for itself of its beauties, its strength, and its tenderness. Though the first fruit of a still young man, his intellect, as seen reflected in this play, has already passed through that cruder part of the storm and stress period and has in fact reached at times that of classic repose and elevation.

Should I be assuming too much to predict an immediate recognition of his genius, or claim for it a co-ordinate rank with the very best that American literature has ever produced? I think not. It may require time for others to join this view, but the fact must not be overlooked that real merit is like the late summer or autumn fruit that has required the ripening process of many days to endure the winter of time.

Deserving Confidence. There is no article which so richly deserves the entire confidence of the community as *Brown's* Bronchial Trochiscs. These medicine pills, containing the most scientific and powerful ingredients, are able to overcome. At last she draws a talisman to her aid, and with an almost superhuman effort denies that she ever loved him; but at the crucial moment when her wish may be reached, at the very instant when her object is in her grasp, the sustaining power falls her.

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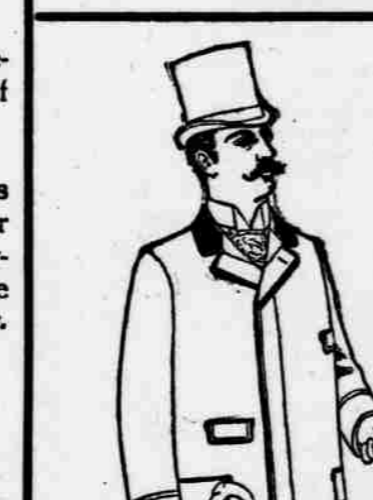
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